

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL  
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION (IACNDR)

(2021)

This report contains a summary of the activities carried out by the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disasters Reduction (IACNDR) during the months of January to December 2021. It has been prepared by the Office of the Assistant Secretary General (OASG) with support from the Department of Sustainable Development (SEDI/DSD) of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development.

I. CONSTITUTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IACNDR

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disasters Reduction (IACNDR) acts as the principal forum of the Inter-American system for analyzing issues related to natural and other disasters, including the prevention and mitigation of their effects, in coordination with the governments of member states; competent national, regional, and international organizations; and nongovernmental organizations.

The IACNDR also seeks to harmonize efforts and facilitate the exchange of information on the actions taken and ongoing, as well as on the response plans of the institutions of the Inter-American system, sub-regional and international partners, OAS Member States, and Permanent Observers in response to natural and other disasters.

Additionally, the IACNDR seeks to strengthen hemispheric actions to achieve maximum international cooperation in support of national and/or regional efforts for timely prevention, preparedness, early warning, response, vulnerability reduction, emergency care, mitigation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

It also provides advisory services to the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM) in all matters pertaining to emergency aid, including social, humanitarian, material, technical, and financial assistance to member states pursuant to the Statutes of that Fund, and provides advisory and coordination services under the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance.

The IACNDR is comprised of the Chair of the OAS Permanent Council, the Secretary General of the OAS, the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, the President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Director General of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Secretary General of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), the President of the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Director General of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), the Chair of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), and the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

In accordance with Article 5 of the IACNDR Statute adopted by the OAS General Assembly through Resolution AG / RES. 2955 (L-O / 20), the functions and responsibilities of the Chair of the IACNDR, Assistant Secretary General Nestor Mendez, in representation of the Secretary General, are as follows:

- a. Convenes the IACNDR;
- b. Represents the IACNDR before the other organs and agencies of the OAS;
- c. Directs and coordinates the meetings organized by the IACNDR with other agencies responsible for or associated with matters related to the prevention and mitigation of the effects of natural disasters;
- d. Coordinates performance of the IACNDR's functions;
- e. Invites member states with voice but without vote and, when necessary, invites permanent observers, and representatives of national, sub regional, regional, and international organizations and mechanisms to participate in IACNDR meetings with voice but without vote;
- f. Submits and presents an annual report on its activities to the Permanent Council;
- g. Assists in coordinating the cooperation among OAS member states, when invited to do so by the interested parties, and assists States affected by a natural disaster in notifying OCHA;
- h. Performs such duties as required under Article VII of the Statutes of the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM), and
- i. Solicits voluntary contributions for the purposes established in these Statutes and in accordance with Article 13.

## II. ACTIVITIES OF THE IACNDR

### 1. MEETINGS

Pursuant to OAS General Assembly Resolution AG/RES. 2647 (XLI-O/11), paragraph 5.e, which stipulates the necessity “to activate the IACNDR in the event of emergency situations requiring international assistance in the region,” the Assistant Secretary General, in his capacity as Chair of the IACNDR convened several meetings in response to impending and/or in the aftermath of large-scale disaster emergencies in the region.

#### Eruption of the La Soufrière Volcano, Saint Vincent and The Grenadines

The IACNDR held a virtual meeting on April 15, 2021, to address the situation in Saint Vincent and The Grenadines in the wake of the eruption of the La Soufrière Volcano. The meetings sought to facilitate the exchange of information on the actions taken and response plans put in place by the agencies of the Inter-American System, sub-regional and international partners, as well as OAS Member States and Permanent Observers.

The Committee received an update on the situation from the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS, H.E. Lou-Anne Gaylene Gilchrist. Additionally, the Inter-American agencies represented at the meeting provided an overview of respective relief efforts on the ground. Presentations were made by Ms. Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary of the Executive

Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI); Mr. Gregg Rawlins, Representative in Saint Lucia of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); Dr. Leonardo Hernandez, Unit Chief of Emergency Operations of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); Dr. Lieutenant General Luciano José Penna, Chairman of the Council of Delegates of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB); H.E. Marina Cardelli, President of the White Helmets Commission of Argentina; and Ms. Yasmin Odlum, Specialist of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines transmitted information regarding the supplies needed to address the disaster brought about by the volcanic eruption and subsequently, at their request, a summary of assistance pledged by Permanent Observers, Permanent Missions and Inter-American Agencies at the meeting of the Committee was prepared and circulated.

In addition, the Office of the Assistant Secretary General coordinated several meetings to foster collaboration among different Inter-American agencies, international organizations, and the private sector for post-disaster assistance to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This included a meeting held with representatives of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) to address the need for testing samples of volcanic ash from the recent volcanic eruptions and determining the nutrient levels of the ash to ascertain whether it contained any toxic chemicals, in particular heavy metals. Participants included IICA Director General, Mr. Manuel Otero; Ms. Beverly Best, Director of External and Institutional Relations of IICA; H.E. Lou-Anne Gaylene Gilchrist, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Mrs. Sandy Peters-Phillips, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Ms. Michelle Forbes, Director of the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO); Mr. Omari Seitu Williams, Minister-Counselor, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Ms. Sharen M. Wynne, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Assistant Secretary General, H.E. Nestor Mendez; Chief of Staff of the Assistant Secretary General, H.E. La Celia Prince; Mr. Pablo Gonzalez, Principal Specialist in Disaster Risk Management of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (DSD); and representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary General.

