



VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean (RP21)

Building Resilient Economies in the Americas and the Caribbean

1 to 4 November 2021, Virtual Event



Statement of Youth of the Americas and the Caribbean on Disaster Risk Reduction within the framework of the VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Good afternoon, I would like to thank you all for allowing me to join this space and present the validated statement by the youth of the Americas and the Caribbean. I would also like to extend a special thanks to

- Minister Min. Hon. Desmond McKenzie, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Government of Jamaica,
- Ms Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- As well as the Ministers from the region

This Statement is the result of the Youth Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), developed virtually in the framework of the Preparatory Meeting of the VII Regional Platform for DRR. The Youth Forum, "Building Resilient Economies in the Americas and the Caribbean" had the participation of over 400 youth from the Americas and the Caribbean. The Forum allowed the discussion of young people to build this statement. The statement is supported by the members of the steering committee which includes the Government of Jamaica, UNDRR, UNICEF, IFRC, UNESCO and GNDR.

While the Youth Forum was held on October 26, 2021, the statement is a culmination of work by the Youth Committee since 2020 which include the development of a survey with over 1000 responses from the region and a youth webinar on the topic of DRR and Climate Change on the international day of the youth and the virtual DRR communication campaign.

The statement is as follows:

We, the youth, have concerns about the current messaging of disaster risk. While climate change impacts the frequency, magnitude and extent of hazards, there needs to be separate messaging on disaster risk reduction and climate change. Youth and policymakers need to understand that **disasters are not natural, but a result of social and political actions.**

We find that **hazards are changing faster than policies**, and there is a greater need for collaboration with the scientific community and policymakers. This will allow for the generation of holistic plans and policies, including nationally determined contributions, that will help to build the resilience of the region



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We urge our governments for **more inclusivity and diversity in leadership spaces on disaster risk reduction** and management. The voices of youth, vulnerable groups and indigenous people need to be included and acted upon to create a sustainable future for the region.

We believe **there is a need for greater investment in disaster risk financing** at the local level, and more structured psychosocial support programmes to assist people impacted by disasters. We call on you not to destroy and degrade the environment for short-term economic gain, but to view our environment as a protective barrier against the impacts of hazardous events. Disaster planning should begin before the impacts of hazards are felt.

Within the region, youth have been trying to address these issues through advocacy, raising awareness of climate change and disaster risk reduction, as well as capacity building sessions in communities. Young people are also part of the construction of proposals and that is why we look for safe spaces in the processes, to be able to contribute from our experience and knowledge. Through this forum, the youth aim to generate a website to host information to assist in the execution of local disaster risk reduction events and capacity building sessions with youth leaders in the region. However, we cannot do it on our own and we need the support of policymakers and regional organizations.

We are living in unprecedented times, where the Americas and the Caribbean region has been faced with multiple hazards simultaneously and during a time in which climate change is expected to exacerbate these issues even further. Battling the COVID-19 pandemic alongside natural events has disrupted many livelihoods and increased inequality and vulnerability.

We believe that hazards may be natural, but disasters are created, and we urge the governments and organizations to listen to our suggestions on improving the DRR space. Most importantly, we ask that you involve more youth and children in the process, and generate spaces for our participation, because disasters affect us, maybe more so than they do you.

