



**XVI Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas  
Ad Hoc Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and  
Disaster Relief  
Santiago de Chile November 8-9, 2023**



## **Meeting Minutes**

### **I. Background**

- A. The Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, hereinafter called CDMA, is a multilateral political meeting of the Defense Ministers of the Americas held every two years, endorsed by the governments of the participating countries. The CMDA is the principal meeting of the defense sector in the hemisphere. According to Article 2 of its regulations, the goal of the CDMA is to promote mutual understanding, analyze, debate and exchange ideas and experiences in defense and security matters.
- B. During the XV meeting of the CDMA, which took place in Brazil from July 25 to 29, 2022, in the "Brasília Declaration" the Ministers agreed:
- In paragraph 26:  
*"Their gratitude and recognition to the United States of America for their hospitality and collaboration in the development of the in-person Ad Hoc Working Group "Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR)."*
  - In paragraph 27, letter "c":  
*"Maintain the Ad Hoc Working Group "Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR)", thanking Chile for the offer to host during 2023, highlighting the development of MECODE."*
  - In paragraph 28:  
*"Reiterate the commitment of the Member States of the Ad hoc Working Groups organized for the 2023/2024 cycle, with the aim of reaching recommendations that allow greater cooperation and coordination between them, with the aim of contributing to the success of the XVI CMDA."*

### **II. Participants:**

#### A. Secretariat of the Working Group:

1. Karen Meier, Head of the International Relations Division, General Director, kmeier@ssdefensa.gov.cl.
2. Valentin Segura, general coordinator, vsegura@ssdefensa.gov.cl.
3. Sergio Larraín, executive coordinator, slarrain@ssdefensa.gov.cl.
4. Rafael Castillo, administrative and logistic coordinator, rcastillo@ssdefensa.gov.cl.
5. Antonia Carvajal, administrative and logistic coordinator, gcarvajal@ssdefensa.gov.cl.

#### B. Country delegations:

1. Argentina (Pro Tempore Secretariat of the XVI CDMA)
  - Pedro Rozenwurcel, National Director of International Defense Policy and Coordinator of the XVI CDMA.



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2. Brazil
  - Colonel José Rubens Marques, General Coordinator of the Inter-American Organizations Section of the Ministry of Defense.
  - Capitan Navy André Teixeira Borges, Coordinator of the Complementary Operations Section of the Ministry of Defense.
3. Canada
  - Alex Miranda, Deputy Director for Western Hemisphere Policy, Department of National Defense.
4. Chile
  - Karen Meier, Head of the International Relations Division.
5. Ecuador
  - Colonel EMC Nelson Oswaldo Gaona Sánchez, COS of the Army Aviation Brigade N°15 BAE "Paquisha".
6. El Salvador
  - GDD Carlos Alberto Tejada Murcia, El Salvador Defense Attaché in Chile.
7. United States
  - Ashley Pixton, Defense Advisor, US Department of Defense.
  - Andre Sekowski, Acting Director, Humanitarian Assistance and Response Operations, US Department of Defense.
8. Honduras
  - Artillery Colonel Eduardo Chinchilla Núñez, Defense Attaché of Honduras in Chile.
9. Mexico
  - Infantry Colonel Graduate of the General Staff Noé Ricardo Díaz Ruiz, Military and Air Attaché to the Embassy of Mexico in Chile.
10. Nicaragua
  - LCT (R) Marvin René Ortega Díaz, General Director of Defense Cooperation and Assistance to Humanitarian Demining of the Ministry of Defense.
11. Paraguay
  - DCEM Colonel Sergio Cabral Avalos, Defense Attaché of Paraguay in Chile.
  - DCEM Colonel Christian Ramón Villasanti Silvera, Air Attaché of Paraguay in Chile.
12. Peru
  - Lieutenant Colonel EP Carlos Antonio Jara Estrada, Director of Mobilization of the Ministry of Defense of Peru.
  - Major FAP Irving Portocarrero Peláez, Head of the International Cooperation Folder of the Ministry of Defense of Peru.



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13. Dominican Republic

- Colonel Pablo Lugo Adames, Commander of the Operational Brigade for Disaster Mitigation.

14. Trinidad & Tobago

- Major Sylon Carr, HADR Task Force Commander, Trinidad y Tobago Defence Force.
- Lieutenant (Navy) Atiba Briggs, Operations and Geospatial Intelligence Officer, Trinidad y Tobago Defence Force.

15. Uruguay

- Dr. Cipriano Goñi Lamarthée, Deputy Director General of the Secretariat of the Ministry of National Defense.

C. Attendees

Colombia

- Marine Colonel Nelson Fernández, Naval Attaché of Colombia in Chile.

D. Institutional Observers

1. Inter-American Defense Board (IADB)

- Colonel EP Orlando Melvin Ugaz Bartolo, Head of the Disaster Cooperation Division of the IADB Secretariat.

2. Conference of American Armies (CAA)

- Colonel (Brazil) Guilherme Faria da Silva, CAA representative.

3. Brazilian Navy

- Captain Navy Sidnei Da Costa Abrantes, Naval Attaché of Brazil in Chile.

**III. Agenda**

**A. Opening ceremony.**

Mr. Pedro Rozenwurcel, National Director of International Defense Policy and Coordinator of the XVI CDMA, greeted the participants and highlighted the importance of this topic for the Conference of Ministers.

The Undersecretary of Defense of Chile, Mr. Ricardo Montero Allende, welcomed the participants, and encouraged them to share their national perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

He also noted the commitment made by the Ministers at the 15th CDMA by including Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief as a permanent theme on the CDMA agenda. He recognized the importance of the challenge and the need to work together to respond to future challenges.

The General Coordinator of the Meeting, Mr. Valentin Segura, explained the historical context of the Working Group and announced the objectives of the present meeting.



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**B. Group photo**

**C. Sessions.**

Member States received reports and participated in a series of discussions related to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. The objective of the panels was to use the academic, strategic and operational perspectives of the delegates as a basis for developing the topic of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in defense and security.

**1. Panel N°1 impact of climate change on defense infrastructure.**

Objectives: Using case studies, identify the effects of climate change on defense infrastructure

Moderator: Chile, Ms. Francisca Oyarzún, Undersecretariat for the Armed Forces.

Panelists:

- Chile, Commander, Carlos Zúñiga, Deputy Director of the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the Navy (SHOA), presented SHOA's contributions to the Climate Change Study.
- United States of America (USA), Mr. Andre Sekowski, briefed the Department of Defense's adaptation and mitigation efforts regarding impact of climate change on defense infrastructure and national security.
- Chile, Marcelo Palma, Undersecretariat of Defense, spoke about the impact of climate change on defense infrastructure.
- Mexico, Infantry Colonel Noé Ricardo Díaz Ruiz, spoke about the impact of climate change on defense infrastructure.

**2. Panel N°2 presentation of the exercise on the cooperation mechanism for disasters and catastrophes (MECODEX-2023) of the Conference of Ministers of Defense of the Americas (CDMA)**

Objectives: To publicize the experiences generated during the MECODEX Exercise, carried out in Ecuador.

Moderator: Colonel Juan Miguel Fuente-Alba Pinochet, Head of the Military Disaster Management Department of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Chile.

Panelists:

- Colonel EMC Nelson Oswaldo Gaona Sánchez, spoke about the experiences and comments on the MECODEX 2023 Exercise, hosted by Ecuador.
- Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), Colonel EP Orlando Melvin Ugaz Bartolo, spoke about the experiences generated during the MECODEX Exercise, hosted by Ecuador.

**3. Colonel Juan Miguel Fuente-Alba, Head of the Department of Military Disaster Management of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke about the coordination of the Chilean Armed Forces in HA/DR.**



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**4. Panel N°3 Experiences on civil-military coordination in HA/DR.**

Objectives: Based on real cases from different countries, obtain lessons learned and best practices on civil-military coordination in HA/DR.

Moderator: Canada Mr. Alex Miranda.

Panelists:

- Paraguay, Colonel Sergio Cabral Avalos, spoke about the role of the Paraguayan Armed Forces in disaster risk management, lessons learned and best practices in civil-military coordination and humanitarian aid.
- Brazil, Sea and War Captain André Teixeira Borges, spoke about Experiences on civil-military coordination in HA/DR.
- Chile, Colonel Felipe Cerda, spoke about "Operation Condor's Nest 2022", mountain rescue.

**5. Panel N°4 Experiences with international cooperation in HA/DR**

Objectives: Based on real cases from different countries, obtain lessons learned and best practices regarding international cooperation in HA/DR.

Objetivos: A base de casos reales de distintos países, obtener lecciones aprendidas y mejores prácticas sobre cooperación internacional en HA/DR.

