South America (2018)

*Marcos Nelio Mollar**

Threats posed by intensive natural hazards, from earthquakes to hurricanes, have increased in the Americas. Against this background, the advancements made by the regional and sub-regional mechanisms in South America, such as the Risk Management and Adaptation to Climate Change Section of the Department of Sustainable Development of the Organization of American States (OAS/DSD, RISK-MACC), the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), the Andean Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Disasters (CAPRADE), the Southern Common Market's Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (RMAGIR/MERCOSUR), and the Union of South American Nations High-Level Working Group for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (GTANGRD/UNASUR), help to promote regional, national, and local capacity-building in the area of disaster risk reduction and management of hazards.

1 Organization of American States (OAS)

Concerning the activities of Organization of American States (OAS), in June 2018 the OAS General Assembly, through its resolution 2915, reiterated its support for the White Helmets Initiative¹ as one of the valuable mechanisms in the hemisphere for disaster prevention, reduction, and response and in the fight against hunger and poverty. Particularly, this body reiterated the invitation for member States to make contributions to the OAS-White Helmets Humanitarian Fund, so they can continue seminars and training workshops on disaster risk reduction and the execution of capacity-building projects in areas related to resilience, disaster risk prevention and mitigation, and international humanitarian assistance.²

The OAS General Assembly approved, at the fourth plenary session held on 5 June 2018, the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2026 (PAD), which

* Professor, University of Buenos Aires and Universidad Católica Argentina.

1 For further information on the White Helmets see below the section on 'National Initiatives'.

2 OAS-GA Res 2915 (4 June 2018), OAS GA/RES. 2915 (XLVIII-O/18).

considers emergency, catastrophic, and disaster situations and includes as a goal of OAS Member States to guarantee the integral management of persons with disabilities in a situation of risk, taking into account their needs before, during, and after the emergency.³

Furthermore resolution 2925, related to 'Advancing Hemispheric Security: A Multidimensional Approach',⁴ addressed several aspects related to disaster settings and required a series of actions by OAS bodies and member States in relation to issues such as: security implications of climate change; special security concerns of the small island and low-lying coastal developing states of the Caribbean; protecting critical infrastructure in the event of natural disasters; and the Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance.⁵

Even if, with regard to 2018, relevant practice could not be recorded it is also significant to mention the continuous efforts made by other relevant bodies of the OAS system, namely the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (OAS/DSD) and the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR). In particular, the OAS/DSD, through its Risk Management and Adaptation to Climate Change section, supports the priorities of OAS Member States in adapting to and managing the increasing risks associated with natural hazards. The ultimate goal is to mainstream risk management – or deconstruct risk – into development policy and planning across all sectors and government levels, by building on work underway at the regional and international levels, and by taking into account the changing priority needs of member States and relevant OAS mandates received from the highest-policy making bodies in the Americas. Conversely, the IACNDR, a forum established by the OAS General Assembly,⁶ comprises several leading hemispheric organizations. Its primary purpose is to analyse issues related to disasters, including the prevention and mitigation of their effect, in coordination with OAS member States, and competent national, regional and international organisations and non-governmental organisations. IACNDR also seeks to strengthen hemispheric actions to achieve maximum international cooperation in support of

3 OAS-GA Res 2928 (5 June 2018), OAS GA/RES. 2928 (XLVIII-O/18).

4 OAS-GA Res 2925 (5 June 2018) OAS GA/RES. 2925 (XLVIII-O/18). Under Article 20 of the Rules of Procedure of the Permanent Council, the CSH is responsible for studying and making recommendations to the Permanent Council on any matters relating to hemispheric security that may be entrusted to it by the Permanent Council and, through it, by the General Assembly, in particular with a view to promoting cooperation in this area.

5 Draft Work Plan and Schedule of Activities for the 24th period of the Committee on Hemispheric Security (2018–2019) and other OAS activities for advancing hemispheric security, OEA/Ser.G, CP/CSH-1864/18 rev. 2 (21 November 2018).

6 OAS-GA RES. 1682 (7 June 1999), OAS GA/RES. 1682 (XXIX-O/99).

national and/or regional efforts for timely prevention, preparedness, early warning, response, vulnerability reduction, emergency care, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

2 Activities of UNISDR Related to the Americas

The sixth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, hosted by the Government of Colombia and organised jointly with UNISDR in Cartagena, from 20 to 22 June 2018, was an opportunity to review progress made and provide guidance for moving forward the regional action plan for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the Americas. The Regional Platform adopted the Cartagena Declaration⁷ calling for the development and strengthening of disaster risk reduction plans and strategies in line with target (e) of the Sendai Framework, and the importance of strengthening institutional frameworks to integrate disaster risk reduction across development measures was recognised. Member States highlighted the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction in all sectors and positioning disaster risk reduction as a public policy priority at the national and local levels, also through fostering public-private partnerships and investments.

The Platform provided a space for all stakeholders to advance the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the region. For example, the renewed commitment to implementation of the regional action plan at the Ministerial and high authorities meeting; further strengthening the capacity of countries to measure the Sendai indicators; and the development of a plan of action was discussed to engage the Science and Technology community. The Platform was attended by 1,354 participants from a wide variety of stakeholder groups and the agenda was developed through a participatory approach by an advisory council comprised of 17 representatives from governments, financial institutions, civil society, private sector and United Nations agencies. At a special session on recovery in the Caribbean, it was concluded that building resilience encompasses five critical pillars: social protection for the most vulnerable; safeguarding of infrastructure; economic diversification; environmental protection; and operational readiness. Jamaica will host the Regional Platform in

⁷ Cartagena Declaration, adopted on the 22nd of June 2018 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, at Third High-level Meeting of Ministers and Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in the Americas and the Caribbean, <<https://eird.org/pr18/docs/cartagena-declaration.pdf>> last accessed (as any subsequent URL) on 8 July 2019.

2020 which member States decided to rename the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean.⁸

To improve the availability and use of risk data in the Americas and Caribbean Region, UNISDR collaborated closely with the Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in the provision of technical support to the Latin American and Caribbean Disaster Risk Reduction (LAC DRR) Statistics Working Group. UNISDR also coordinates the LAC United Nations Interagency Group on Resilience. An exploratory mission to Bolivia, initially planned for 2018, was carried out from 14 to 28 January 2019, jointly with UNDP within the framework of the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) and the LAC Interagency Group on Resilience.⁹

Recognising the importance of attaining target (e) of the Sendai Framework¹⁰ by 2020, UNISDR conducted an in-depth analysis of national disaster risk reduction strategies. The analysis identified achievements and gaps in such strategies and made policy recommendations to strengthen their implementation.¹¹ UNISDR organised a variety of regional and national capacity building workshops in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala and Paraguay to improve understanding of Sendai Framework priorities and the role of national platforms in the development of the national strategies for disaster risk reduction and provided support in the development of national disaster risk reduction strategies using both global and nationally defined indicators. This has resulted in strategies focusing on the guiding principles of inclusion and all-of-society participation, while at the same time ensuring that their respective customised national indicators, such as gender disaggregated indicators, are incorporated.

The Latin America and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) held the VII Meeting on Public-Private Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico, 20–21 November 2018. This was an occasion when building resilient infrastructures was discussed, jointly with UNISDR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Cementos Mexicanos and the Inter-American Conference on Social Security. The event analysed regional best practices in terms of investment and efficient, sustainable and responsible construction as well as the resilience of physical infrastructure, in both

8 UNISDR, Annual Report (2018) 34.

9 *Ibid.*, 48.

10 In this context Target (e) refers to 'substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020', <<https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291-sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf>>.

11 UNISDR (n. 8) 48.

public and private buildings, in particular hospital and health services, educational and cultural facilities. At the Regional Platform for the Americas in Colombia, several companies showcased good practices including risk sensitive investments and preparedness strategies from recent events in the region including hurricanes Irma and Maria, tropical storm Nate and the 2018 earthquake in Mexico.¹²

UNISDR has also worked with the Centre for Coordination of Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC), the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), the Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management of the Common Southern Market of South America (MERCOSUR-RMAGIR), as well as other intergovernmental organisations in the Southern Cone Region to align their regional strategies and plans with the Sendai Framework.

3 The Andean Community¹³

Meanwhile, the Andean Council of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, in a major meeting with the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Assistance (CAPRADE), approved on 29 May 2018 a “Glossary of terms and concepts of Disaster Risk Management for Member States of Andean Community”,¹⁴ according to the Andean Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (EAGRD) 2017–2030, approved by Decision 819 (9 May 2017), and its Andean Annual Operative Plan 2017/2018, approved by Resolution 1965 (28 November 2017). By Resolution 2015 (25 July 2018), the General Secretary of the Andean Community adopted the Andean Annual Operative Plan 2018/2019. A revision process of the CAPRADE Guidelines for mutual assistance in case of disaster in the Andean region¹⁵ was undertaken during 2018.

¹² *Ibid.*, 72–73.

¹³ The Andean Community (CAN) is an international organization that has various bodies and institutions that make up the Andean Integration System (SAI) whose objective is to achieve an integral, balanced and autonomous development through Andean integration, with a projection towards a South American and Latin American integration. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru are Member States of the Andean Community.

¹⁴ Andean Community, Andean Council of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Decision 825 (29 May 2018).

¹⁵ Guidelines for mutual assistance in case of disaster in the Andean region was adopted at XII Ordinary Meeting of CAPRADE (Guayaquil, Ecuador, 2018) (the last revision took place in 2011).

