AMERICAS+
CARIBBEAN
VIII PLATFORM FOR
DISASTER RISK
REDUCTION

URUGUAY
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KEY MESSAGES RP23 & DRR

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

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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, localities, the private sector, civil society, 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 agreed in March 2017 in Montreal, Canada, and updated under the auspices of the Jamaica regional Platform meeting, in November 2021.

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Uruguay has proposed the topics of science, technology, and early warning systems, under the title "Science and Technology for the Comprehensive Management of Disaster Risk", as central for the RP23. The role of science and technology in the comprehensive management of disaster risk, particularly regarding its feasibility, development, financing and implementation must be highlighted. The Sendai Framework and the current Regional Action Plan both 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, prevention and mitigation, 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 crucial.

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As a society, we need to strengthen the development and dissemination of national and local science-based methodologies, tools and technical assistance to facilitate the timely implementation of prevention, mitigation, adaptation and preparedness measures. Similarly, approaches for identifying, recording and reporting the direct and indirect systemic impacts associated with disasters should be strengthened through online platforms that are designed for this purpose and adopted to monitor the progress of the Sendai Framework.

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The Americas and the Caribbean are one of the most backwards regions in terms of investment in scientific and technological development, with stark contrasts between countries in the north and south. While countries such as the United States and Canada are in the top five worldwide as regards investment in research and development (R&D) , the rest of the region 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 downgrade the contribution of science and technology to the formulation of public policies and national and local budgets.

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The promotion of technologies should be presented as a transdisciplinary complement to existing knowledge systems and not as an exogenous package that competes with previous "technological frameworks".

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In addition to boosting support and resources for S&T in DRR, it is important to examine the existing contexts, structural and conjunctural, that prevent policy makers and decision makers from making an enhanced and better use of already-available scientific research or lead to the ignorance of science in decisions made by public and private decision makers.

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Disaster risk reduction requires a multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, taking into account, amongst other factors, sex and gender, age and disability. Moreover, easily accessible, up-to-date, comprehensible, science-based, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by traditional knowledge, is required. Countries need to be able to better assess the risk associated with cascading, compounding hazards and complex crises, through access to better and relevant data and by making data more readily available to implement long-term strategies. A more complete and thorough assessment of biological, environmental and technological hazards must be achieved, including those related to future shocks or dangers that emerge as new technologies surface or paradigms shift due to human and societal forces, known as frontier risks.

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Understanding disaster risk is challenging not only for S&TC, but for all relevant DRR stakeholders. It requires a comprehensive grasp of complex interconnections and interdependencies between distinct hazards, as well as the intricate dimensions of vulnerability and exposure – which include disaster root causes and disaster risk drivers.

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As technology development scales up, technologies for all aspects of disaster and climate risk management would also need to scale up and be widely adopted, making disaster and climate risk management smarter, more efficient, affordable, and accurate.

DRR in our future

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Disaster risk reduction should be integrated into the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to help overcome the protracted and recurrent nature of many crises and strengthen local and global food security. Countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises warrant greater attention. Joint risk assessments and activities and early warning systems, using the most up to date science and technology, supported by flexible, predictable and multi-year financing for disaster risk reduction, can foster mutually reinforcing and more resilient outcomes for disaster risk reduction, climate action, and sustaining peace.

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Climate change is now increasingly scientifically associated with more frequent, extreme, and unpredictable climate-related hazards, making investment in early warning systems (EWS) more urgent than ever. EWS must cover multiple hazards. Cyclones, storms, floods and tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and even earthquakes, have traditionally been given increasing attention, but more attention needs to be paid nowadays to heatwaves, wildfires, droughts, sandstorms, , biotic hazards, landslides, technological accidents, pest infestations, amongst others.

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It is not enough for an early warning system to correctly identify an evolving hazard. It must also ensure that the population, livelihoods and economic and social sectors at risk can receive the alert, understand it, and most importantly, act on it. Hence, an early warning must trigger early action that is well prepared and tested. In the case of rapid onset hazards, this sometimes means evacuating and seeking appropriate shelter. Early warning systems must be multi-hazard, end-to-end and people-centered.

