



Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas

March 7 - 9, 2017 | Montreal, Canada | #SendaiAmericas

Towards Risk Informed Sustainable Development

Chair's Summary

The Government of Canada hosted the Fifth Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas (RPA) that was held in Montreal, Canada, on March 7-9, 2017. The RPA brought together some 900 participants from across the Americas, with representation from national and local governments, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, mayors and parliamentarians, local communities, Indigenous peoples, and leaders from business, academia and science. This RPA was the largest to date.

The three-day event included four plenary sessions, nine parallel sessions, a marketplace, multiple side-events, an Indigenous art exhibit as well as craft fair and an Ignite Stage. The Montreal session of the Regional Platform included two innovative initiatives: the launching of a Youth Video Challenge in the Americas; and the hosting of a Public Forum with discussion topics that aligned with the Platform's agenda and priorities.

A new element of the RPA was a High Level Dialogue session that brought together Ministers and High Level Authorities to discuss implementation of the Sendai Framework 2015-2030 in the Americas. The session was attended by representatives of the countries throughout the Americas, as well as representatives from regional, international and inter-governmental organizations and other major stakeholder groups.

The Montreal Declaration and Regional Action Plan (RAP), adopted at the High Level Dialogue, outline priority initiatives that countries in the region can undertake to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework and to reduce disaster risk across the hemisphere. The RAP will serve as a model for future Regional Platforms and marks an important development in the region.

The dynamic discussions that took place are summarized in the following points:



Understanding Disaster Risk:

Understanding risk is fundamental to disaster risk reduction. Without a good understanding of risk, prioritizing and planning for hazard events can be overwhelming. During numerous sessions, experts from the public, non-governmental, academic, community and private sectors held discussions on their respective challenges and proposed solutions and provided examples on how to understand risks. A list of existing good practices, methodologies, and tools to better understand, evaluate and estimate exposure, vulnerability and hazards as well as capacities in the Americas will be made available using the DRR APP.

Connecting mutually reinforcing agendas:

The need to ensure alignment and integration between the DRR, climate change and sustainable development frameworks were a re-occurring theme throughout the RPA. Several of the sessions specifically spoke to this theme, in particular the session on monitoring and reporting. The intersection with climate change adaptation and sustainable development was also a key message in the sessions on understanding risk. Of particular relevance was the announcement of endorsement by the UN General Assembly (UNGA A/RES/71/276, February 2017) of the Sendai Framework disaster risk indicators as recommended by the Open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators (OEIWG) as well as the alignment of DRR considerations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Goal 1, 11, 13.) 4 SDGs targets and 11 SDGs indicators. There are efficiencies to be gained by adopting a more integrated approach across the policy frameworks.

Recognizing the private sector as an actor and partner:

The importance of engaging the private sector was a horizontal theme. The private sector has valuable contributions to make as a partner with governments and civil society in identifying and managing disaster risks. Some partners, like the insurance sector, play a central role in helping to manage the financial aspects of disaster risks and impacts through the provision of tools and risk transference mechanisms. Private sector actors are both producers and consumers of risk information that can have a direct impact on their own operations and on the communities in which they operate and contribute to livelihoods.

The launch of the Canadian National Chapter of the Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies (ARISE) was the key measurable outcome of the Session of Private Sector and DRR, as well as current experiences applicable by the private sector in the context of the Global ARISE initiative aiming to support the implementation of Priority Three of the Sendai Framework to integrate disaster risk considerations in private sector investment planning.



Leading at the local level:

While leadership at all levels is integral to advancing DRR, the local level was highlighted as particularly important. Individuals and communities are at the front line of identifying, preventing and avoiding disaster risk. Cities across the region highlighted the importance to properly plan and implement specific and integral DRR local actions. The role of volunteers in local level response was also highlighted during the building resilience at the local level session.

The value and need for local leadership, with support from other levels and actors, was reinforced throughout numerous sessions. Specific examples of initiatives such as the Resilient Cities Campaign and 100 resilient cities, presented credible evidence of how integration of disaster risk reduction at the local level is feasible and bring concrete experiences for risk knowledge applied to advance in the implementation of the Sendai Framework at the local level.

Inclusive and people-centred DRR:

Successful DRR needs to take into account the unique needs, contributions and capabilities of diverse populations. The specific implications for women and girls, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly, migrant groups and Indigenous peoples were highlighted during the RPA. The need to include these and other populations living in conditions of risk were reiterated, not only to better understand how they may experience vulnerability differently, but also how as agents of change they can bring unique perspectives and useful capabilities to disaster risk identification and reduction efforts.

Innovation as a driver of change:

As societies evolve, so too must the solutions needed to tackle the disaster risks they face. Communities around the world are facing pressures from demographic and climatic change, that are putting stress on social and physical infrastructure. New approaches, informed by innovation, science and technology can help to address existing and evolving challenges. The need for investments in research and science to inform evidence-based innovative solutions was noted in a number of sessions, including the half-day workshop on innovation, science and technology.

Public Forum

There was a parallel event, the Public Forum, which took place on the margins of the RPA. For this event, universities and institutions across Canada and throughout the Americas and the Caribbean were invited to participate. These institutions developed their own programs, which



aligned with the goals and themes of the RPA. The institutions developed some unique and engaging activities during these events.

For example, Brandon University in Manitoba conducted a tabletop exercise aimed at enhancing disaster risk awareness in students. During this exercise, students identified the degree to which they depend on technology, and the challenges that this would pose during an emergency. The participants at the University of Quebec in Montreal discussed the need to clarify governance structures and to improve collaboration across and between sectors.

Second Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas

During the RPA, Ministers and High Level Authorities gathered to discuss progress towards implementation of the Sendai Framework in the region. During this meeting, a historic Regional Action Plan, which identifies initiatives that countries and organizations in the region can pursue, was approved as well as the Declaration of Montreal, which reiterates the commitment at the highest levels in the region to implementing the Sendai Framework, reducing disaster risk and building resilient communities and nations.

Way Forward

The RPA welcomed the presentation by the Government of Mexico, which will be hosting the Global Platform for DRR in Cancun, Mexico, on May 22-26, 2017. The outcomes of the RPA will be shared at the Global Platform. We look forward to 6th Regional Platform that will be hosted by the Government of Colombia in 2018.

To promote the implementation of the action plan, interested member states, and stakeholders, in accordance with respective mandates and priorities, could develop activities based on initiatives outlined in the Regional Action Plan (RAP). In addition, they should provide follow-up with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the subsequent Regional Platform host on the status of activities. Countries agreed that RAP could also support the implementation of DRR actions included in existing Regional and Sub-Regional agreements. Member States and relevant regional organizations were invited to inform UNISDR of these DRR actions, which could contribute to the implementation of this RAP, in order to rally support and avoid duplication of efforts.