

Terms of Reference of the Regional IASC- Risk, Emergency & Disaster working group (RED-LAC)

VISION: *Reduce the impact of natural disasters and emergencies in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

MISSION: *Raise the impact of humanitarian actions in Latin America and the Caribbean through the coordination of humanitarian actors and their assistance to public institutions and civil society for the benefit of vulnerable populations.*

Latin America and the Caribbean covers more than 20 million squared kilometers and is the home of more than 500 million people. Throughout its history, the region has experimented a series of catastrophes caused by natural phenomena and socio-natural. However, the recent tendency shows a raise in the frequency of natural disasters. Even worse, one third of the population is exposed to natural catastrophes according to a study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank and The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

It is also a region that has various organizations and specialized institutions in management of disasters. However, it's important to mention that the multiplication of actors generates sometimes complexity in the coordination of an emergency.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, several regional humanitarian offices that carry out a role in risk management before, during and after the disasters. Each one has a mandate and specific resources. However, each one has a common objective that is to diminish the suffering of vulnerable populations, to improve their capacities to respond and to reduce their exposure to risks.

This should be the center of worries of all agencies and humanitarian institutions, as well as the search for a compliment between these instances to obtain conjointly and effectively this common objective.

Therefore the regional offices for Latin America and the Caribbean:

- *Inspired*¹ on the Resolution 46/182, of the Permanent Inter-Agency Committee (IASC), as well as in the mandate of the United Nation Disaster Management Team (UNDMT).
- *Adapting* to the regional reality of Latin America.

¹ See document: "Texts and Tools of Coordination"

- *Conscious of the need* to re-enforce spaces of collaboration between the different regional agencies on the topic of response to disasters
- *Taking into consideration the presence of several* Regional Humanitarian Agencies in Panama.

Propose to create the Regional IASC Risk, Disaster and Emergency Working Group

Purpose of the Regional IASC Risk, Emergency and Disaster working group

Create a platform of exchange of information, of reflection and of actions that allows optimizing the actions for preventions and responses oriented to prevent, and mitigate the suffering of the vulnerable populations to natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Members of the working group

- Permanent members in Panama:
 - Regional Office UNICEF/TACRO.
 - Regional Office of the WFP
 - Regional Unit for Disaster Reduction of the UNDP.
 - Preparation Program for Disaster Cases of PAHO – Washington.
 - International Strategy for Disaster Reduction- Costa Rica (EIRD)
 - Regional Office UNEP
 - Regional OCHA Office
- Permanent Members Outside of Panama:
 - UNFPA Regional Office in New York
- Permanent Guests in Panama:
 - International Federations (International Delegation and the Pan-American Response to Disasters Unit)
 - Plan International,
 - Regional office CARE
 - Regional Office IOM
 - Regional office MSF Spain
 - OFDA
 - Spanish Agency of International Cooperation
- Permanent Guests outside of Panama (Offices are not in Panama and these members participate when possible):
 - OXFAM GB

- World Vision
- Special Guests (invited to meetings and receive information depending on topics of interest to be discussed):
 - Donors: ECHO, USAID/OFDA.
 - Regional and Sub-Regional Organisms: CEPREDENAC, CDERA, CAPRADE.
 - NGOs (eg WSPA, TSF)
 - Private partners (eg DHL)

Possible Activities of the working group

Information Sharing:

Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Agenda • Early-Warning • Meetings and Workshops • Publications • Institutional Contacts • Monitoring
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Assessment • Conjoint missions • Exchange of information on responses • Exchange of plans and activities on the field • Immediate Response System
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis about the quality of the response • Monitoring and Follow-up • Share experiences and lessons learned

Elaborate conjoint projects:

Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and Workshops. • Inter-agency Contingency Plans, Regional and National • Preparedness and Response Plans • Information Center for Disasters • Conjoint mission to countries at risk • Conjoint Operations • Sharing of logistical services to facilitate the operations • Favor and Promote conjoint response in the field
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favor and promote agreements of conjoint responses
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Note: The group will work in this first stage in response to disasters. Later on, it would integrate other actors to work in Prevention and Mitigation.

Strategy of the working group

The group would be a regional mechanism for the coordination; it would be also a space that would provide a forum for the exchange of information, discussion and search for consensus. The group decisions should not commit the members with respect to their specific mandate.

The results of the cooperation inside the regional group should be transmitted to the different

Members of the UNDMT of the countries at risk more vulnerable to suffer natural disasters, with the objective to widen and re-enforce its regional geopolitical vision, with the objective to widen and reinforce its regional geopolitical vision, its management capacities; improving also in a significant way, its coordination systems.

