



2 December 2013

## Special Meeting

### Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines

16 December 2013, 10:00 – 13:00

ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters

**Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)**

#### Introduction

The devastation caused by deadly and violent Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines on 8 November calls for an urgent response by the international community. As the United Nations and the international community rushes to provide assistance to tens of thousands of people in affected areas, the Economic and Social Council is convening a Special Meeting on 16 December to bring this issue to the attention of the Council and to enhance coordination in response, delivery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. The Council will review how the UN system is being mobilized, assess the preparedness for this disaster at the national and global levels, and determine what further actions are needed to meet the immediate needs in an effective and efficient manner, and to ensure a smooth transition from managing the consequences of disasters to development.

#### Background

Since 1900, the Philippines has witnessed over 280 tropical cyclones. Last year, Typhoon Bopha killed 1,900 people, damaged nearly 233,000 homes and affected over 6.2 million people despite preparedness measures, including early warning, pre-emptive evacuations.<sup>1</sup> As of 2 December, Typhoon Haiyan has affected 14.4 million people, displacing more than 3.6 million. According to estimates 2.5 million people require food aid, and in four assessed regions, over 48 per cent of health facilities are closed due to damage, and 628 schools have been damaged.<sup>2</sup>

The national response is being led by the Government's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council with local authorities. The United Nations system has already mobilized response efforts in support of the Government's efforts. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has brought together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to this emergency. Ahead of the disaster, a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team was deployed to work closely with the Government and regional authorities to assess the needs of the affected communities and to help formulate response plans. More than 125,000 people were preemptively evacuated. At the request of OCHA, the Digital Humanitarian Network activated their volunteer base to assist with media monitoring and mapping for information about damage and impact of the typhoon.

On 12 November, the Action Plan for Typhoon Haiyan was launched requesting US \$301 million—which was revised to \$348 million on 22 November—for the urgent activities in support of an efficient inter-agency response for the next six months, through projects in 15 sectors, with priorities in food, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene. As of 2 December, only 49.4 per cent of the Typhoon Haiyan Action Plan was funded. In addition, \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund has been allocated to

<sup>1</sup> A/67/89-E/2012/77.

<sup>2</sup> [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHAPhilippinesTyphoonHaiyanSitrepNo11.17November2013\\_Final.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHAPhilippinesTyphoonHaiyanSitrepNo11.17November2013_Final.pdf)

provide time-critical funds. It is important that all efforts are made to ensure this humanitarian response addresses the emergency needs of people in terms of food, shelter, clean water, and sanitation and health services in the short-term. At the same time, coordination of the UN system country-level support and strong partnerships of national and international actors would be key to assisting the country's transition from relief to development.

But while coordinated response and relief work is a priority today, the international community should recognize that the reduction of future disaster risk must be at the centre of all our efforts, in particular as we now move into the recovery and reconstruction phase. While the strength of Haiyan was extreme, current models tell us that similar disasters have occurred in the past, with winds of this strength hitting the region with a return period of 50 years.

This is not a trend that is specific to the Philippines. While the number of people killed due to natural disasters has declined over the last forty years, the world has witnessed an increase in the number and intensity of natural disasters and the number of people affected. The estimated cost of the damage has also increased drastically over this period. Economic and social consequences of disasters go beyond the damage to property, sectors, such as energy, health and education, often incur major losses from a disaster. Furthermore, it is expected that climate change will impact not only on the number and intensity of natural disasters, but also on the resilience of communities. While rising global mean temperatures are expected to result in major floods in many regions of the world, carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere and ocean acidity will adversely affect coral reefs that provide protection against floods and storms.<sup>3</sup>

As the work towards building “[the Future We Want](#)” and elaborating a post-2015 development agenda continues, the Special Meeting will discuss the issues of preparedness and relief in the case of the Philippines, what the immediate needs of the people are, and what can be done to ensure effective delivery of assistance, and smooth transition back to development, as well as addressing the underlying risk factors. The Council could reconvene in early 2014 to follow-up on this meeting and to discuss the next steps.

### **Objectives of the special meeting of ECOSOC**

This meeting aims to:

- Identify the impact of the typhoon on the Philippines, in particular on certain sectors, such as education, health, energy, communications, transportation and agriculture;
- Identify effective ways to meet the immediate needs of the affected people;
- Assess the level of preparedness at the national and global levels in responding to this natural disaster;
- Examine how the United Nations system, regional and international organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and the scientific community can assist in the relief, recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts of the Government of the Philippines;
- Consider the role of technology in disaster prevention and risk management.

### **Expected Outcome**

The outcome of the event will be a summary by the President of ECOSOC.

---

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2012. Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided. © Washington, DC: World Bank.