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International Disaster Agencies Seminar Defines Relief Strategies For Caribbean and Latin American Regions

Miami, FL –September 14, 2005– In anticipation of a monster hurricane hitting the less developed countries of the Caribbean region, Washington D.C.-based Center for International Disaster, and the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) hosted a half day seminar to share information and prepare relief strategies for the Caribbean and Latin American regions.

Hurricane Katrina’s devastating and catastrophic damages coupled with the highly active hurricane season predictions, prompted international disaster agencies, government agencies and concerned corporations to meet with South Florida leaders, logistic organizations and non-governmental organizations in order to prepare for the next killer hurricane.

Suzanne Brooks, director of the Center for International Disaster Information, was the morning’s key presenter. She discussed the need to focus efforts on immediate response strategies and the massive coordination effort that will need to take place in very little time following these types of disasters. Ms. Brooks, an international disaster relief and management expert, has directed relief responses to more than 200 international disasters. She drew from personal past experiences to address the agencies’ and corporations’ concerns and past frustrations.

“This is an opportunity to provide guidance to a wide array of organizations and companies in support to appropriate international disaster relief activities, particularly regarding in-kind donations”, said Brooks.

AmericasRelief Team, a Florida private sector collaboration of corporations and non-profit organizations, helped organize the event. Based in Miami, AmericasRelief seeks to define “fail proof” procedures and systems for getting help to the impoverished countries of the region when disasters hits. “And given the predicted highly active hurricane season, we want to make sure that we are all in line and ready to move at a moments notice,” said Dr. Teo Babun, executive director of AmericasRelief Team. “Hurricane Katrina’s devastation in the Gulf Coast and unsurpassed relief demands sent us a very strong message – you can never be too prepared,” he said.

“This was a highly productive and timely meeting,” said Daniel Thomas, president of Harvest International, Inc. who attended the seminar. “When associated with the Asian Tsunami tragedy, the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, and the recent announcement by the Department of Atmospheric Science, that this hurricane season will be more active than earlier predicted, the agencies needed to regroup and focus their efforts and attention to prepare for a similar catastrophic event in the less developed countries in the Caribbean Basin, which are most likely to experience the brunt of a devastating hurricane like Katrina,” explained Thomas.

The Florida Association of Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA), a member of AmericasRelief Team, identifies experts to help with emergency management plan development, capacity building, and post-trauma counseling among others. “The Gulf Coast tragedy must not be repeated in the Caribbean,” said Julieta Valls, president of FAVACA. “Today we took huge steps toward that goal,” she said.

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EVENT



Suzanne Brooks, Director of the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI)



Gregg Nakano, USAID Military Liaison Officer; Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)



Angela Rae, Anchor/Reporter, CBS-Channel 4 Miami



Marc Henderson, Coordinator Public Affairs, Miami International Airport



Laurent Prosper, Consulat General D'Haiti



Guillermo Cueto, Human Rights Institute, St. Thomas University



Eric Williams, President, G.O.A.L., Inc.



Julieta Valls, President, The Florida Association of Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA)