Moderator: Uruguay, Dr. Cipriano Goñi.

Panelists:

- Peru, EP Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Jara Estrada, presented experiences on international cooperation in humanitarian aid and disaster relief.
- Argentina, Mr. Pedro Rozenwurcel, presented the lessons learned in two cases of "Operation General Manuel Belgrano" during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Squadron Commander Enzo Penna Luna, from the Chilean Air Force Combat Command, spoke about the humanitarian evacuation of Israel 2023.

**IV. Conclusions**

The Working Group analyzed a number of issues and shared perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. Delegates discussed the ways their armed forces respond to disasters, and how they anticipate the evolution of this mission will change as climate change threatens their countries' national security:

- A. Gained a better understanding of trends in weather events and natural disasters and the impact of these patterns on the role and responsibilities of the military.
- B. It was agreed to analyze the ways to cooperate and collaborate bilaterally and multilaterally to minimize the impact of meteorological phenomena and disasters on populations throughout the Western Hemisphere.
- C. Recognized that climate change will impact the role of defense institutions and their missions, and considered that the response to climate change, the development of climate resilience and the improvement of environmental protection would require Member States to revitalize hemispheric cooperation and collaboration.



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- D. Considered the possibilities of multilateral commitments to analyze national, regional and hemispheric preparation to respond to climate change. Likewise, he encouraged the Member States of the CMDA to work together with the objective of harmonizing resources to address climate change and disasters.
- E. Analyzed the value of bilateral and multilateral information exchange agreements related to climate change and disasters. Likewise, it supported additional measures to encourage the fluid and timely exchange of science, data, tools and approaches to address climate change.
- F. Thanked Ecuador and the Inter-American Defense Board for carrying out the MECODEX - CMDA 2023 exercise, to compile the best practices and lessons learned captured during the exercise, to review this cooperation mechanism in the event of disasters.
- G. Noted the military's use of innovative technology and ingenuity to maintain mission readiness by responding to emerging challenges in a resource-constrained environment. As well, he recognized the need to adapt to a virtual environment in order to maintain readiness for missions.
- H. Recognized the importance of defense and security forces' support to civil organizations in humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and committed to continuing to share best practices and lessons learned.
- I. Recognized the importance of the support of defense and security forces in international cooperation for humanitarian assistance and response to disasters. Additionally, he committed to continuing to share best practices and lessons learned.

## **V. Recommendations**

In recognition of the interdependence of the hemisphere in relation to the issues presented at this event and due to the different circumstances and capabilities of each country, we make the following recommendations for Ministers' consideration:

- A. It is recommended that Ministers reiterate the importance of permanently maintaining the topic of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, as well as the impacts of climate change, in future CMDAs.
- B. It is recommended that CDMA countries continue to share lessons learned and best practices on the topics analyzed in this Ad Hoc Working Group, especially with regard to the role of the armed forces in supporting HA/DR missions.
- C. Reiterate the importance of the support of the armed forces to civil response organizations, optimizing civil-military coordination regarding disasters.
- D. Recognize the unique regional geography that requires civil and military responses to disasters. Recognize that remote areas may lack communications infrastructure and other government services, possibly increasing the challenges of civil and military responses.
- E. Recognize the importance of climate change and its effects in the different countries of the hemisphere. Recommend to continue addressing this issue, in the next CMDA commitments, in order to strengthen the response in the defense field to develop climate resilience and strengthen environmental protection.



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- F. Express recognition and gratitude to the Republic of Ecuador, especially the Ministry of Defense and its Armed Forces, for the support in the planning, organization, conduct and execution of the MECODEX-CMDA 2023 Exercise, hosted in the city of Quito -Ecuador.
- G. Recognize the work of the Inter-American Defense Board as Permanent Secretariat of MECODE-CMDA, for its outstanding work as coordinator in the different organizational and advisory activities on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief issues.
- H. Express gratitude to the Republic of Peru, especially the Ministry of Defense, for accepting its participation as host country of the MECODEX-CMDA 2024 Exercise.
- I. The efforts made by CDEMA and CEPREDENAC on disaster mitigation issues are recognized and it is proposed that they be invited to participate as Observers in the next MECODEX-CMDA exercises.

It is recognized that at 2:45 p.m. on November 9, 2023, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief has concluded with the signing of this Minute. Let it be stated that the Executive Secretariat of the XVI CMDA will distribute digital copies of this document to Member States in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.