



CONCEPT NOTE

THE CARIBBEAN MIGRATION CONSULTATIONS

CONSULTATION TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION ON HUMAN MOBILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTERS AND THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 6-7 June 2019

I. Introduction and Background

The Caribbean is comprised of countries and territories, many of which are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and are vulnerable to a variety of natural hazards: hurricanes, floods, volcanic and seismic activity, droughts and bush fires. Many of these countries and territories have large percentages of their population centers and economic activities in low-lying coastal areas, facing specific risks linked to the adverse effects of climate change. In the Caribbean, like elsewhere, the adverse effects of climate change are projected to affect the frequency and intensity of certain natural hazards and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and heavy rainfalls. Rising global temperatures are also likely to increase drought risk and water scarcity in the Caribbean, according to the latest report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The vulnerability and exposure of Caribbean countries and territories was demonstrated during the record-breaking hurricane season of 2017, with landfall of two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes, Irma and Maria. These events demonstrated that Caribbean countries do not only belong to one of the most hazard-prone regions of the world, but they are also at high risk of displacement and other forms of human mobility because of poor infrastructure, land use, and low adaptive capacity, coupled with geographically exposed populations. Many of the countries are heavily dependent on the tourism industry and on the agricultural sector, both of which are frequently and negatively impacted by extreme weather events. In the Caribbean, 60 per cent of the population and 70 per cent of all economic activity are located within two miles of the coastline.





Slow-onset processes and events linked to the adverse impacts of climate change such as increasing temperatures and sea level rise have increased the vulnerability and exposure of certain populations and exacerbated other risk factors such as food security, water scarcity, population growth, urbanization, and poverty.

In the Caribbean, a complex and multi-causal relationship exists between these hazards and political, demographic, environmental and social factors and human mobility¹, both internally and across borders. For example, sudden-onset disasters linked to natural hazards, particularly frequent and intense storms (and the earthquake in Haiti) have resulted in over six-and-a-half million reported incidents of displacement (mostly internal) over the past ten years (2008-2017), the majority in Cuba and Haiti. More recently and in the aftermath of the 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria, many Caribbean countries and territories both experienced both internal displacement and received displaced persons from nearby countries².

In 2014, governments of Latin American and Caribbean adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, which recognized the challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters and the displacement of persons across borders caused by these phenomena in the region. Governments noted the need to conduct studies on this matter, the results of which serve to support the adoption of appropriate national and regional measures, tools and guidelines.

Overall, the Caribbean is both a region of origin, transit, and destination of extra-regional and intraregional migration flows, and experiences considerable return migration. Furthermore, as it is situated between North and South America, the Caribbean serves as a transit point for migrants from South America and elsewhere trying to reach North America. Migration in the region is anything but linear; rather it is characterized by complex, reciprocal flows³.

Importantly, migration and displacement have continued in the period after the hurricanes made landfall in 2017, including across borders. In many instances, national and regional migration policies, frameworks and laws are not in place to govern such human mobility, leading to unpredictable and *ad hoc* responses. Key gap areas are related to admission of the disaster-displaced, and the conditions under which they would be permitted to stay in another country.

¹ As per the UNFCCC Cancun Adaptation Framework, human mobility includes migration, displacement and planned relocation. See also Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility. *Human mobility in the context of climate change: Recommendations to COP 20*. <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/pbn/docs/Human-Mobility-in-the-context-of-Climate-Change.pdf>

² See: Cantor, D (2018). *Cross-border displacement, climate change and disasters: Latin America and the Caribbean*. Geneva: UNHCR/PDD (unpublished).

³ IOM (2017) *Migration in the Caribbean: current trends, opportunities and challenges*. Working papers on migration. San José: IOM.



The situation of nationals of Caribbean countries residing or visiting countries affected by disasters has also received increased attention in the aftermath of the 2017 hurricane season. Under the auspices of the Caribbean Migration Consultations, a workshop organized in Santo Domingo in April 2018 discussed the integration of migrants in disaster preparation and response. Among the main recommendations of the event emerged the need to enhance the involvement of consular officers from Ministries of Foreign Affairs in emergency response initiatives.

Although the Caribbean region lacks a regional environmental migration framework, it has a well-established and functioning disaster risk reduction operational and policy framework led by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which has vast experience coordinating most emergency response plans and disaster risk reduction strategies in the region.

This concept note introduces a proposal for regional consultation to discuss opportunities and challenges in implementing a framework for cooperation on disaster displacement and migration in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change in the Caribbean. It will be complemented with a more detailed background paper that will be distributed to participants prior to the consultation.

The meeting is organized in the framework of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC) regional dialogue and aims to inform and support networks of technical specialists on *migration and climate change and emergency preparedness and response*. This note briefly identifies key topics for discussion related to cross-border disaster displacement in light of existing mechanisms and emerging protection needs in the Caribbean.

II. A regional consultation in the Caribbean on displacement and migration in the context of disasters and climate change

The Regional Consultation will be hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on 6-7 June 2019 (two days); and will be co-organized by IOM and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).

Participants will include representatives from States, countries, territories, international and regional organizations, academic institutions and other key actors working on issues related to displacement, disaster risk reduction, disaster management, climate change, human rights protection, migration management and development.

The overall objectives of the consultation are to:

1. Deepen knowledge and understanding of displacement trends and overall human mobility dynamics in the region in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change





among regional and national stakeholders from various departments, including migration officers, disaster risk reduction and environment experts and consular affairs staff;

2. Identify policy, normative and operational challenges and gaps related to disasters and displacement in the Caribbean;
3. Develop concrete, practical policy and programmatic guidance to enhance the region's overall preparedness and response capacity to these challenges under the work of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC).

Expected outcomes from the regional consultation in the Caribbean may include the following:

1. A better shared understanding of the overall displacement dynamics in the region (drivers, trends, patterns, pathways and characteristics of the population) and the general protection needs of people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change;
2. Identification of good practices, at regional, national and community levels, in establishing mechanisms for disaster preparedness, building resilience, and responding to and managing displacement risks;
3. Priorities to prepare future regional cooperation frameworks, which may include criteria for identifying people displaced across borders due to disasters, admissions, standards of treatment, opportunities for further regional and inter-state collaboration and recommendations on how to address them.

In terms of the key topics for the consultation, the discussions will focus on four thematic issues: i) managing disaster displacement risks in the country of origin and the inclusion of human mobility into national and regional DRR policies and adaptation planning processes; ii) migration as adaptation to environmental and climate change; iii) protection challenges in the context of migration flows for displaced persons as well as migrants in countries affected by disasters; and iv) addressing cross-border disaster-displacement: migration law and policies.

The regional consultation will emphasize and encourage discussion on how to incorporate the outcomes from this regional consultation within existing processes at the regional and sub-regional level, and at the global level such as the in the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

III. Administrative details and logistics

Logistic details will be shared in due time by the organizers.

A. Participants





Participants will include two representatives from each of the 16 following Caribbean independent countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Suriname. Other countries and territories will be invited to attend at their expense and may be offered funded participation should budget or additional funds permit. Five representatives from regional institutions: CARICOM, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's sub regional office for the Caribbean – will also be invited to attend. Finally, representatives of countries with territories located in the Caribbean – France, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom will also be invited at their own expense.

It is asked that each country put forward the name of two (2) managers (or equivalent) with decision-making responsibilities in the areas of immigration management, disaster/emergency management, environment/climate change, or national planning strategy. The meeting organizers will then review the candidates' portfolios to ensure their areas of responsibility meet the ideal participant profile. Representatives would be required to be knowledgeable on the various concepts listed above, yet be able to benefit from further learning, and be able to identify how these practices would be applicable to their respective migration and emergency preparedness and response systems. The ideal participant could speak to their national issues and best practices during the interactive sessions which will be facilitated through simultaneous interpretation (English<->Spanish). Following the meeting, participants are asked to share their newfound knowledge and experience with their national colleagues in their respective operational and policy sectors. The meeting will aim to form (a) network(s) of officials in immigration, emergency management, and environment to ensure continued engagement, networking and informal information sharing.

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