

VII Regional Platform for Disaster
Risk Reduction in the Americas
and the Caribbean (RP21)

*Building Resilient Economies in the
Americas and the Caribbean*

1 to 4 November 2021, Virtual Event

CONCEPT NOTE



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<https://rp-americas.undrr.org/rp-americas-programme>

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on millions of people, causing loss of lives and devastating economic impacts. While no one remains unaffected, the most vulnerable bear the brunt of the impacts of the pandemic. The losses resulting from this global disaster have major social impacts that are manifested in different dimensions of human development and poverty. By the end of 2020, for instance, COVID-19 pushed 22 million Latin Americans into poverty, increasing the poverty rates in the region to 33.7% of the total population.¹ The impact of the pandemic on education, with close to 120 million school-age children of the region losing or at risk of losing an entire academic year, has resulted in worsening indices of inequality for Latin America and the Caribbean.² The region will therefore have to address recovery in the context of magnified structural gaps and high levels of indebtedness.³

The nature of our globally interconnected world means shocks, stresses and crises reverberate globally and are exacerbated by the interaction between climate change, ecosystem fragility, pre-existing inequality, and political or financial instability. The global health crisis has affected sectors that are critical for generating income and employment, such as tourism, and has revealed the precarious nature of the systems upon which trade, food, energy, transportation, and social safety nets depend. This in turn has challenged the capacities of countries to ensure public safety and security. The COVID-19 pandemic offers a vivid example of systemic compound risk. It shows us that the very nature and scale of risk has changed to such a degree that it has the potential to overwhelm established risk management approaches and the reach of institutions.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Americas and the Caribbean already accounted for 53% of reported global economic losses resulting from climate-related disasters.⁴ Heat waves are getting stronger, longer, and more frequent due to human-caused climate change. By June 2021, for instance, a major drought covered 38.5% of the U.S. and Puerto Rico.⁵ Furthermore, the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was the most active on record. The storms that slammed into the Gulf Coast, Central America and the Caribbean that year exhibited hallmark signs that they were exacerbated by climate change. The heaviest cost of storms, relative to the size of their economies, fall on small island states of the Caribbean. This cycle

1 ECLAC (2021). Social Panorama of Latin America 2020. March.

2 World Bank (2021). Acting Now to Protect the Human Capital of Our Children: The Costs of and Response to COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the Education Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

3 ECLAC (2021). Special Report COVID-19 No. 10, entitled Financing for development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond: Priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to the financing for development global policy agenda. March.

4 UNDRR (2018). Economic losses, poverty and disasters: 1998-2015.

5 According to the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

is not sustainable in social nor in economic terms, hence the importance of reducing disaster risk as a means of achieving resilience and sustainable development.

A multi-stakeholder dialogue and action to understand and manage systemic risks in the region is warranted. Progress towards risk-informed sustainable development will only be accelerated by incorporating systems-based approaches into the design of policies and investments across all sectors and regions, and at all levels.

Jamaica's hosting of the VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean under the theme "***Building Resilient Economies in the Americas and the Caribbean***"⁶ is aimed at raising awareness of the challenges facing Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean region and the wider Americas. This will be the first time a regional platform will be held in the Caribbean, one of the world's most vulnerable regions to extreme weather events and seismic activity. The United Nations lists Jamaica among the countries most exposed to natural hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes, landslides and flooding. The experience of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean addressing multiple-hazards, reducing disaster risk and building resilience will offer a great environment for the VII Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and will provide an excellent setting to reflect upon the advances and challenges in disaster risk reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean.

2. Background

During the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in March 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) was adopted. This global framework, along with the other global agreements adopted during 2015⁷, constitute the 2030 Agenda, which establishes comprehensive disaster risk management and its integration into development as fundamental for Member States. Global Frameworks cannot be successfully implemented in separate boxes; they require coherence in planning and in implementation. As a practical framework for dealing with risk, the **Sendai Framework is the connecting tissue** for the post-2015 international agreements. Unacknowledged, unaddressed and unknown risks sit at the heart of the global threat to sustainable development.

6 Resilient Economy is understood in this context to be the capacity of an economic system to quickly recover from a disruption. In the context of sustainable development, it refers to the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience at a local, national or regional level requires the ability to anticipate risk, assess how that risk can impact key economic assets, integrate this knowledge in risk-informed decision-making processes to avoid the creation of new risks, reduce existing risk and strengthen resilience through social, economic, cultural, political incentives and instruments.

7 Addis Ababa Action on Financing for Development, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement on Climate Change.




The Sendai Framework seeks to achieve “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries”. Achieving this result requires not only the commitment of political leaders at all levels. It is also necessary for all actors to actively participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and related actions.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), which serves as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction, supports the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework. One of the core activities is the organization of Regional and Global Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

The Sendai Framework ratified Global and Regional Platforms for DRR as multi-sectoral and broad participatory mechanisms to discuss the regional advances on the implementation of the Sendai Framework every two years. The Global and Regional Platforms are spaces where multiple stakeholders such as (national, subnational and local) governments, intergovernmental organizations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, scientific and academic institutions, private sector, donors and the media come together to share experiences and knowledge and to agree on the main regional priorities for concerted action for disaster risk reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean.

3. Regional Platforms in the Americas and the Regional Action Plan



Over the past several years, the Regional Platform sessions were hosted by [Panama](#) (2009), [Mexico](#) (2011), [Chile](#) (2012), [Ecuador](#) (2014), [Canada](#) (2017) and by [Colombia](#) (20-22 June 2018). The duration of the Regional Platform is usually three days; the latest session of the Regional Platform saw more than 1,400 participants. It is expected that the virtual modality of the VII Platform will attract a much larger number of participants. Regional Platforms usually take place every two years, alternating with Global Platforms.

Additionally, and as an integral part of the Platform, there is a Ministerial meeting that aims to convey the political commitment of countries to DRR and to the Results of the Regional Platform. The first Ministerial meeting took place in Paraguay (2016) as a stand-alone event and was thereafter integrated to the context of each Regional Platform.

During the Fifth Regional Platform in Canada in 2017, the “[Regional Action Plan](#) (RAP)⁸ for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas” was adopted. The RAP incorporates DRR priorities for the Americas region and supports countries in their efforts to build resilience as well as reduce the risk of disasters and their impacts.

The Ministerial Meeting that took place in the frame of the Sixth Regional Platform in Colombia (June 2018) identified advances and further commitments in reference to the RAP. In addition, the Sixth Regional Platform held a Special Session on the Caribbean, to showcase the specific challenges and opportunities for a risk-informed sustainable development in this sub-region. A document that articulates key actions required for the Caribbean in recovery, risk reduction and resilience was an outcome of this session, and fed into the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) Council Meeting of Ministers convened in June 2018 after the Regional Platform.

Regional Platforms should not be seen as isolated events but as benchmarks in the process of implementation of the RAP and the Sendai Framework in the Region, and should be connected to other important regional events such as the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, the Caribbean Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM), the sub regional Understanding Risk fora, the Regional International Mechanism for Humanitarian Assistance (MIAH) meetings, among other important regional convenings where disaster risk is addressed. Likewise, Regional Platforms and Global Platforms are connected and feed into each other to contribute to the advancement of the efforts to implement the Sendai Framework.

VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

It was due time for the Caribbean to host a Regional Platform given the significant contribution of its regional organizations and frameworks, such as CDEMA and the Caribbean Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy (CDM), in advancing the intent of both the Hyogo and the Sendai Framework

⁸ <http://eird.org/rp17/docs/regional-action-plan-eng.pdf>



commitments. In the context of the Caribbean, Jamaica has shown great advances in reducing disaster risk and building resilience. Jamaica also played important roles for the advancement of DRR beyond its territory. For instance, Jamaica played an active role in Global and Regional Platforms, chaired the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIWG) on Indicators and Terminology Relating to Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted numerous regional DRR-related events and is keen on enhancing the topic at all levels. By hosting the Regional Platform, Jamaica will be the first country in the Caribbean to lead the organization of a Regional Platform of the Americas and the Caribbean.

