

# IDRL

International Disaster Response Law  
Haiti, 2013

# Strengthening legal preparedness for international disaster assistance in ACS countries

Association of Caribbean States' Heads of State Summit

22 April 2013 (8am to 2pm)

Karibe Hotel, Pétion-Ville, Haiti



Las Colinas. One of the urban areas severely affected by the avalanche of 13th January, El Salvador. / IFRC

On April 22, the Governments of Haiti and Mexico, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will host a discussion on "strengthening legal preparedness for international disaster assistance in Association of Caribbean States countries" on the occasion of the 5th Summit of the Heads of States and/or Government of the ACS in Port-au-Prince.

ACS member states are all too aware of their rising vulnerability to natural disasters. The vast majority of these disasters (including over 200 events just in the last ten years) have been addressed by the communities affected, with the help of the government and civil society of their own countries. However, the region has also seen more than its share of megadisasters, such as the earthquakes that struck Port-au-Prince in 2010 and Mexico City in 1985, Hurricanes Ivan in 2004 and Mitch in 1998, and historic floods, such as those that have struck Colombia over the last several years.

Global solidarity has often been a critical factor in mitigating the humanitarian crises caused by these events, but affected states' task in managing international response has grown more challenging over time. How can they ensure not only that the right aid arrives at the right time but that it supports, rather than undermines, domestic efforts? Part of the answer must be in effective procedures and rules at the domestic, regional and international levels, now generally referred to as "international disaster response laws, rules and procedures" or "IDRL".

In 2007, the state parties to the Geneva Conventions affirmed the importance of IDRL and unanimously adopted the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance" (also known as the "IDRL Guidelines").

Based on global consultations and case study research around the world, the IDRL Guidelines recommend preparatory actions that states can take to avoid the most common regulatory problems in international relief operations. In 2011, a "Model Act" was developed to provide further support to states interested in implementing the Guidelines. In November 2012, the ACS Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction decided to adopt promotion of IDRL and the Model Act as an on-going activity in the ACS. The Special Committee recommended the topic to be included in the ACS Summit.

This event will stake stock of progress on IDRL among ACS member states and globally, featuring presentations on:

- The experience of international assistance after the 2010 Haiti earthquake and current initiatives to strengthen Haiti's framework for IDRL.
- Experiences and initiatives in this area in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Mexico.
- Global developments in strengthening IDRL, including work with the IDRL Guidelines and Model Act.

It will also be an opportunity for member states and their partners to debate additional steps that can be taken nationally and regionally to improve the facilitation and oversight of international assistance.



Residents of La Piste, Port-au-Prince, lined up hours in advance of the distribution of Red Cross relief shelter materials. Bonnie Gillespie/American Red Cross



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies