



AMERICAS+  
CARIBBEAN  
VIII PLATFORM FOR  
DISASTER RISK  
REDUCTION

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# CONCEPT NOTE

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# VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean: *“Science and Technology for Integrated Disaster Risk Management”* (PR23)

Punta del Este, Uruguay, February 28 - March 2, 2023

## 1. CONTEXT

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015. This global framework, together with other global agreements adopted during 2015<sup>1</sup>, constitute the 2030 Agenda, which declares comprehensive disaster risk management and its integration into development as fundamental issues for Member States. Global frameworks require coherence in both planning and implementation, which is why the Sendai Framework, as a practical framework for reducing disaster risk, forms the connective tissue of post-2015 international agreements. Unaddressed or unknown risks and new risks not yet built are at the heart of the global challenge facing sustainable development.

The Sendai Framework aims to achieve “substantial reduction of disaster risk and disaster losses, both in lives, livelihoods and health, as well as in financial, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of individuals, businesses, communities, and countries”. Achieving this outcome requires not only the commitment of political leaders at all levels, but also that all actors actively participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, as well as related actions.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognises the Global and Regional Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction as a broad and multi-sectoral participatory mechanism where regional progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework and future actions for its achievement are discussed every two years. The Regional Platforms for the Americas and the Caribbean are spaces where multiple key partners such as governments (national, subnational and local), intergovernmental organisations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, scientific and academic institutions, civil society, the private sector, youth, donors and the media come together to share experiences, exchange knowledge and make agreements on the main regional priorities for disaster risk reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean region.

## 2. THE CONTRIBUTION OF REGIONAL PLATFORMS

In recent years, the sessions of the Regional Platform were organized successively by Panama (2009), Mexico (2011), Chile (2012), Ecuador (2014), Canada (2017), Colombia (2018) and Jamaica (2021). As an integral part of the Regional Platform, a ministerial and high-level authority meeting is

<sup>1</sup> Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

being held to highlight the political commitment of countries to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and to the results of the Regional Platform. In addition, contributions from other important sectors, such as the private sector, youth,<sup>2</sup> and others, are welcomed. Under the auspices of the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay as host country and the cooperation of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the **VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean**, will be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from February 28 to March 2, 2023. The VIII Regional Platform represents an opportunity for governments, intergovernmental bodies, the private sector, civil society, scientific-technological community, cooperation agencies and donors, as well as other relevant stakeholders in the Americas and the Caribbean, to exchange experiences and facilitate decisions in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas and the Caribbean, agreed in March 2017 in Montreal, Canada, and updated under the auspice of the Government of Jamaica in November 2021.

Uruguay has proposed to give a relevant space during PR23 to the topics of science, technology, and early warning systems (Target G of the Sendai Framework), under the slogan **“Science and Technology for the Comprehensive Management of Disaster Risk”**. It is considered that it is necessary to focus on scientific and technological support as a fundamental tool for comprehensive management of disaster risk, particularly with regard to its feasibility, development, financing and implementation.

### 3. APPROACH, OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

#### *Risk trends, disaster impact and challenges in the region.*

The first **Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean, RAR-LAC 2021 2021**, analyses the underlying causes and drivers of risk and raises the need to deepen them in order to fully understand risk and its causality, and then reflect on governance mechanisms and structures that allow it to be reduced.

The RAR-LAC 2021 recognises that “three decades after the proclamation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) – which initiated the systematic efforts of the international community to reduce disaster risk – fifteen years after the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) and five years after the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) was launched, it is possible to verify that the policies, measures and mechanisms adopted have been limited in the effective fulfillment of their central objective: to reduce the number of disasters and their impact”.<sup>3</sup>

For example, as indicated by the RAR-LAC 2021, between 1997 and 2017, one in four disasters recorded in the world occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, mainly due to events of climatic origin (mainly floods, which are potentially predictable). The region is also the most affected in the world in terms of the economic impact of disasters. Between 1998 and 2017, the region accounted for 53% of the world’s economic losses from climate-related disasters and 46% of the global disaster losses in the last decade.<sup>4</sup> Latin America has been the region most impacted globally by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was the leading cause of death in virtually the entire region.

<sup>2</sup> Within the framework of the VII Platform, the Declaration of the Youth Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Declaration of Civil Society Organisations were presented.

