1. BACKGROUND

a. School Safety in the Caribbean Context

Caribbean developing countries are exposed to a variety of similar natural hazards, namely hurricanes, floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, droughts, fires as well as technological and biological hazards. These hazards have compromised countries’ poverty reduction strategies, hindered development gains, and endangered educational systems. Their impacts are likely to be magnified by the expected effects of changes in global climate and potentially more frequent and severe extreme weather events. Low-lying states in the Caribbean are especially vulnerable to these effects which pose significant risks to public safety, infrastructure, and natural resources.

In the Caribbean, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the education systems of all countries in the region. While Education systems have been responding to the effects the COVID-19 pandemic, the systemic nature of risk has become evident, and highlighted the exposure of different systems to multiple hazards, as its unprecedented cascading effects have impacted all sectors and levels of our economies and societies. At the same time, countries are also implementing actions to mitigate the potential consequences of the hurricane season, and other latent hazards, such as
geological ones (earthquakes and tsunamis) and social ones (migration). The Tropical Storm Risk extended range forecast for North Atlantic hurricane activity in 2022, issued in December 2021, anticipates a season with activity close to the 1991-2020 30-year norm level, however this outlook has large uncertainties. The region is experiencing the effects of systemic risk as we witness the interplay and amplification of the varied effects of multiple events. The Global Assessment Report 2019 (GAR) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction reflect the certainty that in an ever more populous, networked, and globalizing society, the very nature and scale of risk have changed to such a degree that it surpasses established risk management institutions and approaches.

Disasters, such as those caused by COVID-19 or the 2021 eruption of the La Soufrière volcano in St Vincent and the Grenadines, have a major impact on children, youth, and education systems. Studies suggest that worldwide each year, 175 million children are likely to be affected by natural hazards, and children in the Caribbean are no exception. Children who have experienced a disaster are much more likely to have physical health problems, mental health symptoms, lower school attendance and trouble learning. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan caused widespread destruction in Grenada damaging 73 of 75 public schools. In 2010, in Haiti, a massive earthquake killed 38,000 students and 1,300 teachers and education personnel. It destroyed 4,000 schools, as well as the headquarters of the Ministry of Education. The 2017 hurricane season affected 1,700 school buildings in Cuba. Dominica had 18,500 school-aged children out of school, and 57 Government primary and secondary schools were damaged or destroyed. Children from Barbuda and Dominica had to be temporarily relocated to Antigua to attend classes. Research conducted by the World Bank predicts that the economic cost of lost learning stemming from COVID-19 will result in USD $17 trillion loss in lifetime earnings among today’s generation of schoolchildren if corrective action is not urgently taken. These figures are likely to increase unless populations improve their capacity to anticipate, prepare, adapt and become more resilient to such events.

3 Ibid.
b. The Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI)

Despite scarce resources, major strategies have been implemented individually in different countries to improve school preparedness, resilience, response and recovery. To ensure political commitment at the regional and national level, the First Caribbean Ministerial Safe School Forum was organized in April 2017 in Antigua and Barbuda, during which the Caribbean Safe School Initiative (CSSI) was launched, being the suggested framework to advance school safety in the Caribbean. The same event yielded a Regional Road Map on School Safety, and the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety, which guide the CSSI. During the First Ministerial Forum the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration was signed by 12 Caribbean Ministries of Education. During the Second Ministerial Forum, held in 2019 and hosted by the Ministry of Education and National Reconciliation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the number of signatories raised to 18.

The initiative is the Caribbean's contribution to the Worldwide-Initiative on Safe Schools (WISS) and promotes the partnership for advancing safe school implementation. Ministries of Education lead the implementation and get technical support from international, regional and national partners. Since its launch, the CSSI has been an inclusive effort, promoting the participation of all islands in the Caribbean, including CDEMA Participating States and overseas territories, as well as bridging language barriers across English, French, Dutch and Spanish-speaking communities.

2. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS CONTRIBUTING TO SCHOOL SAFETY

a. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted by the United Nations Member States on 18 March 2015 at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan. This a 15-year voluntary, non-binding agreement aims at: the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

Education plays a crucial role in reducing vulnerability and building community resilience to disaster risks, as well as empower people and reduce poverty. Recognizing that a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development adopted by the 193 countries represented by the United Nations General Assembly reflects the commitment to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" as Goal number 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Damage to schools by disasters can lead not only to the loss of children's and teachers' lives but also to a loss of public investment in social infrastructure and interruptions to education, which in turn can have lifelong implications.

