Position of the Americas and the Caribbean
High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework

Presented by Uruguay as host country of the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean (RP23)

The current document puts forward the unified regional position of the Americas and the Caribbean to be presented at the High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Midterm Review of implementation of the Sendai Framework (MTR SF) at the United Nations General Assembly on 18 and 19 May 2023. This position is the result of discussions with Member States within the framework of the VIII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 28 February through 2 March of 2023. The process for developing this position involved an evaluation of the advances in the Regional Action Plan in keeping with the overall findings of the MTR SF process in the region.

The road towards 2030 and beyond: Proposed recommendations and actions

The Americas and Caribbean is one of the most broadly diverse regions in the world in terms of its topography, geography, biodiversity and cultural diversity. However, it has been building vulnerabilities in multiple dimensions, which show large asymmetries compared to more developed regions such as North America, and even between countries in the same region, although all are suffering from the increased intensity and frequency of climate change related disasters. Although this diversity contributes to the region’s wealth and vitality, it also adds to its complexity.

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most disaster-prone in the world. Between 1997 and 2017, one out of four disasters in the world and 53% of the economic losses due to climate-related disasters occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean. Climate change, a threat to survival, has significantly impacted the lives and livelihoods of the people of the Americas and gives urgency to the need to build resilience to minimize disaster impacts. Loss and damages have been acute in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are on the frontline of the devastating consequences of climate change and, consequently, its development prospects are increasingly jeopardised by the intensification of climate crises. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had greater economic impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean than in other regions of the world.

In our region, the review process of Sendai Framework implementation between 2015 and 2022 led to notable findings in terms of achievements and challenges. With regards to the latter, a number of technical, legal, political, institutional, cultural, financial and structural issues were identified that call for urgent action. It is evident that much remains to be done to achieve the objective of leaving no one behind, particularly in the context of

1 UNDRR (2021), Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
2 UNDRR (2023), Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 Implementation for Latin America and the Caribbean, MTR SF-LAC (UNDRR)
the current climate crisis and, above all, two years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, delaying progress, increasing existing problems and generating significant setbacks in several aspects, both in the region and worldwide.

Disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management must be taken out of the exclusive realm of technical and accrued expertise and, recognising ancestral knowledge, incorporated as an essential element of sustainable development management. This will also require forward-looking multi-sectoral, multidimensional, multi-level and territorial governance which recognizes ecosystem approach and promotes networks and alliances.

Similarly, structural changes pivot from the traditional focus which was limited to identifying and responding to risks and move towards a systemic and comprehensive approach to disaster risk that responds to the components of compensatory, corrective and prospective risk management are needed. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency have provided compelling evidence of how risk accentuates - and is accentuated by - multiple socioeconomic factors such as poverty, social and economic inequality, gender inequality, unplanned urbanization, as well as environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

In this context, an intersectional approach should be applied to bring coherence to the implementation of the global agendas and to facilitate consensus-building that recognizes both the systemic nature of risk and the need to create capabilities, networks and systems, in order to advance in an evolving agenda that is increasingly urgent and alarming.

Taking this comprehensive approach as a starting point, the recommendations contained herein are cross-cutting through all seven targets of the Sendai Framework and grouped in five categories: (i) Essential Actions, (ii) Technical Actions, (iii) Legal, Political and Institutional Actions, (iv) Cultural and Social Actions, and (v) Financing and Investing Actions.

**Essential Actions**

Latin America and the Caribbean is an extremely unequal region. With 32.4% of the population of the region living in 2021 in poverty, uneven access to basic needs such as food and nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, health and education services or affordable and safe housing is evidence that many people are falling behind the Sustainable Development Goals. This is aggravated by unregulated urban sprawl and the impact on essential livelihoods such as agriculture and food security. In addition to this, political strife and social conflict in several countries is adding severe strains to an already difficult situation.

The Americas and Caribbean region has made progress in promoting a multi-sectoral approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). This trend needs to continue and be complemented with investment and financing strategies that align DRR efforts with sustainable development and climate action.

The linkages between climate change and DRR, as well as fiscal instruments and incentives, are prominent areas where substantial support is recommended. As the region
and the world rightly move towards nature-based solutions for energy, transportation, and communications, it is imperative that comprehensive analyses be undertaken on the growing use of such technologies, both in relation to the opportunities they present but also to ensure equity and adequate measures to mitigate potential emerging risks.