The VII Regional Platform was originally scheduled to take place in Montego Bay in June 2020 but was rescheduled due to COVID-19 considerations and will now take place *virtually*, from 1 to 4 November 2021. Notwithstanding, the leadership of Jamaica and the experience of CDEMA will contribute to place Jamaica and the Caribbean region at the centre of the discussion and the definition of the regional agenda for advancing in the efforts for disaster risk reduction for resilience, climate change adaptation and sustainable development, as called by the international agreements. It will also be an opportunity to review, jointly with the participating countries of the Americas, the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, assess the advances for building resilient economies and promote further actions and commitments towards strengthened disaster risk governance.

To this extent, Jamaica will lead a *regional consultation* on the progress towards the Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas and the Caribbean ahead of the event. This consultation will serve to assess and propose any needed adjustments to the RAP in light of the lessons learned and challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as an input for the discussions and deliberations of delegates at the Regional Platform. The VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean will be a privileged space to underline the importance of disaster risk reduction for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in these critical times, and the utmost importance of a multi-actor and multi-sectorial approach to building resilience.

One of the conclusions of the discussions at the last Global Platform, in May 2019, is that 'the current pace of implementation is not fast enough to meet the 2020 deadline for Target (e) and may delay further progress on other targets.' At the same time, this may delay further progress on other targets and jeopardize the achievement of the SDGs. A stock-taking process around the implementation of the RAP and reflections with regards to the challenges and opportunities present in the region shall consider the urgency with which the Targets of the Sendai Framework should be met.



4. Objectives and expected results

The Regional Platforms pursue three *general objectives*:

1. Present and analyze the progress achieved at the regional level regarding the comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the Sendai Framework and its targets, identifying key areas of success and areas where concerted attention is needed.
2. Taking into account the risks and impacts of COVID-19 and other disasters, review the Regional Action Plan to assess needed adjustments, define regional priorities for the following two years and identify mechanisms to promote the integration of disaster risk management within and across sectors.⁹
3. Considering the systemic nature of risk, as well as the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, climate change and other compounding risks in the region, take stock of the recovery efforts and recommend strategies to achieve resilient economies and build a risk-informed inclusive sustainable development.

As such, the role of multiple actors as agents of change in disaster risk reduction and in strengthening resilience throughout the Americas and the Caribbean shall be recognized, highlighted and strengthened. The role and leadership of community networks, the private sector, development banks, finance and planning institutions, civil society, the youth, volunteer groups, women, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous populations, migrants and groups living in conditions of high vulnerability must therefore be integrated.

The VII Regional Platform represents an opportunity for Member States to share experiences, build their capacities, transfer knowledge and show successes related to disaster risk reduction at the national and local levels. Similarly, it is expected that this session will increase the degree of participation and the commitment of the parties and stakeholders interested in the implementation of the Sendai Framework as well as in the integral management of disaster risk as a key component for sustainable development.

The Regional Platform will include an intergovernmental segment, technical sessions and parallel and special activities in which participants will have the opportunity to interact and discuss about the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework, as well as identify best practices and lessons learned

⁹ Including health, education, security, environment, infrastructure and financial sector among others.



in this area. One of the most relevant aspects will be the high-level segment, in which ministers of government and the high-level authorities of various sectors (including, *inter alia*, education, agriculture, finances, tourism) will discuss the regional advances in DRR and set the regional priorities for the following two years.

Additionally, it will include *Learning Labs*, *Innovations Platform (Marketplace)* and the *Ideas Incubator* space, where various professionals and experts in disaster risk reduction will present innovative tools and initiatives in this area. It will also provide an opportunity for regional and sub-regional intergovernmental groups to interact and strengthen working partnerships, as well as to share experiences with a view to achieving the seven targets outlined in the Sendai Framework. The private sector and finance sectorial entities will have a key role in the conversation to build resilient economies. Finally, the Platform also provides a space for strengthening the links between the agencies of the United Nations System and other regional organizations in order to ensure consistency between the Sendai Framework and other relevant global agreements.

