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 TEXTUAL

Presentation of the REPORT OF THE first OAS Conference on Building a Science and Data Agenda for Decision-Making on Resilience and Disaster Risk Management in the Caribbean

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Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates

 I would first like to begin by acknowledging and expressing my thanks to those on the panel this morning:

* Ambassador Francine Baron, Chief Executive Officer of CREAD, the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica;
* Engineer Raul Kulichevsky Executive and Technical Director of CONAE, the Argentina National Space Activities Commission;
* Dr. Roger Pulwarty Senior Scientist at NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States;
* Mr. Pierre Chrzanowski*,* Science, Technology and Open Data for Climate and Disaster Risk, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank;
* Dr. Juan Villagrán de León, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs; and
* Mr. Luis Alonso Amaya Durán, Director General of Civil Protection, Disaster Prevention and Mitigation of El Salvador.

Good morning to you all.

 In October of last year, the Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), in collaboration with Climate Resilience Executing Agency of Dominica and Inter- American Institute for Global Change (IAI)hosted a regional conference on “Building a Science and Data-Based Agenda for Decision Making on Resilience in the Caribbean.” Recognizing that the Caribbean is one of the world’s most susceptible regions to climate change and the importance of strengthening the necessary decision-making mechanisms to affect timely climate action, the Conference brought together over 70 high-level regional experts and stakeholders from Caribbean governments, regional international organizations, the private sector, and academia.

 These experts—a few of whom have joined us this morning—each brought extensive knowledge and experience in the fields of resilience, scientific research, and risk reduction, and at the Conference discussed climate change’s impacts on CARICOM economies and identified gaps, challenges, and opportunities to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resiliency in the Caribbean using science and data.

 A number of the OAS’ core partners, working over the course of 2 days provided critical input into how to best approach addressing this area of critical need for the region across five sessions:

1. From Climate Vulnerability to Climate Resilience: Essentials for Sound Decision-making
2. Decision-making Essentials for Energy Resilience
3. Building Resilience with Geospatial Intelligence
4. Science for Building Citizen Resilience
5. Resilient Health Systems

 The Conference helped generate consensus among participants that resilience building be embraced as an evidence-based decision-making process in which all critical actors—including Governments, businesses, social partners, academia, and, most critically, citizens—promote resilient and sustainable development.

 The final session of the Conference brought many of the OAS’ key partners to the table—including NOAA, the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, and the Development Bank of Latin America and the University of the West Indies—to determine strategic, forward thinking institutionalized responses in the short, medium, and long-term.

 The session concluded by recommending the development of :

* + a “**Collaboratory on Risk and Resilience”** comprising national, regional, and global agencies to serve as a strategic planning entity and facilitate co-creation and sharing of knowledge;
	+ a regional coordinating mechanism charged with aligning risk abatement with institutions responsible for horizontal coordination;
	+ a national integrated planning platform to generate a robust baseline of data for risk management and resilience building, anchored by a geospatial information framework;
	+ a robust national and regional surveillance system for chronic and non-chronic diseases profile; and
	+ an assessment of the implementation of risk mitigation and transdisciplinary training in the Caribbean.

 The session further considered a recently signed MOU between CAF and the OAS as a basis for generating data to develop policy, governance frameworks, and the design of a green project facility.

 By all measures, the Conference was a resounding success, and I would like to close this morning by highlighting another significant outcome:

 In his opening address, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica Honorable Roosevelt Skerrit committed to advocating within the OECS Authority and CARICOM for the implementation of the Conference’s outcomes, and specifically pledged to, within the CARICOM cabinet, champion the creation of a portfolio on Risk and Resilience supported by a regional coordinating and collaborative mechanism tasked with leveraging resources for capacity building and institutional strengthening to mitigate risk and strengthen resilience to external shocks.

 This is an important step forward for the Caribbean, and one that will surely serve as the basis for future climate and resiliency action across the region.

 SEDI will implement the recommendations from the conference. Indeed, the Secretariat intends to replicate this model in Central America in the near future. Numerous studies and lived experiences demonstrate that with greater collaboration and more widespread use of science and data, we can mitigate risk from climate related events as well as other exogenous shocks. We welcome the participation of all member states and partners in this endeavor.

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