Functioning of the working group (before, during and after an emergency)

- The permanent members and guests will meet on a regular basis, every first Tuesday of each month.
- The meetings will be organized and held in Panama.
- The meetings will be held, in a rotating way, in each of the offices of the permanent members.
- OCHA RDRA will chair the meetings. If the OCHA RDRA is absent, he will have the authority to delegate his function of Chairman to another permanent member of the group.
- In an AD-HOC way, it would be possible to invite and according to the work agendas, a Representative of other specialized agencies / organizations (see “special guests”).
- The OCHA offices will be in charge of the Secretariat having the responsibility to:

- Facilitate the communication channels between members.
 - Facilitate the preparation of each meeting in coordination with its members.
 - Distribute the meeting minutes and action points taken and agreed by all members.
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- An executive format of the meeting minutes would be adopted that allows determining clearly the actions to be taken and the responsible members. In the absence of OCHA, the agency who chairs the meeting will be responsible to assign someone to draft that particular meeting minutes.
 - Members and guests commit to diffuse, through their internal respective channels, the results of the group meetings.
 - In case a disaster occurs in a country in the region, OCHA Regional Office will have the responsibility of convoking the group, to exchange information that can improve the management of an emergency and define common strategies to support the affected country or countries.

Resolution 46/182 of the General Assembly of the United Nations

In December 1991, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the resolution 46-182 on the strengthening of the coordination of the humanitarian assistance in emergencies of the United Nations in which it is expressed that: *“the United Nations has a central and singular role to carry out in the task to provide leadership and to coordinate efforts of the international community in supporting the affected countries”*.

An emergency relief coordinator was designated in case of emergencies and has the responsibility of the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) was established to provide institutional support. In 1998, DHA converts itself to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA.

The Inter-Agency Standing Commission - IASC

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was established in June 1992 in application of the resolution² 46/182 of the General Assembly to re-enforce the coordination of the humanitarian assistance.

The IASC facilitates the decision making process between organisms responding to emergencies fundamentally through:

- The development and agreements about humanitarian policies through the system;
- The designation of the responsibilities between the organisms in the humanitarian programs;
- The demand of the common humanitarian principles to the non-integrated parts of the IASC;
- The identification of the areas where there is lack of leadership or where lack of operational capacity exists;
- And the development of a consensus between humanitarian organism on humanitarian affairs in all the system

The IASC is conformed by the Executive Guidelines of the de member organizations. A workgroup and Sub- Workgroups of the IASC cover non-strategic policies, operational aspects and technical affairs.

The IASC is presided by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

² Paragraph 38.

The permanent members are: OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, WFP, WHO, UNHCR. The organizations that are permanent guests include IRC, the International Red Cross Federation, OIM, INTERACTION, ICVA, the Special Representative of the SG for IDP, OHCR and the World Bank.

The first role of the IASC is to formulate humanitarian policies that assure a coordinated and efficient humanitarian response to complex emergencies and natural disasters.

The mechanisms of coordination inside the United Nations Organization system are based principally on agreements that are reached inside the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

The guidelines for the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning in issues of Humanitarian Assistance

In November 2001, the Reference Group on Planning and Preparedness of Contingencies of the IASC presents the guidelines for the Inter-agency Contingency Planning in issues of humanitarian Assistance. These guidelines were developed to satisfy the *"critical needs to develop a common methodology between the various agencies for the planning of contingencies, that serves as basis to find coincidences in the planning parameters³"* in a manner of collaborative efforts to the heart of Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) on behalf of the Reference Planning Group before Contingencies, that is presided by UNICEF and WFP.

The United Nations Disaster Management Team - UNDMT

In each country and in theory the nucleus that participates in the Inter-Agency contingency planning process normally is constituted by the United Nations Country team that works with the international Red Cross Federation and Red Cross Societies as well as with the NGO communities.

Although it has not been implemented in all the places, in the countries most vulnerable to disasters and emergencies, the United Nations Organization Resident Coordinator directs a United Nations Disaster Team (UNDMT), integrated by organizations on the United Nations Organization related to responses to humanitarian emergencies.

The composition of the UNDMT is determined taking into consideration the types of disasters that the countries are prone too and the organizations present in the country. The Representatives of

³ *Informe del Secretario General de ECOSOC para 1997: 'Robusteciendo la Coordinación de la Ayuda Humanitaria' (Párrafo 85.)*

FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP y PAHO-WHO, constitute the principal members of the UNDMT.

Depending on the types of disasters in which a country is more prone too and the type of intervention that would be required in consequence, the following could be included as regular members --or guests to assist specific meetings when convenient--, the representatives of other organisms as key government bodies, donors, NGOs, OIM, CICR, the International Federation of National Red Cross Societies and Red Crescent societies.