

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Strengthening Disaster Resilience for Caribbean Communities

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Introduction

The Caribbean Islands are located in one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world, and so are their economies. They frequently experience threats from various disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes and more. The Caribbean includes 29 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), since SIDS are generally solely dependent on sectors depending on climate activity, these events affect them to the core. For hundreds of years, frequent extreme weather events have caused severe infrastructure damage and have placed long-term strain on economies across the Caribbean Region.

Recent disasters and the recovery processes that followed them have clearly shown that recovery for the region cannot be sustained solely depending on immediate humanitarian response. What the Caribbean needs is a planned, long-term and sustainable recovery which is only possible with the help of international collaboration due to the high debt and limited economic capacity that is carried within Caribbean States. As disasters keep happening back-to-back, Caribbean island economies face a common cycle of vulnerability, thus not having the chance to recover before another disaster makes the situation even worse.

In the context of RCIMUN 2026's theme, "In the Wake of Crisis: Rebuilding Trust, Peace, and Prosperity," the issue of Strengthening Disaster Resilience in Caribbean Communities clearly shows how resilience building measures can be transformed from crises to opportunities for sustainable recovery and international trust.

Definition of Key Terms

Disaster: A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS): A group of developing countries characterized by size, limited resources, and high vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters.

Early Warning System: An integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction,

disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness activities systems and processes that enables individuals, communities, governments, businesses and others to take timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.

Disaster resilience: The ability of individuals, communities, organisations and states to adapt to and recover from hazards, shocks or stresses without compromising long-term prospects for development.

Hurricane Maria: Extremely powerful and catastrophic tropical cyclone that affected the northeastern Caribbean in September 2017, particularly in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. The hurricane resulted in 3,059 deaths and an approximate monetary loss of 91.61 billion US Dollars.

2010 Haiti Earthquake: Large-scale earthquake that occurred January 12, 2010, on the West Indian island of Hispaniola, comprising the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The earthquake resulted in 220,000-230,000 deaths and an approximate monetary damage of 7.8-8.5 billion US Dollars, marking the earthquake as one of the most deadliest earthquakes of history

Hurricane Melissa: Extremely powerful hurricane that was formed in the Atlantic Ocean in October 2025. Caused 95 deaths in total and over 8.82 billion US Dollars in damage, which is the largest in Jamaican History.

Earthquake: Sudden violent shaking of the ground, typically causing great destruction, as a result of movements within the earth's crust or volcanic action.

Hurricane: A storm with a violent wind, in particular a tropical cyclone in the Caribbean.

Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM): CDM is an integrated approach to disaster management. It is viewed as the management of all hazards through all phases of the disaster management cycle (prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation). It involves the public and private sectors, as well as all segments of civil society and the general population.

General Overview

Around 5 centuries ago, in 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered the Caribbean. Since then, for every single year of the past 5 centuries, Hurricanes, Earthquakes and many more disasters have been shaping the fate of the region. Many Caribbean states are located within the Atlantic hurricane belt, where they face brutal weather conditions regularly. At the same time, these states often have high concentrated coastal populations and limited economic diversification, which ultimately increases the vulnerability of natural hazards and makes post-disaster recovery programs more complicated

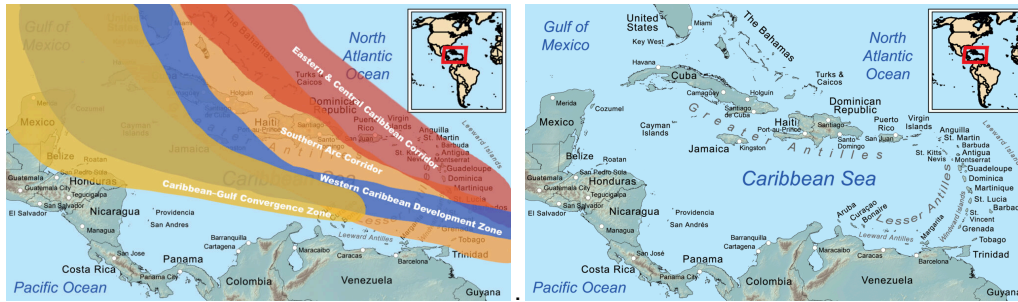


Image I: Map of the Atlantic Hurricane Belt Image II: Map of the Caribbean Region

In more recent decades, natural disaster occurrences have had devastating and long term impact on Caribbean economies. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan caused great damage in Grenada, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands destroying a large portion of the state’s housing and impactfully disrupting economic activity in the region. In 2010, an earthquake that took place in Haiti, resulted in severe loss of human life and collapse of crucial infrastructure, overwhelming the national response capacity of the governments and states. More recently, hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 caused large-scale damage across several Caribbean islands, destroying housing, transport networks and public facilities, with prolonged recovery efforts lasting several years, making the process arduous for both the government and citizens.

After such disasters, access to public facilities and services, including healthcare, education and electricity gets jeopardized for extended periods of time. Governments are forced to turn significant portions of their national budgets towards emergency response and reconstruction, putting limits on their ability to invest in long term development and social programs. For smaller island economies, the economic damage of a single disaster may be a substantial share of annual GDP in the island, making recovery slow and economically painful for citizens and the country’s growth overall.

Furthermore, rebuilding the previous standards that were present in the countries after disasters are not sufficient anymore. Rebuilding the previous standards result in a waste of resources and valuable time that could be used to build back more resilient infrastructure. However, the limited technical and technological expertise in the regions make the rebuilding of new and standardized infrastructure a great burden since the economic capacities of the Caribbean governments are not enough to tolerate the new changes that should be made. The fact that Caribbean States have different paces in rebuilding themselves after disasters makes the process even more trickier for every individual country. The interruption caused by damaged infrastructure carries back states by limiting access to education and health systems, creating gaps in education and resulting in lower productivity, contributing negatively to the issue at hand.

Over the past decades, significant efforts were made towards disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. Institutions such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) were established, although these organizations strengthened regional cooperation, disasters still continue to determine the fate of the Caribbean, highlighting that the change of fate is only possible with further international cooperation.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Dominica

After Hurricane Maria, Dominica has promised to become the world's first “climate-resilient nation.” The state shows major support for sustainable infrastructure and responsibility of states in the global climate.

Haiti

One of the most economically vulnerable countries in the Caribbean, the government frequently emphasizes the need for international cooperation towards strengthening resilience towards disasters, Haiti has been highly affected from disasters in the Caribbean such as the earthquake that took place in the country in 2010.

European Union

The EU has shown grand support to SIDS with funding towards climate adaptation projects, the EU also actively recalls the need for international cooperation in order to facilitate disaster resilience in the Caribbean. Since the 1990s, the EU has provided over €219 million in humanitarian aid to Caribbean countries (excluding Haiti), supporting disaster preparedness and response. In 2025, part of the EU's €120 million regional aid package includes funding dedicated to disaster preparedness in the Caribbean.

Caribbean Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA)

The CDEMA's mandate is to act as the primary regional intergovernmental organization responsible for promoting and implementing Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) in 18-20 participating states. CDEMA has helped open a new Regional Logistics Hub in Barbados to pre-position critical emergency supplies. CDEMA can now rapidly dispatch food and medicine to impacted islands within 48 to 72 hours of a major disaster.

United States of America

The United States supports strengthening climate resilience in the Caribbean through financial assistance, renewable energy development, and disaster preparedness programs, through initiatives such as the “US-Caribbean Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis 2030”

France

France prioritizes climate resilience in the Caribbean due to its own overseas territories in the region such as Guadeloupe and Martinique. The French support regional disaster preparedness, climate adaptation funding, and environmental protection through organizations such as the French

Development Agency.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom strongly supports climate resilience in Caribbean states since many Caribbean nations are members of the Commonwealth of Nations. Through the UK Caribbean Infrastructure Fund, it invests in water systems and sustainable energy projects across the Caribbean.

Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF)

CCRIF helps to mitigate the short-term cash flow problems small developing economies suffer after major natural disasters. Following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) made rapid insurance payouts totaling approximately \$29 million USD to affected Caribbean states to support immediate recovery efforts.

Timeline of Events

<p>September 8-19, 1988</p>	<p>Hurricane Gilbert, one of the most destructive hurricanes in history, strikes the Caribbean, causing 315 deaths and 2.98 billion US Dollars (1988) in damage.</p>
<p>September 2-25, 2004</p>	<p>Hurricane Ivan hits the Caribbean and the United States, causing 124 deaths and great damage in infrastructure.</p>
<p>18-22 January, 2005</p>	<p>At the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 168 Member States of the United Nations adopted The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the first global agreement focused on action towards disaster reduction.</p>
<p>January 12, 2010</p>	<p>A 7.0 magnitude earthquake strikes Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, resulting in around 220,000 – 230,000 deaths and 7.8-8.5 billion US Dollars in damage.</p>
<p>March 18, 2015</p>	<p>The United Nations adopts the Sendai Framework, mainly focusing on resilience and</p>

	risk-prevention, replacing the HFA.
April 22, 2016	The Paris Agreement was adopted by 195 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21)
August-September, 2017	Hurricanes Irma and Maria strike the Caribbean, Dominica loses %200 of its GDP in damage.
August 24, 2019-September 10, 2019	Hurricane Dorian hits the Caribbean, resulting in 85 deaths, 245 missing, and over 5.1 billion US Dollars in damage.
6-20 November, 2022	At the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), The Loss and Damage Fund was established.
October 21-31, 2025	Hurricane Melissa hits the Caribbean, resulting in 95 deaths, 27 missing, and over 8.82 billion US Dollars in damage, the largest in Jamaican History.

