

ACS DRIVES REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (September 19th 2014) - The crippling effects of Natural Disasters on Small Island Development States (SIDS) has increased the need for Disaster Risk Reduction strategies as it becomes an important asset in the future of Sustainable Development. The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in its overall aim of promoting Sustainable Development for the Greater Caribbean, through its Directorate of Disaster Risk Reduction, continues to improve and increase its initiatives in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction as reflected in the 22nd Meeting of the Special Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In his opening remarks, Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development of Trinidad and Tobago, Senator the Honourable Bhoendradatt Tewarie, identified Caribbean SIDS as the most vulnerable in relation to the intensity and frequency of natural hazards. As a result, disaster risk reduction becomes “a powerful tool for development as it allows communities to continue their progress in spite of hazards.”

Minister Tewarie, also identified Microzonation Studies as a Disaster Risk Reduction project currently being carried out in Trinidad and Tobago. The Microzonation map of Port of Spain, expected to be completed in December 2014, is a process of generating detailed earthquake hazard maps for a small area such as a city as opposed to a whole country. Further to this, sites are subdivided into zones based upon the identification of seismic hazards such as ground shaking, liquefaction susceptibility, landslide and rock fall hazard.

H.E. Alfonso Múnera, Secretary General of the ACS reiterated the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction but also highlighted the importance of the meeting as an instrument through which a large group of countries can gather “to find solutions to problems that are beyond the capacity of

individual countries.” Therefore, the great merit of the ACS as the Secretary General pointed out, is that it has created a forum for dialogue which had not existed in the past. He concluded his introductory remarks appealing to the human imagination, as it is “only through human imagination that Disaster Risk Reduction projects can be constructed.”

George Nicholson, Director of Disaster Risk Reduction, informed that the ACS is now in Phase II of its project on Strengthening Hydro Meteorological Operations and Services in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SHOCS II). This project seeks to strengthen the capacity of National Meteorological and Hydrological Institutions and Disaster Management Agencies in ACS Member States, in the provision of early warning services and preparedness to mitigate impacts of natural hazards.

During the proceedings, the Director elaborated on new initiatives which form part of the Work Programme. These include, the “Caribbean Geospatial Information Infrastructure Strengthening” and the “Caribbean Territorial Platform for Disaster Prevention.” The first project aims to strengthen the capacities of the institutions involved in disaster risk management and civil protection, by establishing a uniform platform to facilitate the exchange of information on threats, vulnerabilities and risks. The latter will promote the development of Spatial Data Infrastructure in eleven countries in the Caribbean, in order to strengthen the generation, use and sharing of geospatial information.

Other initiatives discussed at the meeting included the launch of the “International (virtual) Diploma in Risk Management and Disaster Reduction.” This project intends to train officials, decision-makers and stakeholders of ACS Member Countries in disaster risk management.

Dr. Stephen Ramroop, Chief Executive Officer of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) also presented the advances which have been made on the project “Green Response.” This project seeks to determine the availability, effectiveness and efficiency of green products and processes to be utilized in the case of emergency response to and recovery from disasters in the Caribbean.

Director Nicholson reiterated the ACS’ commitment to working with international partners and Member States to advance disaster risk reduction in the region.