To advance this goal, the Sendai Framework recognizes that schools should incorporate disaster-resistant structures according to local risks, while at the same time calling for knowledge and awareness of hazards and risk to be part of the school curriculum in order to bring about behavioural changes that support disaster risk reduction and greater resilience. The framework also states that policies and practices for disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. It also calls for the strengthening of disaster resilient public and private investments, particularly through structural, non-structural and functional disaster risk prevention and reduction measures in critical facilities, in particular schools and hospitals and physical infrastructure.

The VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean further supports the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, where the CSSI was represented by the current Chair, Hon. Curtis King, Minister of Education of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Furthermore, the "Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in the Americas And The Caribbean (Updated November 2021)" specifically mentions the need to work towards a stronger integration of knowledge on hazards and the use of disaster risk information in the education sector.

b. CARICOM Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy

In the Caribbean, the Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy 2014-2024 is the strategic road map for disaster risk management. The Strategy was developed through a broad-based, participatory and consultative process that was led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and involved regional disaster risk management stakeholders including CDEMA Participating States, representative of key sectors, regional and international development partners and donors. The Strategy aims to integrate CDM more firmly into development planning and will provide broad strategic direction to addressing the challenges of disaster risk management in the Caribbean during its ten-year lifespan. Education has been given significant consideration under this regional Strategy.
The Strategy prioritizes four areas for addressing DRM issues, generally summarized as (i) institutional strengthening, (ii) knowledge management for CDM, (iii) mainstreaming of CDM into key sectors and (iv) building and sustaining community resilience. More specifically, Priority Area 2 of the Strategy aims to achieve “Increased and sustained knowledge management and learning for Comprehensive Disaster Management”.

c. Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS)

The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS) was developed in collaboration with partners from the Global Alliance on Disaster Risk Reduction Education and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES) building on guidance from the 2009 and 2011 Global Platforms on Disaster Risk Reduction to undertake risk assessments on existing education and health facilities and the call of the High-level Communiqué at the 2013 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction “To start a global safe schools and safe health structures campaign in disaster-prone areas with voluntary funding and commitments to be announced at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015”. It is a government-led global partnership for advancing safe school implementation at the national level. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the first Caribbean country that has signed up to WISS. Through their commitment to the Caribbean Safe School Initiative, the current 18 signatories directly contribute to the WISS.

The Initiative seeks to motivate and support Governments to develop national strategies and implement school safety, building upon the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and defining a safe school as one that combines all of the following elements, defined as its three core pillars, which should be addressed by education policies and plans, and aligned with disaster management at national, regional, district, and local school site levels:
• Safe Learning Facilities (disaster-resilient infrastructure);
• School Disaster Management;
• Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Education.

Furthermore, the WISS also strives to promote the sharing of good practices and achievements in
safe school implementation, as well as to help identify challenges and offer technical assistance and
particular expertise around its three pillars.

3. THIRD MINISTERIAL FORUM ON SCHOOL SAFETY
IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Third Caribbean Ministerial School Safety Forum will be an in-person event, hosted by the Ministry
of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of Sint Maarten on 28 to 30 June 2022 in Sint Maarten, observing
all COVID-19 regulations in place at the time. Originally scheduled to take place in 2021, the COVID-19
pandemic had the event postponed and, in its place, “The Virtual Caribbean Safe School Initiative Pre-
Ministerial Forum” was held online on 15 to 26 March 2021. The upcoming Ministerial Forum build on
the outcomes of this pre-forum. Furthermore, it will offer the opportunity to reflect upon the changes
and challenges the Caribbean has faced since launching the Caribbean Safe School Initiative, mainly
the effects of more frequent extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Irma and Maria, or biological
hazards, such as COVID-19.

The Third Ministerial Forum will be organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
of Sint Maarten, in close collaboration with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
(CDEMA), the Ministry of Education and National Reconciliation of St Vincent and the Grenadines,
for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO).