4 Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR)¹⁶

During the twelfth Ordinary Meeting of Ministries and High-level Authorities on Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management of MERCOSUR (RMAGIR), held in Montevideo on 17 October 2018, national delegations discussed several topics: the draft work of a Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for MERCOSUR's member States; the strengthening of mechanisms of implementation of actions to reduce and prevent risks, as well as, mechanisms of cooperation with CAPRADE and other regional blocks; the creation of mechanisms of shared disaster risk management between border cities; and the revision of the Additional Protocol to the Framework Agreement on Environment of MERCOSUR (22 June 2001), particularly in cooperation and assistance to bring up to date concepts relate to environmental emergencies and disasters.

5 Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)¹⁷

One of the specific goals of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is the cooperation among member States in matters of disaster prevention and the fight against the causes and effects of climate change.¹⁸ The Council of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of UNASUR (UNASUR/CMRE) approved in 2018 the Statute of the Union of South American Nations High-Level Working Group for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (GTANGRD/UNASUR),¹⁹ which had been established in 2013.²⁰ The principal goal of the GTANGRD is the strengthening, at regional level, of comprehensive disaster risk management, through politics, strategies, plans and actions focused on risk reduction, prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response to disasters and rehabilitation and reconstruction.

16 MERCOSUR is a South American trade bloc comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.

17 UNASUR is an international organization that aims to build a space for integration and union in the cultural, social, economic and political, especially, giving priority to political dialogue, social policies, education, energy, infrastructure, financing and the environment, among others, with a view to eliminate socioeconomic inequality, achieve social inclusion and citizen participation, strengthen democracy and reduce asymmetries in the framework of the strengthening of sovereignty and independence of the States.

18 Union of South American Nations Treaty (23 May 2008), art. 3 (g).

19 UNASUR/CMRE/RES 002/2018 (10 January 2018).

20 UNASUR/CMRE/RES 04/2013 (29 August 2013).

6 National Initiatives

In Peru, on 17 April 2018, the Framework law on Climate Change was adopted.²¹ The purpose of this law is to establish the principles, approaches and general provisions to articulate, design, execute, report, monitor and disseminate public policies for the integral, participatory and transparent management of adaptation and mitigation measures to climate change. The framework law establishes as management instruments, national and regional strategies for climate change and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). During 2018, the Peruvian Ministry of the Environment began a consultative process for the development of the regulation for the application of this Framework law.

Additionally, in October 2018, the Argentinian Ministry of Security approved the National Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.²² The National Plan constitutes a public policy tool to develop guidelines for the comprehensive management of risk reduction (GIRD) and the basic principles that must be adopted for the execution of programs and actions aimed at reducing existing risks, guaranteeing better safety conditions for the population and protecting economic, social, environmental and cultural heritage. It is the first document of national scope addressing these issues, thereby promoting the development of short, medium and long term strategies consistent with the new regulations which currently regulate risk management in Argentina, namely the National System for Comprehensive Risk Management and Civil Protection (SINAGIR) and the Sendai Framework 2015–2030.

Furthermore, it could be mentioned how a relevant national initiative, namely the White Helmets, was the object of attention by the UN General Assembly which commended its activities through its resolution 73/138 adopted on 14 December 2018. The White Helmets initiative is the agency of the Argentinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of designing and implementing humanitarian assistance. Since 1994, it has developed its activities through a working model based on cooperation, solidarity and community engagement in order to provide international assistance in case of disasters,²³ and is

21 Peru, Framework law n° 30754 on Climate Change (adopted 17 April 2018) <<https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/download/url/ley-marco-sobre-cambio-climatico-ley-n-30754-1638161-1>>.

22 Ministry of Security of Argentinian Republic, Res. 803, 10 October 2018 (RESOL.-2018-803-APN-MSG).

23 For more information see <<https://www.cancilleria.gob.ar/en/foreign-policy/white-helmets>>.

responsible for promoting the goals agreed in the Sendai Framework.²⁴ Its activities have also produced a series of agreements, memoranda of understanding and other instruments of cooperation with States and UN bodies.²⁵

²⁴ OAS CIDI/RES. 322 (LXXIII-O/17).

²⁵ Memoranda of Understanding between White Helmets of Argentinian Republic and National Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response System (SINAPRED) of the Republic of Nicaragua (20 April 2015) in order to exchange experiences, technologies and knowledge in the field of management and disaster risk reduction; Presidential Statement between Argentina and Colombia (16 June 2016) which recognised the mutual interest to continue deepening the exchange of experiences about knowledge and risk reduction and assistance mechanism in case of disasters; Agreement between Argentina and Peru (3 November 2017) whose purpose is to promote joint actions in the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster risk management, including design, development and execution of programs, projects and joint plans of contingency in cases of disasters; Memorandum of understanding between the White Helmets and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which established the framework for the deployment of White Helmets volunteers in support of UNHCR emergency responses (2016).