<sup>3</sup> [RAR Regional Disaster Risk Assessment Report for Latin America and the Caribbean | UNDRR](#)

<sup>4</sup> Idem

Overcoming this reality involves facing a set of challenges clearly set out in the RAR-LAC 2021:

- Maintaining interest and supporting coherence between global frameworks and the commitment of countries to their compliance, among others, given the panorama of economic recession foreseen at that time for the region due to the COVID-19 pandemic and today fueled by the impacts of the war in Ukraine.
- Improve information to better understand the risk and impact of disasters. Recognize the progress, but improve data quality, update, and expand country coverage to have greater understanding, recognizing the systemic nature of risk.
- Addressing the underlying causes and drivers of risk and containing the new dynamics in the construction of risk: we must go to the root of the problem.
- Promote future-oriented and corrective risk management decisions and investments through sustainable schemes that do not represent a financial burden for countries. Ensure that planning and investments are informed by and sensitive to disaster risk.
- Build innovative approaches and forms of management of cities, where risk is increasingly concentrated.
- Transform governance for risk management, so that the predominance of reactive vision is overcome once and for all and have a profound impact on the DNA of development.

### *Science and Technology for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management*

It is necessary to highlight the role of **science and technology in the comprehensive management of disaster risk**, considering the diversity of knowledge available in the region and in the world. Both the Sendai Framework and the Regional Action Plan state that disaster risk management policies and practices should be based on a thorough understanding of risk. Such knowledge is essential for pre-disaster risk assessment, to promote prevention, mitigation once risk materializes, and the implementation of appropriate preparedness and response measures to manage emergencies and disasters effectively and comprehensively. For all these processes, science and technology are a key factor.

In the **Declaration of Ministers** of the VII Regional Platform, Jamaica 2021, the participating high authorities confirmed the need to strengthen the development and dissemination of national and local science-based methodologies and tools. The importance of the availability of technical assistance was also underlined, as well as technical assistance to facilitate the timely implementation of prevention and preparedness measures, as well as the identification, recording and reporting of impacts caused by disasters through online monitoring platforms which are designed for this purpose and adopted for the monitoring of the Sendai Framework.

Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management, in its different components, requires an adequate management of science and technology:

- **Corrective management:** it is essential to know the vulnerability of what is exposed to different hazards of different origins, to reduce uncertainty and define effective strategies in terms of territorial planning, formulate public policies that improve the living conditions of our populations, and promote cultural patterns that incorporate care habits, among other dimensions.

- **Compensatory management:** it requires the use of technology to develop diverse types of early warning systems for the different adverse events to which a territory is exposed, to promote resilient practices, to generate and apply response protocols, continuity, and evacuation plans, to assess damage and losses, etc.
- **Prospective management:** information, knowledge, technology, and innovation are relevant to anticipate the construction of new risks and not to reinforce existing ones, influencing the development model that reproduces them. Anticipatory action, investment in DRM and ensuring equal access to funding must be strengthened to reduce risks.

However, the Americas and the Caribbean is one of the most unequal regions in terms of scientific and technological development in the world. While countries such as the United States and Canada are among the world's leading countries in terms of investment in research and development (R&D), the rest of the region as a whole is at the bottom of the list. Furthermore, there is a trend, aggravated by the pandemic, to reduce the fiscal space of States for investment in R&D and, therefore, to deepen the little value given to science and technology in public policies and national budgets.

Another challenge is related to the development, access and use of science and technology, which is determined by the context of inequality and exclusion that prevails in the region and that has concrete manifestations in the capacity of use and exploitation of its benefits. For example, the pandemic showed how and how much the digital divide weighs and how millions of people did not have the same opportunities to adapt to virtuality and the use of technological packages in areas such as work or education.

In the same vein, given the cultural, ethnic, and social diversity of the continent, it is important to bear in mind that people's relationship with science and technology is different and very often complemented by another knowledge. Experience has shown that technological tools are hard to assimilate if managers do not consider the cultural particularities and the visions and knowledge of the communities. The promotion of technologies should be presented as a transdisciplinary complement to existing knowledge systems.

All the above reaffirms the importance of including science and technology in the process of developing public policies and in DRM governance, facilitating its access and use, generating mechanisms that improve transparency and accountability, establishing a constructive dialogue between DRM and S&T communities. In short, the aim is to effectively transform S&T into actions that improve decision-making processes in DRM at all levels in a context of increasingly complex and interconnected risks.

### ***General Objective, Specific Objectives and Expected Results***

Considering the above, the VIII Regional Platform will have as its **General Objective:** to analyze the progress and obstacles for the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the RAP updated to 2021, to seek proposals and collective responses to the challenges in the increase in number and complexities of climate and disaster risks in the region; and to find sustained, attractive, and valid mechanisms for the best use of science and technology in holistic disaster risk management.

