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ECOSOC Meeting
Pathways to resilience in climate-affected SIDS:
A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda
Promises, results and next steps
13 November 2018; 3:00-6:00 p.m.

The Economic and Social Council is convening a meeting on “*Pathways to resilience in climate-affected SIDS—A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda: Promises, results and next steps*” on 13 November 2018. Recognizing the need for a strong and effective response to the impacts of hurricanes, the Council will convene this follow-up meeting to take stock of progress on actions contained in the Presidential Statement¹ on its 2017 Special Meeting on “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk informed and resilient 2030 Agenda”.

The 2017 Special Meeting² illustrated the profound and disproportionate impact of natural hazards, and how they exacerbate risks in those countries with high-level of exposure and vulnerability to economic shocks, in particular the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The strongest messages were the urgency to combat climate change and the need for intensified efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to enhance support for adaptation.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 outlines four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks: (i) understanding disaster risk; (ii) strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (iii) investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; (iv) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. About 90% of financing for disaster risk reduction worldwide is still directed at emergency response and reconstruction/rehabilitation, while only 10% is for preparedness and resilience. Furthermore, while \$106 trillion are available through different funds worldwide, only 1.6% is invested in infrastructure and even less in initiatives to increase resilience.

Climate change has exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by SIDS. In these countries, one natural disaster can erode a generation of development gains as seen in the case of Dominica in 2017 with Hurricane Maria. Most of the hurricane and cyclone-affected countries were categorized as middle income and were ineligible for concessional development financing from Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs) due to the use of GDP per capita as the primary criterion for access.

¹ The Presidential Statement outlined immediate, medium and long-term actions to assist affected countries in their efforts to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda.

² In line with its mandate, ECOSOC periodically hosts special meetings to address global development emergencies or crises, to raise awareness and to serve as a high level policy platform for coordination of actors working on a specific situation to develop a strategic response. To this end, the Council organized special meeting on the [African food crisis](#) and [Avian Flu](#) in 2005, global food crisis in [2008](#) and [2013](#), and the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, [Typhoon Haiyan](#) in the Philippines in December 2013, [Ebola](#) in December 2014 and the Zika Virus in February 2016. And most recently, the Council focused on the El Nino phenomenon. These meetings brought attention to their impact on sustainable development. They also promoted coordinated action in support of the affected countries.

The October 2017 meeting thus raised the need to increase access of such countries to concessional finance given their vulnerability, limitations to mobilize resources domestically and high levels of indebtedness.

During the 2017 Special Meeting, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) made a strong appeal for urgent access to concessional financing, including for climate change adaptation. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) proposed a debt for climate adaptation swap and resilience building initiative aimed at addressing the debt burden of affected States whilst simultaneously generating resources for climate action.

The high-level CARICOM-UN Pledging Conference³, supported by UNDP, that took place on 21 November 2017, mobilized over US\$1.6 billion in pledges and over US\$1 billion in loans and debt relief. According to assessments, the principal economic sectors of tourism and agriculture were significantly impacted. Recovery costs were estimated to surpass US\$5 billion. For some countries such as Dominica, the impact was 3.5 times their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The 2018 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development addressed the issue of disaster risk and resilience within the context of financing. The Forum discussed options for policy responses, including a proposal for a regional debt relief initiative for the Eastern Caribbean, building on the experience of the initiative for heavily indebted poor countries.⁴ In the Forum outcome, Member States recognized that the international system's overall financial response to disasters is insufficient and that better ex ante disaster risk reduction and resilience-building mechanisms and quick-disbursing ex post instruments are required.

A year after the devastating hurricanes, the special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on 6 October 2018 is a stark reminder of the urgency of adopting the rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes required for limiting global warming. The report underscores that transitions in energy, land, urban development and infrastructure would be key. Furthermore, the report notes that improved access to international climate finance is essential for supporting adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).⁵

On 2-14 December 2018, the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) will convene in Katowice, Poland, where Parties must agree on implementing guidelines for the Paris Agreement. Financing for climate action will play a key role in negotiations and developed countries will be expected to step up their commitments to fulfil their promise of mobilizing \$100 billion per year by 2020. Continued support for the Green Climate Fund will be crucial in this context, as it seeks its first replenishment in 2019.

In 2019, climate change will be at the top of United Nations' agenda. The 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, on the theme "empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" will be reviewing progress made on SDG13 on climate change. This will be followed by the HLPF under the General Assembly—the SDG Summit—in September.

Furthermore, the United Nations Secretary-General will be convening a Climate Summit in September 2019 to increase the ambition of climate commitments, and to scale-up and accelerate climate action to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

³ <https://resilientcaribbean.caricom.org/>

⁴ A/73/86-E/2018/68 available at <http://undocs.org/A/73/86>

⁵ http://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_chapter5.pdf

The high-level mid-term review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway would also take place in 2019. This follow-up ECOSOC meeting would provide an opportunity for the Council to contribute to these meetings and processes.

The follow-up meeting of ECOSOC will:

- Share measures and practices by countries that helped manage and respond to the hurricanes in the Caribbean, and results achieved;
- Take stock of progress made in terms of disbursements and results achieved as well as challenges faced following the pledges at the CARICOM-UN High-Level Pledging Conference supported by UNDP;
- Explore new and innovative approaches to financing climate resilience, including once more making the case for concessional financing, leveraging remittances for climate action, accessing private financing for resilience and climate action; new insurance products, innovative debt financing instruments such as state-contingent debt, debt swaps and other mechanisms;
- Identify good practices and approaches that can be leveraged for resource constrained SIDS in building economic, social and environmental resilience in the region, as well as remaining gaps and challenges. This will include leveraging knowledge to deliver development solutions and enhancing recovery capacities.

The outcome of the meeting will be a Presidential Statement with conclusions and recommendations from the meeting that could feed into the discussions in 2019.