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People are affected differently during disasters. Persons with disabilities are often disproportionately affected and have different and uneven levels of resilience and capacity to recover. The failure to adequately include persons with disabilities in the world's efforts to reduce the risks of disasters has dramatic consequences. Due to inaccessible disaster preparedness plans, systemic discrimination, and widespread poverty, persons with disabilities are often left behind in relief and response efforts, needless to say in preimpact prevention, mitigation and preparedness activities. This calls for a participatory and human rights-based approach to include all under a principle of "nothing about us without us" in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation.

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Effective disaster risk reduction requires meaningful and diverse participation, engagement and leadership, through an inclusive and accessible, all-of-society approach. Amongst the more important considerations it must consider how gender dynamics influence disaster impacts. When women's capacities, knowledge and skills are utilized in disaster risk reduction efforts, we will all benefit. We can accelerate progress towards achieving the mutually reinforcing goals of gender equality and the prevention and reduction of disaster risks by ensuring disaster risk reduction efforts are gender-responsive and promote and support women's empowerment and leadership.

Policies and programmes must also be supported by an understanding of gender dimensions of disaster risk. Greater investment in women-led civil society organizations and networks should be facilitated for their meaningful participation in and in influencing decision-making.

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The resilience of indigenous people, their ancestral knowledge in the management of natural resources and the reduction of disaster risk can be considered as innovative practices that can contribute positively to the circular economy, the ecological transition and the consolidation of clean and safe energies, all key factors in reducing disaster risk and serving the affected populations. There is a need to promote traditional, local and indigenous knowledge and wisdom that have been tested and improved through generations across the world to further strengthen scientific practices and know-how and enhance efforts on awareness raising and education.

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Provisions to address disaster displacement and other forms of human mobility (such as participation and protection of migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, climate migration, planned relocation) should be included in national, local and regional disaster risk reduction policies and strategies, as done by some countries. The risk of disaster displacement should be assessed and reduced, including through addressing the underlying causes of such displacement and preparing for its adverse consequences.

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Climate change and its effects will have a major impact on the current and future livelihoods of young people. Educating youth and partnering with them on disaster risk management ensures that their participation in resilience-building actions is extended to policy-making with intergenerational impact. Various studies show that children and young people can be great promoters of actions against climate change in their different groups and communities. Empowering young people is the world's best chance of building resilient communities as they comprise the largest and most interconnected generation in history.

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Infrastructure resilience is the cornerstone of sustainable development. Understanding of risk to infrastructure and particularly services it provides, together with land-use planning, should be key considerations. Industry-specific tools, such as rating standards to guide investment decisions in infrastructure, including in real estate, are useful for the development of sector-specific standards. The resilience of critical services provided by national infrastructure has never been more important. There is strong evidence that investment into infrastructure resilience is economically justified.

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Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation have the common objective of reducing vulnerability and enhancing capacity and resilience. A comprehensive disaster and climate risk management approach is key to making the shift towards integrated plans and policies, supported by shared risk understanding and inclusive institutions.

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Economic growth and community well-being are directly impacted by disasters. As key members of communities and drivers of growth, private sector companies have an important role to play in reducing disaster risk. As threats to communities and economic livelihoods increase, the private sector continues to grow its understanding of where to adapt and respond. Actions on Disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, resilience and economic sustainability should be locally focused and culturally bounded to make effective impact. For that, people at local level need to be included as part of participatory processes for building resilience.

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As stated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 the private sector is key in making business and communities more resilient. Consequently, the private sector will play a key role in returning to a new normality, as they are bridges connecting actors along value chains from customers, suppliers, investors, etc. In this light, increased cooperation and peer-to-peer support, as evidenced so far, will help companies, particularly SMEs, to bounce back, while establishing prevention strategies to better protect their employees and operations against future disasters.

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Potentially transformative lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic must be applied before the window of opportunity closes. Current approaches to recovery and reconstruction are not sufficiently effective in protecting development gains nor in building back better, greener and more equitably. There is a need to encourage an adaptive, responsive disaster risk management system with multi-stakeholder collaboration accompanied by empathy, solidarity, cooperation, and a spirit of volunteerism, in particular to address inequity.

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