Promoting technical structures and capacities for interdisciplinary, integrated and multisectoral assessment, planning and decision-making processes is also a priority. This is a major challenge, requiring the support of different multilateral agencies and offices, especially those related with climate change and disaster risk reduction.

**Technical Actions**

Research and the generation of knowledge should be continuously promoted with the purpose of understanding the root causes and drivers of risk as well as for impact forecasting and advancing the implementation of Multihazard Early Warning Systems within the context of the Early Warnings for All Initiative. At the same time, the use of information and technology services should serve for the modeling of future risk and the adoption of informed decisions. International cooperation should be subject to the needs as defined by the countries, oriented to the transfer of information and the promotion of innovative and appropriate practices and take into consideration the special vulnerabilities of SIDS. Also, national and regional agendas or strategies that prioritize the areas of knowledge according to the characteristics, level of progress and needs of each country and region should be promoted.

Strengthening the articulation between the various communications strategies, which should be approached from a differential or intersectional focus, as well as strengthening the interoperability and exchange among information systems. Special attention should be given to monitoring and reporting processes regarding national advances on the commitments towards the global agendas and to promote articulation among such agendas, particularly with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework.

The conditions of land use and occupation must be improved, taking into account factors of existing and future hazards, exposure and vulnerability, or in other words the conditions of existing or probable risk, its specificities and how such elements interrelate. Similarly, balancing the relationship between cities with rural areas and ecosystems, as well as the inclusion of comprehensive risk management criteria in land-use planning, is key to avoid increasing communities' disaster risk.

Efforts should be made to review building codes and standards, zoning regulations and urban planning in view of systemic risk, together with the creation of mechanisms for the private sector and academia to support research and development in this area. Nature-based solutions should be explored, as well as local, indigenous and traditional solutions, mindful of current animal husbandry practices, alternative agro-industrial practices and
family farming, along with the entire food cycle, from production to consumption, enabling increased resilience and reduced vulnerability.

In order to build resilience at the local level, local as well as national and regional initiatives and capacities should be promoted and strengthened, risk reduction agendas at the local level should be adopted and implemented, and the sharing of good practices, preparedness and training should be enhanced. Such initiatives should be led jointly by government entities and local communities. The development of green and blue infrastructures should also be promoted, particularly in the fringes of towns and cities, in order to improve resilience to adverse events of hydrometeorological origin and to strengthen the ecological functionality of these ecosystems, both by favoring natural processes and by facilitating community contact with a diverse natural environment.

Capacity and capability for response and recovery should be strengthened at the national and regional levels where appropriate to deliver more efficient and effective response and reduce the recovery timeframes.

Truly embracing the multi-hazard approach as called for by the Sendai Framework has been a notable challenge in breaking the sectorial divide in the region’s DRR agenda. Building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the current climate emergency, greater investment and focus is needed on understanding the underlying factors of existing and emerging health issues and the complex interactions with other hazards. Efforts must be made to consciously integrate biological hazards into all risk assessment tools and methodologies at national and sub-national levels, including their direct and indirect effects and how they can increase the vulnerability of people, livelihoods and systems. Recommendations in this regard include ensuring that health-related risks are identified and adequately considered in the development of national disaster risk assessments and strategies, linking epidemiological surveillance systems and systems for early detection and identification of disease outbreaks to national DRR strategies, national adaptation plans, as well as integrating them into multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS).

Finally, it is necessary to deepen the decentralization of technical and financial capacities that provide the necessary institutional strengths at the regional, subnational or local level for disaster risk management and reduction. In order to achieve this, the ‘democratization’ of access to information made possible through the internet and mobile devices -with technology at the hands of all- is a bridge to new possibilities and innovation. Special attention should be placed on promoting the development of methodologies for the generation of statistical data that can ensure the systematic collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data.

**Legal, political and institutional actions**

Moving from a focus centered upon disaster response to a more holistic vision of risk reduction through corrective and prospective disaster risk management is a persisting and top priority. To achieve this, coordinated and articulated collective action is needed, aiming to develop, enhance, apply and enforce DRR laws, policies, strategies, plans and instruments -both at the national and local levels- supported by institutional arrangements.
and national systems with presence on the ground and with a mandate stemming from the highest level.

It is essential to promote a shared vision of risk in which all issues associated with risks and disasters, including risk reduction, should be managed by all entities playing their role whether government, non-governmental or civil society including the private sector, is essential. This would favor the development of more comprehensive strategies, mechanisms and regulations that promote an effective articulation of DRR with issues of environmental management and natural resource management, development planning, land use and land use planning, financing and public and private investment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and human rights, including the right of access to a clean and healthy environment, among others.

Disaster risk governance should be institutionalized in all sectors as part of their mission and supported at the highest level of authority. The decentralization of this same governance and the empowerment of stakeholders should be encouraged through the exchange of experiences involving both society as a whole and the various decision-makers. This means regulating inclusion and active participation in DRR strategies in line with global commitments on human rights, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is also a call to strengthen the organizational scheme of platforms, roundtables, or national DRR systems, as mechanisms to ensure articulation between governmental and non-governmental actors.

In terms of transparency, it is necessary to strengthen accountability measures in the building of resilience and the tools that promote risk management. Such measures should go beyond specific sectors and leverage public-private partnerships, recognizing that all risk is, by nature, systemic. Similarly, it is crucial to develop or enhance actions and mechanisms that facilitate access to information as well as deepening the synergies between governments, civil society, academia and the general population, strengthening existing community spaces for participation and clarifying the role of mechanisms for dialogue between public actors and society.

**Cultural and social actions**

Promoting and adopting behavioral changes in the region strengthening initiatives that contribute to the energy transition towards environmental sustainability is key, with the greater purpose of finding alternative solutions for food systems, transportation and energy.

Generating and strengthening the organizational, technical and financial conditions that guarantee the active participation of civil society organizations is crucial. A potential tool for achieving this is the online system for monitoring the implementation of the Sendai Framework, which could provide an accountability function, be it linked to regional and national reports or independently.

The education sector -from elementary schools to universities- should be integrally involved in raising awareness and generating knowledge on DRR, through including DRR
in academic curricula at all levels. The "Safe Schools" initiative is a good example to increase capacities and strengthen the resilience of the scholastic community.

Developing and expanding disaster risk communication strategies is also a key action to inform, promote and strengthen scientific, social, economic and political cooperation, aiming to achieve an effective systemic risk governance. Specific actions designed to strengthen the dissemination of the Sendai Framework at the institutional level and among civil society should be developed.

Youth have an essential stake in accelerating implementation of the Sendai Framework and in boosting this necessary paradigm shift and should be integrated through disaster risk governance mechanisms. They are undoubtedly key drivers for ensuring an agenda of coherence with other global agreements.

Greater involvement of the business and industry sectors (private and public) should be sought, especially in risk-informed development planning, understanding of systemic risk and investment in disaster risk reduction with a view to creating economic opportunities. To this effect, it is essential to promote public-private coordination initiatives and to establish regulations that control their role in risk creation and assessment, as well as regarding the formulation of business continuity plans.

**Actions on financing and investing**

Current DRR financing mechanisms focused on risk retention and risk transfer tools should be complemented with actions that increase knowledge and information on risk, with incentives and disincentives, thus promoting the inclusion of risk in decisions surrounding public and private investments. This should be done within a framework in which the design of DRR strategies is integrated into planning and development processes, going beyond aspects related to emergency response and short-term decision-making. Similarly, access to DRR financing, investment, and planning by local governments and social protection mechanisms should be prioritized.

The region should actively seek ways to capitalize on existing and emerging global and regional opportunities, including funding opportunities for DRR to be understood as a strategy for addressing climate change and similarly funding opportunities for climate change should be leveraged to address DRR.

Improving the allocation of and tracking of resources for DRR in State budgets is paramount, thus promoting risk-sensitive investments that are supported by cost-benefit analyses and other relevant evaluation techniques, demonstrating the importance and advantages of investing in reduction, as well as the savings that this entails when faced with disasters or emergencies.

There is a strong need to widen the scope of banking and insurance products, through public and private disaster risk insurance schemes as well as innovative products and services that guarantee protection and vulnerability reduction, especially among populations that, due to factors of inequality, are more likely to be vulnerable and marginalized, such as women, young people, older persons, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced persons, as well as people employed informally or by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.