

# *Cuba conducts exercise to strengthen earthquake response capacity*

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Havana, September 17 (RHC)-- Cuban and foreign experts are participating in the Regional Exercise of Earthquake Response Simulation, SIMEX 2019, with the purpose of strengthening the capacity of response and recovery to this danger.

Speaking at the opening ceremony on Monday, the Chief of the National Civil Defense Staff Major General (R), Ramon Pardo Guerra, stressed the need to be prepared for increasing disaster situations every day.

"Cuba is not exempt from adverse weather events, which is why it always encourages the exchange of experiences with other countries, as well as the activation of its early warning system," he said.

For her part, the resident coordinator of the United Nations System in Cuba, Consuelo Vidal-Bruce, stated that the exercise complements the Caribbean nation's experience in managing disaster response with international protocols.

Hosting SIMEX 2019 implies the presence of international search and rescue teams to share their experiences in disaster response, she said.

The head of the Emergency Response Section of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Sebastian Rhodes, said that Cuba's Civil Defense is one of the strongest and

most experienced in the Caribbean.

The OCHA official said that the purpose of SIMEX 2019 is to develop skills, coordinate aid and strengthen the effort at all levels to have a better response to earthquakes of medium or intense magnitude or other risk events.

Cuba has participated in such exercises in Costa Rica (2014), Chile (2015) and Colombia (2016), according to official sources.

The current SIMEX 2019, organized by the island's National Civil Defense, the Pan American Health Organization and others, will take place until the end of this week and it includes a hands-on exercise at the Russian-Cuban Regional Rescue and Fire Training Center.

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