Another meeting was held with representatives from Coalmont Energy Management, a United States-based engineering firm specializing in complex electrical systems. The constructive discussions yielded an agreement for a team to be deployed to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to assess the situation on the ground and provide assistance with respect to the immediate infrastructure needs on the island. Participants at the meeting included Mr. Shaun McCutchen, CEO of Coalmont Energy Management; Mr. Brian Ellis, Coalmont Energy Management, H.E. Lou-Anne Gaylene Gilchrist, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Mr. Thornley Myers from St. Vincent and the Grenadines Electricity Services Ltd; Mr. Omari Seitu Williams, Minister-Counselor, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Ms. Sharen M. Wynne, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Assistant Secretary General, H.E. Nestor Mendez; Chief of Staff of the Assistant Secretary General, H.E. La Celia Prince; Mr. Pablo Gonzalez, Principal Specialist in Disaster Risk Management of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (DSD); and representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary General.

Furthermore, at the request of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, the Office of the Assistant Secretary General coordinated a meeting to address the critical situation of the health sector in the country in the aftermath of the natural disaster. In attendance were representatives

from Northwell Health, a nonprofit integrated healthcare network that is New York State's largest healthcare provider, Dr. Yves Duroseau, Chairman of Emergency Medicine, Lenox Hill Hospital; Dr. Asha Samuels, Physician Assistant Specialist from Northwell Health; and representatives from the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment of the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. H.E Lou-Anne Gaylene Gilchrist, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Mr. Omari Seitu Williams, Minister-Counselor, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Ms. Sharen M. Wynne, Alternate Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the OAS; Assistant Secretary General, H.E. Nestor Mendez; Chief of Staff of the Assistant Secretary General, H.E. La Celia Prince; Mr. Pablo Gonzalez, Principal Specialist in Disaster Risk Management of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (DSD); and representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary General also participated.

### Haiti Earthquake

In the wake of the tragic earthquake which struck Haiti on Saturday, August 14, 2021, the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disasters Reduction (IACNDR) held a meeting on August 16, 2021, with Member States, Permanent Observers and key partners to discuss an immediate response to the disaster. The meeting, convened by the Assistant Secretary General, allowed H.E. Bocchit Edmond, Interim Representative of Haiti to the OAS to present the immediate needs and a preliminary report of the aftermath, as well as the points of contact for receiving offers of assistance. Permanent observers and OAS Member States, as well as specialized agencies of the Inter-American System, namely the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), and the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), shared their response and plans for further assistance.

The meeting facilitated collaboration among the members of the international community and contributed to minimizing overlaps and overburden on the Government of Haiti. Presentations were made by Dr. Leonardo Hernandez, Unit Chief of Emergency Operations (PAHO); Ms. Cédrelle Alexis Jean Louis, Haiti Country Director (PADF); Ms. Beverly Best, Director of External and Institutional Relations (IICA); Vice Admiral Alexandre Rabello de Faria, Chair (IADB); Ms. Alejandra Mora Mora, Executive Secretary (CIM); and Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary (SEDI).

The Office of the Assistant Secretary General prepared a summary compilation of assistance pledged by OAS Member States, Permanent Observers, and members of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction in support of relief efforts undertaken in Haiti following the earthquake. This document was updated and revised several times, and subsequently circulated as a document of the Permanent Council CP/INF.9090/21 "Inter-American Response to the Earthquake." In addition, the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) established a virtual situation room, compiling data and information on the aftermath of the disaster.

## 2. OUTREACH EFFORTS

During the Fiftieth Regular Session of the General Assembly, held on October 2020, the Member States adopted Resolution AG / RES. 2955 (L-O / 20), "Advancing Hemispheric Initiatives on Integral Development: Promoting Resilience," which amended the Statutes of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disasters Reduction (IACNDR) to further advance the harmonization of bilateral and

multilateral efforts and facilitation of cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders. In so doing, it granted the Chair of the Committee the authority to invite international organizations, international cooperation agencies, international financial institutions, regional development banks and competent regional inter-governmental organizations to join the Committee in its meetings and activities on the basis that a broader membership would provide for more effective coordination with these organizations and mechanisms, in an effort to promote a hemispheric approach to disaster risk management in the Americas.

Pursuant to this Resolution, and to paragraph 5 of Resolution AG/RES. 2979 (LI-O/21), “Strengthening the Role of the Organization of American States in Advancing Disaster Resilience in the Hemisphere,” which requests “that the General Secretariat further strengthen its outreach to international and sub-regional disaster management strategic partners, particularly in the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), to complement, facilitate and integrate the implementation of any new and existing measures to advance disaster resilience in the hemisphere,” the Assistant Secretary General, in his capacity as Chair of the IACNDR, extended an invitation to these entities to join the Committee as strategic partners in efforts to enhance regional and international cooperation to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters.