The organization of the Forum is possible thanks to the financial support by the Directorate-General
for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).
a. Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The Third Ministerial Forum on School Safety in the Caribbean is a follow-up on Second Ministerial Forum, Forum held in April 2019 as well as the CSSI Pre-Forum, held online in March 2021. It will respond to the need for a collaborative and coordinated approach among actors in the region's education sector as well as across other sectors, fostering a systemic approach to risk. It will contribute to: CDEMA's Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy and Programming Framework 2014-2024; the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools (WISS); Caribbean Safe School Initiative; the Samoa Action Plan for SIDS, the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 Roadmap; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and its Regional Action Plan for the Americas and the Caribbean, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The forum will be linked to a youth forum “My Island, My Voice” to determine how Youth can be empowered and mobilized to improve school safety, increase inclusion, reduce the digital divide, foster child protection, address cyber bullying and protect the environment. Outcomes of the Youth Forum will be presented to the Ministers of Education during the Third Ministerial Forum.

Objectives

• To create an occasion for discussion, contemplation and decisions on school safety among Ministers of Education, School Safety Focal Points and key stakeholders.
• To update the Caribbean Regional Roadmap on School Safety.
• To reassert commitment to the Caribbean Safe School Initiative by nations from the region.

Outcomes

• Progress on the implementation of the Caribbean Regional Roadmap on School Safety shared among CSSI members.
• Increased coordination among School Safety Focal Points through a dedicated working session.
• Opportunities for a systemic approach to risk in the education sector identified through contributions from other government sectors, the private sector and youth.
• Donor support to the Caribbean Safe School Initiative identified.
• Updated Caribbean Regional Roadmap on School Safety.
• Adopted Sint Maarten Declaration on School Safety, replacing the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety (2017).
### b. Brief Description of the Programme Content

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<th></th>
<th><strong>Opening of the Third Caribbean Ministerial Forum on School Safety</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Honourable Drs. Rodolphe E. Samuel, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of Sint Maarten will receive the Chair of the Caribbean Safe School Initiative from the current Chair, Honourable Curtis King, Minister of Education and National Reconciliation.</td>
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<th><strong>School Safety Focal Point Working Session on the Implementation the Regional Roadmap</strong></th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Peer-to-peer meeting ahead of the arrival of Ministers to review challenges and lessons learned while implementing the Regional Road Map on School Safety. The working session will focus on increasing coordination and implementation during 2022 and 2023. Outcomes of this session will be shared with Ministers of Education.</td>
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<th><strong>Roadmap Progress: Overview of Country and Regional Level Actions</strong></th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Presentation of the outcomes of the monitoring exercise undertaken in the month prior to the Forum to measure advancements of priority actions of the Regional Roadmap for School Safety, last updated in 2019.</td>
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<th><strong>Update on Ongoing Review and Update of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSS)</strong></th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mid-2022 GADRRRES is expected to launch a revised CSS Framework. Ministers will receive insight into new developments of the Framework and its importance for national school safety agendas.</td>
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<th><strong>Resilient School Infrastructure</strong></th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Insight into needs and opportunities to support initiatives for school maintenance, retrofitting, reconstruction and design, as well as promote green schools and explore linkages with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.</td>
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<th><strong>Systemic Approach to School Safety: Contributions and Linkages with Other Sectors</strong></th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>An exchange among Ministers of Education on visions and opportunities for an increased collaboration with other sectors in light of the need for a more systemic approach to risk in the education sector.</td>
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<th><strong>Youth Forum Contributions</strong></th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Provide youth representatives with an opportunity to discuss with Ministers of Education on how youth can contribute to regional decision-making processes related to the CSSI. Explore ways in which national school safety agendas can involve and profit more effectively from the Youth.</td>
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INVESTMENT IN SCHOOL SAFETY
Review practical examples for initiatives to invest in school safety and explore funding opportunities for partners in the region.

UPDATE OF THE CARIBBEAN REGIONAL ROADMAP ON SCHOOLS SAFETY
Ministers of Education will amend the Regional Roadmap with inputs stemming from discussions held during the forum, outlining regional and national priorities actions for the next two years.

SINT MAARTEN DECLARATION ON SCHOOL SAFETY
To celebrate the common understanding and commitment on school safety, Ministers will sign the Sint Maarten Declaration on School Safety, replacing its predecessors, the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety.

c. Participants
The Forum is primarily targeting Ministries of Education, Ministers themselves, as well as technical advisors, mainly School Safety Focal Points. In addition, regional organizations that support the implementation of School Safety in the Caribbean may be invited.

Invited to the Third Ministerial Forum are the following countries: 19 CDEMA Participating States, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Sint Maarten, Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Puerto Rico as observer.