

Welcome Remarks by Diane Quarless  
at the opening of the  
TRAINING COURSE ON DISASTER ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY  
PORT OF SPAIN, 24 – 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2017

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H.E. Dr. June Soomer, Secretary General, ACS;  
Distinguished representatives of member states;  
Representatives of Regional Organizations especially CDEMA & CCRIF;  
Members of the UN family including our colleagues from ECLAC Santiago;  
Specially invited experts;  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is such a pleasure for me to be here with you this morning, at the opening of this Training Course on ECLAC's Disaster Assessment Methodology which will be held here in Port of Spain over the next four days.

Let me start by acknowledging the collaborative effort on the part of ECLAC and the ACS that went into organizing this event. I truly welcome this partnership between our two organizations, working jointly to build institutional capacity for risk reduction and management in the member states of the Caribbean. These tasks are of course supported by other key regional agencies: CDEMA and CCRIF, so it is very good to have them in the house. Their work is complementary to ours, and so I applaud recent efforts to strengthen the collaboration within our network of institutions. To borrow a campaign slogan from the recent US elections: **we are stronger together**. There is much that we can do jointly to support the countries of the Caribbean in this most vital effort: building their resilience to risk and strengthening their capacity for disaster preparedness and response. I look forward to many more opportunities for collaboration among our

institutions, as we seek to support the region's sustainable development goals.

This week's training course is important as it gives further momentum to, and places appropriate emphasis on disaster risk management, in which the imperatives of risk reduction, risk identification, preparedness and financial protection are critical pillars of sustainable development and resilience. You who are seasoned practitioners in this field understand the importance of applying an integrated, multidisciplinary and holistic approach to disaster management, rather than acting in sectoral and reactive manner, as has been the predominant practice of the past. This effort notwithstanding, over the past 20 years, the international community has allocated almost US\$ 70 billion in support of emergency response, while only US\$ 13.5 billion has been designated for disaster risk reduction.<sup>1</sup> These figures suggest that we still have work to do in raising awareness of the fact that 'prevention is better than cure', that we could achieve so much more were we to invest more heavily in the management of risk and in strategies for disaster risk reduction in a comprehensive and proactive manner, particularly in light of the interdependence of poverty reduction, resilience building and sustainable development.

The objectives of this meeting are twofold. First, it is intended to promote planning for disaster risk management within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in light of commitments made in key development platforms, notably the Sendai Framework for Disaster

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<sup>1</sup> Kellet, Jan & Caravani, Alice (2013), "Financing disaster risk reduction: a 20 year story of international aid", Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)/ Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Risk Reduction and the SAMOA Pathway. I take this opportunity to recognize again the presence of our colleagues from the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), and the Division of Sustainable Development of ECLAC HQ, who will lead the first day of training. Situating our strategic approach to risk reduction and resilience building within the framework defined by Agenda 2030, we have identified four priorities to promote their implementation and follow-up:

1. the need to strengthen the institutional architecture of the countries of the subregion.
2. analysis of the means of implementation of Agenda 2030 at the regional level.
3. the need for the production of indicators for monitoring and measurement at national and regional levels, addressing at once the strengthening of national statistical systems and clarifying the role of national statistical offices, and finally
4. Supporting the integration of the SDGs into national development plans and budgets.

The first day of this workshop will be used to expand on the importance of disaster planning and risk management and to considering their role in advancing development objectives. The programme will also address the challenges and opportunities for disaster risk reduction present in the SDGs, and will explore opportunities where the Caribbean countries might benefit in the upcoming Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Sendai Framework. These instruments and international fora

evidence a global commitment towards strengthening disaster risk management and offer opportunities for deeper involvement of the Caribbean subregion.

The second objective is to strengthen national institutional capacity for disaster assessment, which will be led by my team from ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. In order to understand and reduce the risk of future disasters, as a region we need to evaluate the effect and impact of past disasters, regardless of their magnitude. Major disasters demonstrate the extent to which they undermine social, economic and environmental gains, underscoring our vulnerability. Smaller, more frequent disasters often go unnoticed and underreported, but we should not lose sight of the pressure that they can put on public finances, nor of the impact of their cumulative effects. The systematic assessment of disasters is crucial to development forecasting and modeling. Recognized in both the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030 and in the Sustainable Development Goals, the importance of measuring the effects of these events and collecting data for continuous monitoring and assessment cannot be over emphasized.

The Disaster Assessment Methodology applies a multisectoral approach to estimating the effects and impacts of a disaster. The global description of the impact of a disaster and the sectoral estimation of the damage, losses and additional costs provide basic information to determine the resources needed to restore social and economic activities following an event, as well as the level of investment needed to ensure resilient reconstruction. The design of a resilient reconstruction strategy and budget demands

quantitative information on the effects and impacts of a disaster from a wide range of sectors.

I am therefore pleased that we have managed to assemble diverse representation from many sectors of government in this training course. We have present participants from disaster management offices, statistical offices, ministries of public works, finance, housing, development, and planning. The range and diversity of sectors underscores the importance of the comprehensive, whole-of-government approach that is needed for the effective management of disaster risk. It only through the involvement of all of your institutions that we can create and apply the mitigation and adaptation strategies that respond to the vulnerabilities of our small islands, and that minimize future risk in the process.

The 4-day training course will provide you with the fundamentals for assessing the effects and impacts of disasters. The programme will be interactive in nature, including technical presentations while offering opportunity for hands-on experience in the conduct of assessments on a sectoral basis.

I wish to thank all of you for your interest in and your commitment to participating in this course. It is my hope that you will gain much from the information that will be shared, and that the next four days will yield fruitful, engaging and productive exchange. I therefore offer my best wishes for a successful workshop.

I thank you.