

**Opening Remarks of the Executive Director, CDEMA,  
First Meeting of the CARIFORUM/OCT/FCOR/EU  
Task Force on Disaster Management  
Hyatt Regency, Trinidad and Tobago, April 9, 2010**

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Colleagues, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this First Meeting of the CARIFORUM/OCT/FCOR/EU Task Force on Disaster Management. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency is particularly pleased to see the realization of the convening of this meeting after several unsuccessful attempts between 2006 and 2009.

As you may be aware, this meeting has its origins in the first Clovis Beaugregard Meeting of the CARIFORUM-DOM-OCT and the European Commission which was held in Martinique, November 2005, when it was agreed that a Task Force be established with a mandate to define guidelines and activities for cooperation in Disaster Management. It was agreed that the Task Force would comprise representatives of CARIFORUM/CARICOM, the British and Dutch OCTs, the Caribbean outermost regions, and the European Commission with participation of specialized institutions and agencies.

The creation of this Task Force on Disaster Management is a very timely initiative which will assist the Region in preparing and coping with the variety and growing number of natural hazards that impact the Region. Recent regional and international catastrophic events and the projected increase in number of high magnitude of hydro-meteorological associated global warming and climate change suggest the need for deepen cross jurisdictional cooperation..

The Task Force also presents a unique opportunity to facilitate discussions among CARIFORUM, DOM and OCT countries, as well as the European Commission, notwithstanding the diverse political arrangements and languages, for the identification of common challenges and to facilitate the development and implementation of shared vision and standards for regional capacity building programmes in Disaster Management.

The trans-boundary nature of the threats we face necessitate more urgency in our commitment to shoring up our cooperation in this vital area of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). To do this so we must be ready to free ourselves from the shackles of insularity orchestrated as part of the colonial era efforts to isolate and dominate. The dialogue therefore must not be about the "them and us" but on our common agenda.

The challenges of nature when considered in the context of our smallness, individual limited capacity and limited resources make cooperation an indispensable element of our development discourse.

The United Nations Hyogo Framework for Action provides a platform for framing our cooperation goals. We need to explore the possibilities of common frameworks, experience sharing, knowledge development and agreed tools of practice that give reality to our HFA obligations.

The Task Force must be careful to want to limit its engagement to cooperation on projects and programme. The potency of this mechanism for informing and shaping the global agenda must not be undervalued. We have the potential, if ably harnessed, to ensure that the issues of SIDS are appropriately considered in the international discourse on DRR. For example how much are the issues and experiences of Caribbean SIDS reflected in the GAR? What is our level of effort to

influence the UN Humanitarian Reform discussions, the Civil Military cooperation guidelines, codes of practice for humanitarian organizations, the indicators for reporting and monitoring the HFA, the agenda for DRR and CCA integration?

On all of the above there is more commonality than there is the division derived by language, history of ownership and perceptions of capacity.

In this war to win the hearts, minds and support of our policy makers and to influence the global DRR agenda there is no space or personal or territorial egos. Fighting the devastation to our social and economic fabric is a calling beyond self.

The vision therefore is that the establishment of the Disaster Management Task Force will strengthen the cooperative arrangements across the CARIFORUM states, the OCTs and the DOMs and give us the space for shaping our DRR priorities and working with our development partners within the fullest intent of the OECD principles and guidelines on Aid Effectiveness.

I therefore look forward to our full participation in this dialogue and evolving process.

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