

# Press Releases: Ministerial for the “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership”

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On April 12, Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan led an interagency team of United States senior officials and experts to U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) headquarters in Miami, Florida, where he hosted ministers and disaster management officials from 18 Caribbean countries, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, and the Regional Security System to launch the new “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership.”

The “U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership” will strengthen the U.S.-Caribbean relationship and advance our shared interests in achieving greater resilience to natural disasters. The Partnership involves the following initiatives:

## **Understanding Risk and Enabling Action**

- **Weather Information-Sharing and Storm Surge Mapping:** The United States, through funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will roll out storm surge mapping to additional countries in the Caribbean, enabling governments to assess and mitigate flooding risks from tropical cyclones and tsunamis. The United States, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will continue to offer weather information sharing capabilities with Caribbean countries.
- **Space Technologies for Risk Reduction and Resilience:** The United States, through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), will make geospatial information openly accessible, understandable, and readily useable with Caribbean partners to ensure the region’s decision-makers and stakeholders have the tools necessary to implement sustainable resilience policies. U.S. and Caribbean officials will continue high-level policy dialogues and collaboration on the use of Earth observation tools to build resilience and reduce risk during the Understanding Risk: Caribbean Conference in Barbados, May 27, and a NASA-led workshop on vulnerability and exposure of infrastructure in

Puerto Rico, August 6-8. The United States will be an active partner when Jamaica hosts the first United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Americas and Caribbean Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction meeting in 2020.

- **Monitoring Terrestrial Hazards:** The United States, through USAID and in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), will offer technical assistance to the University of the West Indies' Seismic Research Center for Dominica and other Caribbean nations to build technical skills in monitoring volcanoes via the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program. This assistance will help Caribbean countries continue improving their ability to provide early warning. The United States supports resilience to terrestrial hazards through the installation of seismic stations for the Caribbean Tsunami Early Warning System, as well as technical consultations and capacity building on coastal inundation and erosion hazards.

### **Building Resilient Communities**

- **Empowering Local Community Resilience:** The United States, through the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), plans to provide \$650,000 in grants to eastern Caribbean community organizations to improve disaster mitigation and resilience.
- **Planning Smarter, Responding Better:** The United States, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), committed to sharing best practices and lessons learned from its recovery efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and other parts of the United States recently impacted by hurricanes. Information sharing will include the use of industry standards and building codes to build back and improve the resilience of disaster-impacted facilities and infrastructure.
- **Network Resilience:** The United States, through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), committed to share with its Caribbean regulatory counterparts best practices in emergency communications and disaster preparedness.
- **Resilient Energy Systems:** Under the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), the Department of State is working toward resilient, cost-effective, and secure energy re-development efforts in support of disaster recovery in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica. Building on this effort, U.S. and Caribbean officials announced the Advancing Caribbean Energy Resilience (ACER) Workshop to be organized by the Department of Energy in partnership with the Department of State and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Puerto Rico, May 2-3. The ACER workshop will further advance energy resilience in the Caribbean and bring together technical experts and regional policymakers to learn about tools for powering critical infrastructure and microgrids.

### **Improving Disaster Response**

- **U.S. Assistance to the Caribbean:** The United States, through USAID, will offer skills development training to the Caribbean Red Cross National Societies and to their volunteers. The United States will also work with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and Regional Security System to strengthen regional response capabilities. Ongoing USAID

programs in the Caribbean help islands prepare for their annual hurricane seasons. USAID maintains prepositioned emergency supplies in Florida, Texas, and Haiti. USAID has trained on-call local disaster relief staff and consultants that monitor and collect information on potential disasters in the Caribbean and enable the U.S. government to respond immediately should a country request assistance.

- **Civil-Military Coordination and Training:** In addition to sharing best practices in military and civilian disaster response, SOUTHCOM officials announced U.S. participation in the establishment of a Multi-National Caribbean Coordination Center in Barbados that will support information sharing and coordination among allied partners when responding to disasters in the Caribbean. The Coordination Center will support the Caribbean-focused Tradewinds Exercise in June to train over 600 Caribbean military and security personnel in responding to natural disasters and land and maritime threats. This exercise will also incorporate civilian authorities in a disaster simulation planning exercise. On behalf of the United States, the Deputy Secretary and a representative of the Regional Security System signed an End Use Agreement, which outlined a new plan for cooperative activities to help build the defense and security of the eastern Caribbean region.
- **Civil Aviation in the Caribbean in Time of Disaster:** The United States and participating Caribbean countries signed a declaration of intent to expand civil aviation cooperation to promote the resumption of critical services quickly after a disaster. The declaration of intent specifically calls for the creation of a disaster resilience-planning group, the "Caribbean Aviation Resilience and Recovery Group," to share information and lessons learned for recovery from disaster events, and to enhance partnerships and communication mechanisms to mitigate vulnerabilities and strengthen recovery efforts in Caribbean aviation. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will work with aviation partners in the Caribbean to achieve the goals of the declaration of intent.

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