The main **expected outcomes** of the seventh session of the Regional Platform are:

- Chairman's summary.
- Declaration from the high-level segment / Ministerial Meeting.
- Presentation of the progress made and recommendations to advance the implementation of the Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas and the Caribbean.
- Proceedings of the seventh session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean.

It is expected that the deliberations and the outcomes of the VII Regional Platform inform other regional and global mechanisms that review the progress in the achievement of the 2030 agenda, in particular the [Conference of the Parties](#) (COP 26), the [High-Level Political Forum](#) (HLPF), the [Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#), and the following [Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (23 to 28 May 2022), among other important fora.

In addition to the official outcomes above, the RP will provide an exceptional space for participants to:

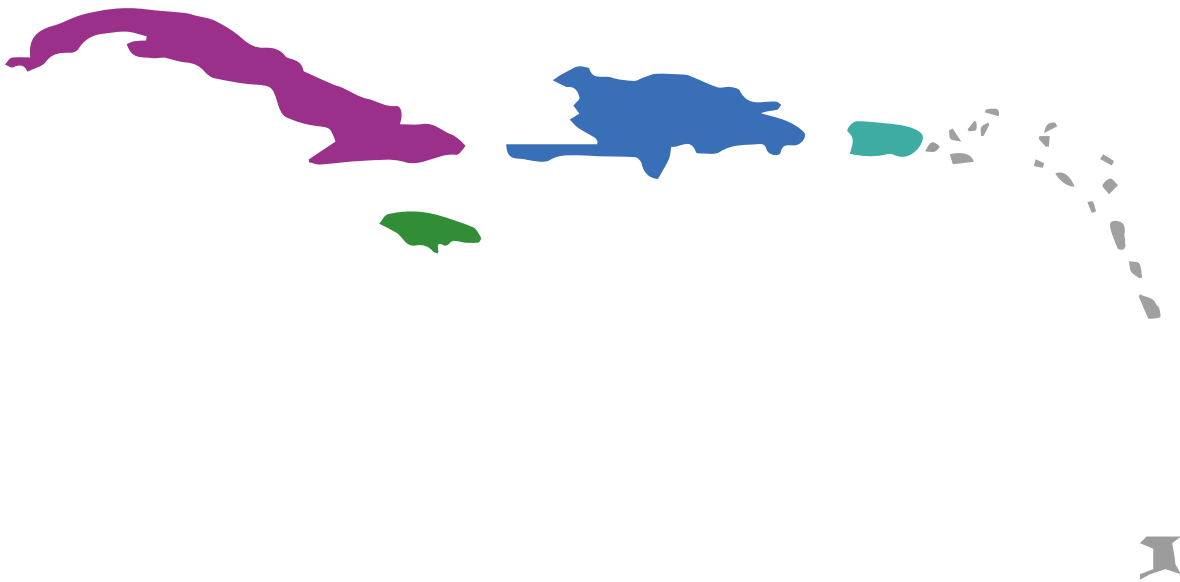
- Interact virtually with DRR leaders and decision-makers from the public and the private sectors, including members of the science and technology community, the business community, the academia, civil society, community leaders, and government representatives from across the region.

- ✓ Be exposed to the latest thinking in DRR and have the opportunity to learn from experiences from across the region.
- ✓ Forge new alliances and explore new partnership opportunities with the hundreds of organizations and agencies present.
- ✓ Showcase their own experiences and learning in the "Ideas Incubator" space.

5. Media

The Web Page of the RP21 contains updated information about the event. It can be accessed here: <https://rp-americas.undrr.org/rp-americas-programme>

Interested parties throughout the Americas & the Caribbean can also be part of this conversation by using the #SendaiAmericas hashtag online.





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