



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

## PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

on the occasion of the ECOSOC Special Meeting on

***Aftermath of recent hurricanes:  
Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda***

The Economic and Social Council convened a Special Meeting on “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda” on 24 October 2017. As President of the Economic and Social Council, I am pleased to share the key messages and recommendations that emerged from our discussions during the meeting.

During the last six months, we have witnessed severe disasters due to natural hazards—the severe floods in Africa and South Asia, the earthquakes in Mexico, and the devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean, Central America and in the United States. We express our deepest condolences to the victims and their families, and extend our solidarity to all the affected people and Governments.

We heard from affected States the devastation caused by the recent hurricanes, floods and earthquakes and their negative impact on the capability of affected communities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We acknowledge the more profound and disproportionate impact of disasters in countries with high-level of exposure and vulnerability to climate change, in particular the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Most of the affected countries are categorized as middle income and are ineligible for concessional development financing from Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) due to the use of GDP per capita as the primary criterion for access. These disasters are a reminder that the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 are all interconnected.

Early humanitarian response has been critical for saving lives and livelihoods and the provision of essential services. Preparedness and partnerships played an essential role as prepositioned personnel, logistics and stocks allowed the humanitarian response and emergency supplies to arrive more quickly. We commend the efforts made by countries themselves, the United Nations system, the regional organizations and the international community at national, regional and international levels. The United Nations system, together with partners, deployed early and is helping countries to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable people. As assessments continue, immediate needs identified concentrate in the sectors of health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, shelter and early recovery support to livelihoods, as displacement and disruptions to livelihoods are expected to last for several months.

### **Action now**

- We emphasize the importance of disaster preparedness and humanitarian assistance in saving lives and livelihoods. We welcome the actions undertaken by the United Nations system and partners in response to the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean and call for further funding to meet the requirements of the humanitarian appeals launched in their aftermath.
- We call on all Member States and the international community to ensure that the humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put these countries on a

sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda. These efforts should address risks and rebuild back better adhering to the commitments contained in the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We must build on existing initiatives and efforts that are aimed at helping the affected countries and territories rebuild with resilience, enhancing their complementarity and avoiding duplication.

- We recognize the coordinated and coherent response by humanitarian and development actors, that has illustrated stronger impact and results on the ground. We call for sufficient funding for both, which is critical in putting these communities on the path to sustainable development. We must ensure that funding pledges, whether bilateral or through the UN system, are delivered urgently.
- We call for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action, and to ensure a well-coordinated, timely and effective response to future disaster events, supported with predictable, timely, flexible and adequate risk-informed financing, including forecast-based financing. We urge greater risk-informed investment in infrastructure and housing and call for more effective public-private partnerships with the engagement of all stakeholders including the insurance sector, the wider investment community and international actors.
- We encourage affected states to review their national policies and legal frameworks for disaster risk reduction with a view to integrate disaster risk management in development planning, review and adhere to building codes, enhance multi-hazard early warning systems, preparedness, response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts as well as guide new investment. We call on Member States and the international community to actively engage in the planned Donor Conference, being spearheaded by the CARICOM Secretary-General as mandated by the CARICOM Heads of Government, and to mobilize international support for reconstruction and building long-term resilience across the region. The work on post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) by UNDP, the World Bank and the European Union and the Damage and Loss Assessment (DALA) by ECLAC will be important in evaluating the scope and scale of the damage caused by recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region and in informing international responses thereto.
- We call for stronger collaboration, connectivity and complementarity between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate action to define and deliver collective outcomes to reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years. By doing this, we can help contribute towards transformative changes in the resilience and lives of the most vulnerable people and ensure that no one is left behind in the face of the adverse effects of climate change and extreme weather events.

#### **Medium- to long-term measures**

- We call for longer term recovery, development and reconstruction programmes, including the regeneration of key industries such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries to generate the jobs much needed. Importantly, key industries and livelihoods must be made sustainable and resilient to the impacts of future extreme weather events and other hazards. We must support efforts of affected and vulnerable countries to diversify their economies and harness the benefits of digital economy to enhance their economic resilience. We call for concerted efforts to help SIDS transform their power sectors by increasing their access to affordable renewable energy sources, taking into account their small markets and limited financial resources.
- We note the request to change the criteria for determining access to concessionary resources, by ending the dominant use of GDP criterion and including the concept of vulnerability. We call on the bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions to explore financial solutions that take into account both the high debt and the urgent need for reconstruction financing in affected SIDS. We call for increased concessional finance to all SIDS. We encourage development finance providers, including bilateral and multilateral creditors, to offer State contingent debt instruments in lending to SIDS and other vulnerable countries. We note ECLAC's proposal for debt for climate adaptation swap and resilience building initiative, that aims to address the debt burden of affected States while redirecting resources to build resilience in all dimensions of sustainable development and look forward to progress in this regard. We also express concern about the impact of the withdrawal of correspondent banks from the Caribbean region on their financial sector and acknowledge the region's request for a concerted global response.

- We also look forward to the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development (IATF) on the inventory of quick disbursing mechanisms for financing in the aftermath of shocks, and encourage the IATF to explore the question of disaster resilient investing. We also call on the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development to discuss risk-informed investments and financing for disaster risk reduction and consider its inclusion in the inter-governmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of its next session in 2018.
- We must explore ways to improve reinsurance mechanisms. More diversification, through a global fund or regional funds with enhanced reinsurance, is needed for insurance products to work effectively. Insurance mechanisms can also offer incentives to reduce existing and avoid creating new disaster risk.
- We encourage financial intermediaries and regulatory entities to reduce the transaction cost of remittances, and call on Governments to reduce the cost of remittance transfers, through policy, regulatory and technological actions, that could help increase financial flows to affected countries.
- We must strengthen social protection systems and safety nets to reach affected populations during disasters. Attention must be given to the accessibility of infrastructure, service provision and disaster-preparedness schemes for vulnerable groups of population.
- We need to continue to build strong response capacities and effective networks at regional, national and local level as the first lines of defense to the impacts of extreme weather events. We call on the United Nations and the international community to reinforce these efforts.
- We note with concern the role of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change as drivers of displacement and call for effective strategies to prevent and mitigate such displacement, ensure adequate protection and assistance for those displaced, and promote and support durable solutions.
- As an international community, we have a responsibility to come together to intensify our efforts to make the achievement of a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We call for an integrated approach to implementing the commitments made in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We also urge the full and effective implementation of the commitments and partnerships announced at the third International Conference on SIDS and the fulfilment of the provisions on all means of implementation, as contained in the Samoa Pathway.
- We underline the importance of geospatial information and services in preventing or reducing the human, socioeconomic and environmental risks and impacts of disasters, and in this context, acknowledge the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, adopted by the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), an ECOSOC subsidiary body. We call for systematic accounting of loss and damages from disasters and climate change as highlighted at the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to provide statistical evidence of risk for policymakers, development planners, and the private sector to make risk-informed choices.
- We call for sustained and coherent international support to accelerate recovery, ensure risk-informed reconstruction, and strengthen resilience in economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this regard, we call on the international community to respect the principle of national ownership and align with national priorities of affected States.
- We emphasize the urgency to combat climate change and call for intensified efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as to enhance support for adaptation. We look forward to the deliberations at the upcoming Bonn 2017 UN climate change conference (COP23), which we hope will use as a benchmark for action the need to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS.
- We need to act urgently. The Council is committed to continue to promote coordination in the work of the United Nations development system and intends to follow-up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground.