



Dirección de Prevención y  
Atención de Emergencias



Sistema Nacional para la Prevención  
y Atención de Desastres

**GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**  
**First Session Geneva, Switzerland**  
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**WRITTEN STATEMENT DELEGATION OF COLOMBIA**

Colombia counts with a National System for the Prevention and Attention of Disasters” and a policy framework adopted by National Decree<sup>1</sup>. The System is inter-sectorial, territorially decentralized and promotes the participation of the private sector, the public institutions and the community. One of its main characteristics has to do with the autonomy of the municipalities regarding risk reduction planning, emergency attention and activities towards rehabilitation and recovery in their territories. In this sense, the action of the regional and national governments is subsidiary and complementary to the capacity of the municipalities, concerning risk control in their jurisdictions.

In relation to risk reduction, it is relevant to underline the profound effect that the territorial ordering process initiated in 1997, had. It allowed the incorporation of criteria for the corrective and prospective disaster risk management, by defining the uses and occupation of the territory, as well as other territorial planning aspects. This has permitted the local administrations to correct and improve the urban development tendencies and reduce the illegality and informality. Nevertheless, the advances in this aspect in Colombia have been very heterogeneous. Some cities have made positive progress, while the technical limitations of most of the small and medium municipalities to generate knowledge and manage information for the local level have perpetuated the dependency to the central level.

Another important achievement in the last years is related to the definition of financial strategies for the national level and for some cities, to reduce the fiscal vulnerability at the occurrence of socio natural disasters. Strategies on collective insurances, soft credits, and contingency funds are, among others, instruments that are starting to be utilized by the national and local government agents.

But besides mentioning some of the results accomplished, we would like to call your attention on the crescent population concentration in the urban areas. This is without discussion one of the biggest challenges for the region under a disaster risk reduction perspective. In Latin America and the Caribbean around 75% of the population lives in urban areas pressing over the territory in terms of the location of the inhabitants, the provision of means of living, the use of environmental goods and the disposition of waste. The result is a city border process without control, in areas where the price of land is low and there is great degradation with an elevated population density and maximum vulnerable conditions as a consequence.

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<sup>1</sup> Decree 919, 1989 createS the System for the Prevention and Attention of Disasters and Decree 93, 1998 adopted the National Plan for the Prevention and Attention of Disasters.



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Another relevant factor to consider is the importance of the productive and economical activity of big cities in this continent, with regard to the national economies. The capital cities house the government and with other intermediate cities determine important percentages of the national income. That is why the possible consequences of a disaster overcome the urban environment to position themselves in the middle of the national policies.

Within this field Colombia can present significant advances in cities like Bogotá, Medellín and Manizales. Bogotá, the capital city, counts with a solid integral management model<sup>2</sup> build upon adopted policies, instruments, processes and language that are shared among institutions as well as the community. The concretion of this model has allowed the city to face in an efficient way the complex challenges that the rapid informal urban development has produced in terms of risk on the last decades. However there are still a lot of problems to be solved in other urban areas of the territory.

Colombia salutes with enthusiasm and expectation the fact that one of the central discussion topics during this First Meeting of the Global Platform has to do with risk reduction in urban environments and big cities. The strengthening of the System of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction - ISDR, constitutes a favorable fact on this direction. The inclusive character of the national and sub national levels, the recognition of the necessity to support regional and local processes through the coordination and coherence of global policies and the promotion of networks that can influence the integration of efforts towards accomplishing tangible objective on risk reductions, are all valid principles of the dynamic in the cities.

As a contribution we propose to lead the conformation of a “Thematic Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction on Urban Environments and Big Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean”, through the technical and institutional capacity of Bogotá. We would like to facilitate a permanent forum to analyze and discuss problems, challenges and alternatives that the cities in the region face in terms of disaster risk reduction with the participation of local administrators, UN agencies, cities associations, universities, research centers, bilateral agencies, financial institutions, among others.

We invite the national delegations form Latin America and the Caribbean to support and disseminate this initiative among the administrators of the main cities. We also invite the ISDR to join our efforts with the intention of starting the process to design the platform, connect cities and identify experiences in order to have the Platform organized and in operation before the next Global Platform Reunion.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Agreement 11, 1987 creates the Fund for the Prevention and Attention of Emergencies, Decree 332, 2004 organizes the System for the Prevention and Attention of Emergencies and Decree 423, 2006 adopts the City's Plan for the Prevention and Attention of Emergencies.