

The OAS General Assembly endorses the *Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance* at its XLII ordinary meeting, in the city of Cochabamba of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.



During his inauguration speech, Secretary General José Miguel Insulza stated: “I believe that a great step forward has been taken with the adoption of ***the Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance***, prepared by the Working Group of OAS member States. In that it contains concrete suggestions related to risk management and the coordination of international humanitarian assistance within a framework of national sovereignty and with active citizen participation, this Plan will serve as our foundation for furthering the agreements on this topic reached at the

Summit...”

[Full speech](#)

The *Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance* was elaborated by the Permanent Council and CEPCIDI Joint Working Group on “Existing Mechanisms for Disaster Prevention and Response and Humanitarian Assistance among the Member States”, established in 2009 by mandate of the General Assembly, resolution AG/RES. 2492 (XXXIX-O/09). Such resolution instructed “the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development to convene a meeting to begin the process of joint assessment of existing legislative and coordination mechanisms in the natural disaster and humanitarian assistance areas, which takes into account coordination efforts that can be made by the Organization, and to consider the advisability of updating them, presenting a proposal for action ...”

Under the chairmanship of Mrs. Ana Pastorino, Alternate Representative of the Republic of Argentina, and the vice-chairmanship of the delegations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and the technical support of the OAS General Secretariat, through our Department of Sustainable Development and its Risk Management and Adaptation to Climate Change section (RISK-MACC), during 2010, five technical meetings were held, with participation of 37 experts and government officials, experts from the Inter-American System and international, regional and subregional organizations, including experts of our SEDI/DSD.

The *Inter-American Plan for Disaster Prevention and Response and the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance* represents a management tool for the hemisphere that aims at coordinating the efforts of member States in order to overcome the main challenges of disaster mitigation and prevention, preparedness and response, and of the international humanitarian assistance. The Joint Working Group, in 2010, had already identified these challenges in the document “Assessment and Course of Action Suggested.” (GTC/DAH-12/11 rev. 3)

Perhaps the most relevant conclusion expressed by the experts during the technical meetings was that the success of a coordinated action for disaster preparedness and response, and humanitarian assistance would depend on the capacity of the assisted countries to identify their needs and manage the response and humanitarian assistance operations, and on their knowledge about competent actors, institutions and decision-making processes. Likewise, it would depend on the knowledge that the assisting States and humanitarian organizations have about the emergency preparedness and response national systems, their legislation and regulations, and about the procedures for emergency situations.

One of the most important challenges is revealed by the evidence of a new humanitarian assistance scenario, characterized by a growing offer of assistance from countries within the region – intra-regional assistance; an increasing number of disasters of larger proportions; and, given the schemes of intra-regional trade and national economies inter-dependencies, an increase of the transboundary impacts of such disasters. This new scenario is completed with a growing international humanitarian assistance offer by non-traditional cooperation agencies and NGOs. This new scenario demands a tighter and more effective cooperation from the international assistance, and brings to the surface the fact that all States, regardless their economy scale, geographic area and population, need to be prepared to receive and provide assistance. The Inter-American Plan approved at the XLII General Assembly highlights the *Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR)* as the permanent mechanism to strengthen inter-regional coordination. Also, the Inter-American Plan stresses the importance of the [Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation \(INDM\)](#) and the need to strengthen both, the Network and the Committee.

Finally, the Inter-American Plan highlights the need to strengthen the Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Platform lead by the Regional Office for the Americas of the secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, UNISDR Americas, jointly with the OAS General Secretariat, through SEDI/DSD. The Inter-American Plan expresses that this should be accomplished “taking into account the actions of sub-regional instances and the participation of the General Secretariat of the OAS as a partner of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat.” The [Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation \(INDM\)](#) offers the ideal mechanism for establishing the coordination among the subregional inter-governmental organizations, such as the Executive Secretariat of CEPREDENAC, in SICA, the Executive Directorate of CDEMA, in CARICOM, and CAPRADE and REHU, among others. SEDI/DSD invites these organizations to act as INDM Regional Focal Points, and fosters the signing and implementation of cooperation agreements that seek to support the implementation of subregional policies in Risk Management, such as the Central-American Policy on Integral Risk Management (PCGIR in its Spanish acronym) and the “*Comprehensive approach for disaster management in the Caribbean (CDM)*.”