In addition, its **Specific Objectives** are set as follows:

1. Present and analyze progress and obstacles at the national, subregional, and regional levels in the comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the Sendai Framework, its goals, and priorities, good practices and recommendations that will contribute to push forward its progress.
2. Review compliance with the Regional Action Plan updated to 2021 and, in the light of the increase in number and complexities of climate and disaster risks, define regional priorities for the next two years 2023-2024.
3. Considering the systemic nature of risk, recommend inclusive and sustained mechanisms and strategies for the better support, development, and use of technology in comprehensive disaster risk management.

The main **Expected Results** of the VIII Regional Platform are:

1. Summary by the Chairperson
2. Statement by the High-level Segment / Ministerial Meeting
3. Presentation of progress made and recommendations for progress in meeting the Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas and the Caribbean.
4. Reports of the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean
5. Declaration on Opportunities and Challenges of Science and Technology for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management

## 4. ADVISORY COUNCIL

An Advisory Council will be created to define and establish the structure, content and methodology of the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean.

The Council will be made up of delegates from: Uruguay as host country, who will co-chair the meetings together with UNDRR, who will have the role of secretariat; Jamaica, as host country of the last Regional Platform; intergovernmental organizations of the region; international agencies and donors cooperating with the region; regional civil society organizations; the private sector; youth groups and networks representative and scientific and technological community.

The Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay and UNDRR remain firmly committed to ensuring the development of inclusive and multisectoral consultations as part of the preparations for the Regional Platform.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

A broad and inclusive participation at PR23 is expected, both in person and virtually, of representatives of member states, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, cooperation agencies, United Nations agencies, donors, development banks, scientific, technological, and academic sectors, financial and planning institutions, as well as other relevant stakeholders in the Americas and the Caribbean. These include women's organizations, community

networks, youth organizations, volunteer groups, the elderly, people with disabilities, Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations and organizations, migrants and groups living in conditions of high vulnerability. The VIII Regional Platform represents an unparalleled opportunity for Member States and all these actors to share experiences and good practices, to have a greater impact on knowledge transfer and capacity building, and to reaffirm their ongoing commitment to disaster risk reduction at the regional, national, and local levels.

The VIII Regional Platform will be developed in hybrid mode, that is, it will be conducted in person, but also enabling the necessary access for virtual participation in the key spaces. To ensure enough spaces for the participation of the diversity of virtual and face-to-face participants, different exchange modalities will be carried out during its development, namely:

1. **Three ceremonies:** Opening Ceremony, with high authorities of the host government and UN, to be held at the beginning of the first day; Cultural Ceremony, with the participation of all attendees, to be held at the end of the first day; Closing Ceremony, with high authorities of the host government and UN, to be held at the end of the last day (face-to-face modality).
2. **Four plenary sessions:** theme to be defined with the Advisory Council (hybrid mode, with greater face-to-face participation).
3. **Eight parallel sessions:** topics to be defined with the Advisory Council (hybrid mode, with greater face-to-face participation).
4. **One special session:** topic to be defined with the Advisory Board (hybrid mode).
5. **Twelve side events:** topics to be defined with the Advisory Board. In this case, six side events will be held in person and another six in virtual mode.
6. **Six learning labs:** these are smaller spaces to promote exchange and learning through direct interaction (face-to-face mode).
7. **A ministerial meeting:** is a segment in which high-level authorities, ministers from different sectors (including education, health, agriculture, finance, tourism, science, and technology) will discuss regional developments in DRR and set regional priorities for the next two years (hybrid mode).
8. **Ignite:** these are spaces where professionals and specialists will present innovative tools and initiatives and where the exchange of experiences will be encouraged (face-to-face mode).
9. **Exhibit:** These are permanent stands to present the work and experiences of various instances (face-to-face mode) and can also be virtual stands with pre-recorded videos about the work and experience (virtual mode).
10. **Official statements:** these are the statements made by representatives of countries, regional organisations, cooperation agencies, donors, the private sector, and civil society (virtual modality with pre-recorded videos).

The specific contents of the sessions shall be established in consultation with the Advisory Council. Additional information, as well as background documentation for the conceptual development, will be provided in a timely manner through a dedicated website.

The VIII Regional Platform may be preceded by preparatory events, organized by different organizations with the objective of conducting preliminary discussions, consultations and

agreements between different stakeholders that contribute to the development and outputs of the Platform - and that take advantage of the presence of representatives and delegates to participate in the Platform. In the past, such events have included a Youth Forum, ARISE Private Sector Forum, ECHO LAC Workshop, IFRC regional meetings, etc.

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