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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT (SEDI)

***Presentation by Executive Secretary Kim Osborne
to the
Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction
on
Thursday, April 15, 2021***

Thank you, Assistant Secretary General Mendez. Good morning. Ambassador Ruiz, Ambassador Gilchrist, distinguished Ambassadors and representatives of member states, members of the Committee.

First, I join with ASG Mendez in expressing our sympathy and solidarity with the government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines at this difficult time. Rest assured that SEDI will continue to work with partners and the Permanent Mission to facilitate assistance, as necessary.

I know that this is a particularly difficult time for colleagues in the disaster community who are trying to respond to the twin challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic and the impact of ongoing disasters and so thanks for taking the time.

Chair at this point I will report on two specific actions that the Secretariat for Integral Development has taken in response to the disaster in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We reached out to our key partner, with whom we have an MOU on disaster management; Amazon Web Services (AWS) and provided them with the list of emergency supplies provided by the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Permanent Mission. As of this

morning Amazon has indicated that they will be delivering 3000 units of essential items from the emergency supplies list including, collapsible water containers, water filters, reflective vests, liquid soap, among others. Amazon will deliver the items to Carnival Cruise Lines in Miami for onward shipment to St. Vincent and the Grenadines since the airspace is closed.

Yesterday (April 14th) as part of the Inter-American Committee on Tourism (CITUR) and under the leadership of the Minister of Tourism of Jamaica-Edmund Bartlett -CITUR Working Group Chair, SEDI participated in a meeting of the World Travel and Tourism Council which convened a meeting of its membership including 150 private companies with a specific focus on St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The meeting was attended by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines- Honorable Ralph Gonsalves, Minister of Tourism Carlos James as well as Minister of Tourism of Barbados-Senator Lisa Cummings. The Prime Minister provided an update on the crisis as well as some of the needs of the island both immediate and future. The tourism private sector partners pledged their support for SVG and asked for more specific information on areas of greatest need and how they may contribute. In its intervention SEDI stressed the need to respond not only to the immediate needs of the region but urged the private sector to continue to work with the island and by extension the region in the long-term as we seek to recover from recurring disasters. SEDI will continue to work with the Global Tourism Resilience Center based in Jamaica in coordinating the response from the Tourism Private Sector at the request of Minister Bartlett in both the immediate response and recovery phase.

Chair, our battle with extreme weather events is an ongoing one with 17 named storms for this Atlantic Hurricane season alone. Therefore, special considerations must be given lending specific support through the allocation of resources for institutional, infrastructural, and human capacity building in the region to mitigate the effects of these external shocks. SEDI will continue with the implementation of our work on preparedness, mitigation, and adaptation in the first instance and business continuity post-disaster particularly as it relates to Micro Small and Medium enterprises which form the backbone of the economies of the region. We are now working on a

regional project on MSME business continuity in the face of disasters in partnership with the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), with funding support from the United States. Likewise, we are working with Caribbean ports on port logistics and readiness for emergency situations. The OAS -SEDI will continue to be a vital source of support in relation to the formulation and application of disaster preparedness and response protocols through the exchange of experiences, knowledge and good practices, coordination with international public and private sector partners in the provision of assistance to our member states in times of need.

We appreciate the overwhelming goodwill exhibited towards St. Vincent and the Grenadines, including ongoing offers of support. I applaud the efforts of all, and I am anxious to see our discussions translate into concrete action not just in the immediate response but in the important recovery phase.

Thank you Chair.