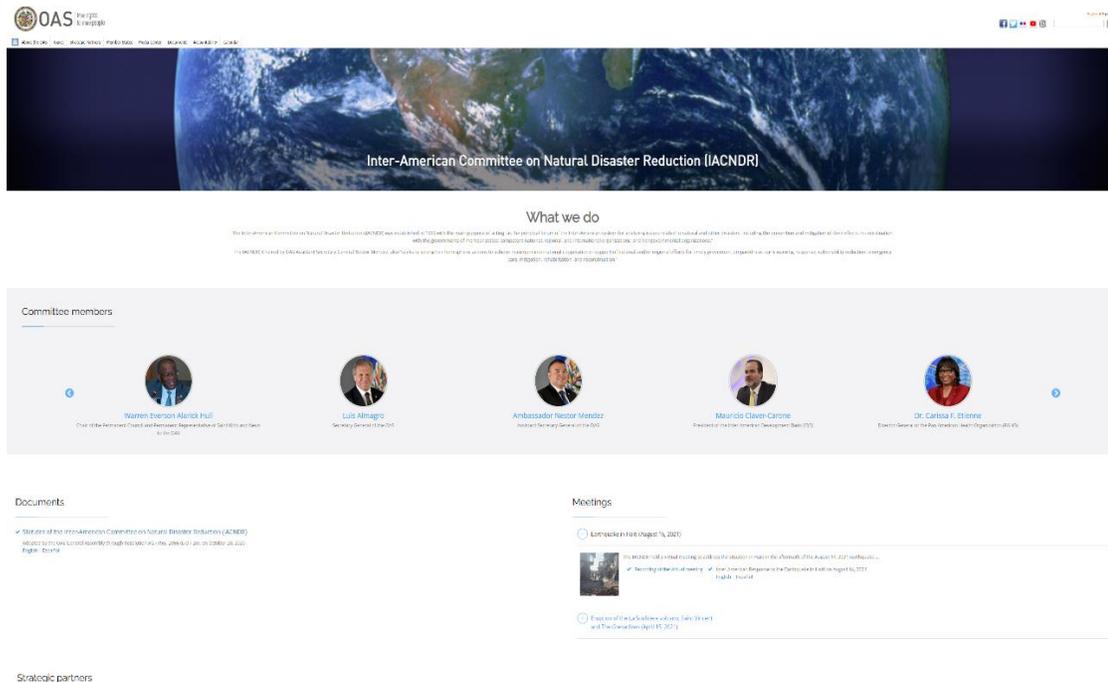
Invitations were extended to the Andean Corporation for Development (CAF), the Andean Committee for the Prevention and Attention to Disasters (CAPADRE), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDNAC), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of Integral Risk Management of MERCOSUR (RMAGIR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the White Helmets Initiative, and the World Bank.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary General (OASG), with technical support from the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), embarked on a process of outreach with the objective of meeting with each of the new partners individually to discuss the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) and the potential role of its new partners.

A round of informative meetings with points of contacts of the new partner organizations that responded positively to the invitation to meet was held from the June 3, 2021, to August 26, 2021. The informative meetings, held at a technical level, served as an opportunity to sensitize the different regional and international entities on the work, activities, and Statutes of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR). It also provided an opportunity to discuss the multilateral approach undertaken by the Organization of American States in support of the prevention, mitigation, and response efforts of its Member States. Likewise, the new partners exchanged valuable information on their Organization’s potential roles, capacities, and shared opinions on how to best advance a common agenda. Several recommendations were prepared for the consideration of the Members of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR).

### 3. IACNDR WEBSITE

In response to recommendations received from Member States and with the objective of providing greater visibility to the important role played by the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) in facilitating regional and international cooperation to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters in the Americas, the Office of the Assistant Secretary General, with support from the Department of Press and Communications (DPC), developed and launched a dedicated webpage for the IACNDR. The webpage will serve as integral hub for information on all the activities of the Committee and as a repository of relevant documents. The webpage can be accessed at ([www.oas.org/en/iacnдр/](http://www.oas.org/en/iacnдр/)).



### III. CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR) was established in 1999 by the General Assembly through resolution AG/RES. 1682 (XXIX-O/99) as an entity of the OAS and is comprised by different decentralized agencies, and entities of the Inter-American system. It is worth noting that although Article 12 of the IACNDR Statutes notes that “the General Secretariat of the OAS shall provide secretariat services to the IACNDR, in accordance with the resources allocated in the Regular Fund program-budget of the Organization and other resources,” the IACNDR in that regard is not allocated direct human or financial resources for its many activities.

The Chair wishes to recognize and reiterate its gratitude to the dedicated personnel of the OAS Secretariat who play an instrumental role in supporting the work of the IACNDR. While all efforts are integral to the success achieved, the Chair acknowledges the essential technical support provided by the Department of Sustainable Development (SDS) of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI). The Chair also expresses appreciation for the professionalism of the staff of its different areas including the Department of Conferences and Meetings Management, especially the

interpreters and translators; the Press and Communications Department; and the staff in the Office of the Assistant Secretary General.

The Chair also recognizes and expresses gratitude for the collaboration from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), and the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).