



13 September 2017

Excellency,

As President of the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly and, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, we would welcome your participation in a high-level meeting on Hurricane Irma, which we will jointly co-host at United Nations Headquarters on Monday, 18 September 2017, from noon to 1p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The high-level meeting will provide an opportunity for those Member States most affected by Hurricane Irma to share their experiences and for the international community to express their solidarity with and support to the people and the countries impacted. The United Nations system will inform regarding ongoing relief efforts. Please note that the high-level meeting will also highlight the need to effectively manage risks of natural disasters and to invest in resilient societies.

We encourage all Member States to participate at the highest political level. The concept note and the related programme are attached for information.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Lajčák'.

Miroslav Lajčák
President of the 72nd session of the
United Nations General Assembly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres'.

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

To all United Nations Permanent Representatives
and Permanent Observers
New York



CONCEPT NOTE

High-Level Meeting on Hurricane Irma

18 September 2017, 12:00 – 13:00

Venue: Trusteeship Council, UN Headquarters, New York

I. Purpose

Co-hosted by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the high-level meeting aims to gain high-level political attention to the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma on Caribbean Island states, secure commitment to support countries and people affected, and highlighting the need for building more resilient communities to natural disasters, including those impacted by climate change. The event will also serve to show solidarity towards affected countries and territories and to highlight the coordinated response between the United Nations, regional organisations, humanitarian actors and affected governments. Equally the event offers an opportunity to highlight the role of climate change in extreme weather events, the need to promote resilience by “Building Back Better”, and the importance of strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus to reduce risk and vulnerability and build resilience to future natural disasters, including hurricanes. The event will convene UN Member States, regional organisations, UN Agencies, and other international actors.

II. Context

Hurricane Irma hit the Caribbean as a category 5 hurricane, causing massive destruction and widespread flooding. The islands of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, St Barthélemy and St Martin/Sint Maarten were most affected. Reports also indicate significant damage to agriculture in Haiti, while livelihoods, housing and infrastructure in Anguilla, Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, St. Martin/St. Maartin, the US Virgin Islands, USA, and Turks and Caicos are severely affected. Assessments are still ongoing and will reveal the extent of needs.

Various UN agencies and partner organisations have stepped in to provide interim relief and support with assessments and response and are working closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency and Management Agency (CDEMA) and governments of impacted islands to coordinate assessment and response.

This hurricane season is already the most violent on record, and will continue until end of November. While it is difficult to attribute particular events to climate change, the current hurricane season fits a pattern: the changes to our climate are driving more extreme weather. Climate change is intensifying the risk of unprecedented natural events that are pushing communities into a vicious cycle of shock and recovery. In that context, we must ensure that people and governments are supported to increase their resilience to disasters by recognising the value of preparedness, whilst also building and maintaining adequate response capacity. This can be underpinned by development and humanitarian actors partaking in complementary action.

At the World Humanitarian Summit, stakeholders identified the need to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus, to reduce risk vulnerability and overall levels of need and to commit to a common vision of a future in which no one is left behind as per the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While it is critical to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the affected

Caribbean island states, reducing vulnerability to future shocks, building the resilience of the communities, and ensuring that housing and infrastructure are built back better are critically important.

III. Objectives

- 1 Draw high-level political attention to the suffering and loss of lives and livelihoods caused by Hurricane Irma, and show solidarity towards all affected countries and territories. Advocate for the humanitarian regional response plan, the UNDP recovery response plan in support of Government priorities as an effective way to support the immediate response to humanitarian needs while linking with reconstruction and disaster risk reduction.
- 2 Focus attention on the impacts of the hurricane season and its links to climate change .
- 3 Advocate for a proactive, preventive and joined-up approach to natural disasters and future climate events, with governments and development partners increasing risk and vulnerability reduction efforts, and humanitarian actors strengthening emergency response preparedness in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 4 Highlight the United Nations response to the hurricane, working closely together with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), national and local authorities and offices of United Nations Resident Coordinators in affected countries.

IV. Format

The proposed scenario of the event is:

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| 12:00 | Opening remarks by Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly |
| 12:03 | Remarks by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda |
| 12:06 | Video on the devastating impact of Hurricane Irma |
| 12:09 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:12 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:15 | Remarks by Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator |
| 12:18 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:21 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:24 | Remarks by Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator |
| 12:27 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:30 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:33 | Remarks by an affected Member State |
| 12:36 | Remarks by Member States expressing their solidarity and support (2 minutes each) |
| 12:50 | Remarks by H.E. Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General |
| 12:59 | Closing by H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly |