

# *UN says Cuba is regional leader in response to natural disasters*

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Cuba has demonstrated its effectiveness in responding to contingencies of a natural origin, serving as a reference for the entire Caribbean region, stated Consuelo Vidal, United Nations System resident coordinator, upon opening the Simex 2019 Regional Earthquake Response Simulation Exercise, Granma newspaper reports.

As an agency, the official said, we prioritize accompanying the Cuban Civil Defense system in the training program, which the country has been developing for some time now, to mitigate the impact of an earthquake of moderate or greater magnitude.

Major General Ramón Pardo Guerra, head of the Civil Defense National General Staff, stated that - despite the resurgence of the United States government's economic, commercial, financial blockade of Cuba, with the recent adoption of new punitive extraterritorial measures - the country will continue to strengthen its capacity to face disasters.

He highlighted the joint work carried out over the years with United Nations agencies, foundations, and programs in disaster risk management, and the expansion of working relationships with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (Insarag).

During the opening ceremony, Sebastián Rhodes Stampa, head of the Emergency Response Section of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), thanked the Cuban government for hosting the regional exercise and said that the event would provide valuable experience and knowledge in dealing with disasters.

Following two days of theoretical training, September 18-20, the practical phase of Simex 2019 took place, at the Russian-Cuban Regional Fire and Rescue Training Center.

Taken from the website of Granma newspaper (English)

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