

Conveners:



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر



Cruz Roja Panameña

Host:



AMERICAS IDRL FORUM PANAMA CITY, APRIL 23-24, 2007

International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL)



A Forum to improve regulatory frameworks for the facilitation and regulation of international assistance

It is indisputable that when international assistance is needed to address the consequences of a major disaster, it should arrive quickly and should be facilitated by rules allowing for effective operations. Moreover, international aid should be well coordinated and of high quality. Are the current legal frameworks at the national, regional and international levels sufficient to ensure this ideal?



In April 2007, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Panamanian Red Cross, in collaboration with the Government of Panama as host, will convene a regional forum on international disaster response laws, rules and principles to address this question.

The Forum will gather approximately one hundred representatives from governments, international and regional organizations, national Red Cross societies, non-governmental organizations and other experts to explore the most common regulatory problems and the best solutions.



Objectives of the Forum

raise awareness of existing international law on international disaster response among government officials, humanitarian actors, academics and other stakeholders,

identify strengths and gaps in the scope and implementation of current international, regional and national legal frameworks,

stimulate dialogue on ways forward to increase cooperation and address gaps and problem areas, and

develop recommendations for the 18th Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross and the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.





THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

In the last thirty years, nearly 3,000 natural or technological disasters have struck the Americas, causing over 300,000 deaths and affecting over 183 million people. The year 2005 alone saw over 27 named storms, three volcanic eruptions, a drought and an earthquake, resulting in international operations in more than a dozen countries. Although efforts are ongoing to prevent and reduce the effects of disaster in the region, it is clear that there is a high probability that the need for international assistance will only continue in the coming years.

In the last few decades, many states in the region have strengthened their national legislation on disaster response as well as their regional cooperation, for example through the creation of CEPREDENAC, CDERA, and CAPRADE and the development of the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance (currently ratified by only three countries). However, a number of common practical problems in the initiation, operation and regulation of international assistance remain which seriously diminish its effectiveness and unnecessarily increase its cost.



THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

In 2003, the XXVIIIth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent concluded that a better understanding, clarification, implementation and development of the norms, laws and principles applicable to international disaster assistance would help to facilitate and improve its coordination, speed and quality.

In 2005, an international conference adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action, which committed all states to further develop their legal frameworks for the prevention and preparation for disasters, including the preparation for international assistance when it is needed.

In 2006 and 2007, the Federation and its partners will convene forums in each region to explore these issues and develop recommendations for the international community. These recommendations will be presented to the XVIIIth Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross in June 2007 and the XXXth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007.

SOME TYPICAL PROBLEMS IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER OPERATIONS



Personnel

Refusal or delay in granting visas or work permits

Failure to recognize foreign professional qualifications for medical staff

Goods and Operations

Customs delays, duties or restrictions on humanitarian assistance

Difficulties in obtaining a domestic legal status

Quality and Coordination

Failure to adhere to minimal humanitarian standards

Failure to respect the role of domestic actors

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FORUM



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