UN Involvement

In the past years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) have been actively participating in the involvement towards disaster risk reduction in the Caribbean. The UNDP and the UNDRR has partnered with the European Union under the initiative “UNDP-UNDRR Support to European Union-Caribbean-Resilient Programme (EU-CA-RES’)” with the aims of building early warning systems and strengthening recovery capacities. Furthermore, UN organizations such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF have been actively participating in post-recovery efforts in the past as well. The United Nations also holds the annual “United Nations Climate Change Conference” which revolves around 5 UN groups with one of them being the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean (GRULAC).

Relevant UN Documents

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (23 June 2015, A/RES/69/283)

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/795443?ln=en&v=pdf>

Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly (25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1)

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3923923?ln=en&v=pdf>

Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-first session, held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December 2015. Addendum. Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-first session. (29 January 2016, FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1)

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/831052?ln=en&v=pdf>

Treaties and Events

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015):

The Hyogo Framework (HFA) was the first plan to explain, describe and detail the work required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses. It was developed and agreed on with the many partners needed to reduce disaster risk (governments, international agencies, disaster experts and many others) bringing them into a common system of coordination. The HFA, which ran from 2005 to 2015, set five specific priorities for action:

1. Making disaster risk reduction a priority;
2. Improving risk information and early warning;
3. Building a culture of safety and resilience;
4. Reducing the risks in key sectors;
5. Strengthening preparedness for response.

Paris Agreement (2016):

The Paris Agreement is an international treaty on climate change that was signed in 2016. The treaty covers climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance. The Paris Agreement was negotiated by 196 parties at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference near Paris, France. As of January 2026, 194 members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are parties to the agreement. Of the three UNFCCC member states which have not ratified the agreement, the only major emitter is Iran. The United States, the second largest emitter, withdrew from the agreement in 2020, rejoined in 2021, and withdrew again in 2026.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030):

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) is a 15-year, voluntary UN agreement adopted in 2015 to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks, it is the successor of the HFA. It aims to decrease mortality, affected people, economic loss, and infrastructure damage through four key priorities which are understanding risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and improving recovery via "Build Back Better".

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

For a long time, Caribbean countries mostly relied on foreign aid to clean up the damage after a major hurricane or earthquake. Eventually, leaders realized that just waiting to be rescued was a dangerous strategy. To solve this, they teamed up to form regional organizations like the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). It has been successful in shifting the region's focus towards preparing for hazards ahead of time. They have effectively reduced casualties and saved

lives. However, their attempts to enforce stronger building codes have been less successful due to high local construction costs.

International groups have also stepped in to fund local safety projects. Initially, these programs were highly successful, where they gave money directly to neighborhoods to build life-saving infrastructure like solar-powered water tanks or reinforced community centers. Unfortunately, as a long-term solution, these attempts have mostly fallen short. A major problem is that these local projects rely on temporary grants, meaning the work and maintenance often stop when the foreign money runs out.

Possible Solutions

Possible solutions for the issue should both be focused on disaster prevention and effective recovery. Delegates shall consider introducing stronger policies for disaster-resilient infrastructure, while doing so, delegates should keep in mind that the economic capacity of the Caribbean is, most of the time, insufficient for these policies, thus making international support towards these policies essential. Cooperation with bodies such as but not limited to the UNDRR and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) can help Caribbean states access technical expertise that strengthen their disaster-preparedness.

Delegates may also focus on international and regional cooperation. Strengthening cooperation through regional organizations could improve management among Caribbean states. Expanding international financial mechanisms programs such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) could allow vulnerable island states to access funding after disasters and begin reconstruction processes in a more quick manner.

Finally, considering that the disasters not only affects the government but the citizens as a whole, delegates may consider funds or joint cooperation systems focused directly on the wellbeing of the citizens of the Caribbean. While doing so, delegates shall keep in mind that corruption is a significant issue in the Caribbean, paying attention to direct cooperation with the government and implementing necessary measures.

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