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United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King
President of the Economic and Social Council

**ECOSOC Special Meeting on “Response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique,
Malawi and Zimbabwe”**

New York, 2 April 2019

Opening Statement

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2.5 weeks ago, in 14 March, one of the most powerful tropical storms ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere struck Southern Africa. Cyclone Idai brought with it death and destruction for three million people in these already vulnerable communities. The winds and heavy rains killed more than 700 people. More than 100,000 homes have been destroyed. Thousands of schools and dozens of health facilities can no longer be used. Cholera has begun to rear its head. Almost half a million hectares of crops ready to be harvested have been destroyed, threatening the food security as well as livelihoods of those who have survived.

The increasing intensity of extreme weather events and climate related disasters that unleashed Cyclone Idai have wreaked devastation in other parts of the world. Only 18 months ago, we were convening a Special Meeting of ECOSOC on the aftermath of a series of powerful hurricanes in the Caribbean that devastated countries and where communities are still recovering.



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Today's meeting shows the continuing relevance of ECOSOC in bringing attention to the social, economic and environmental impacts of global phenomena such as these extreme weather events which are hampering achievement of the promise of the SDGs - and in some cases reversing development gains.

I have therefore convened this special meeting of ECOSOC today to discuss:

First, supporting the urgent, life-saving humanitarian efforts of the three countries and the UN humanitarian agencies. Required funding for the immediate humanitarian response for the next three months is US\$394.2 million. The loss of so much harvest-ready crop means that communities that were already food insecure are even more vulnerable now. They will need help to survive this coming lean season. It is critical to contribute generously to help humanitarian actors contain the loss of lives; prevent large disease outbreaks and acute food shortage.

Second, going beyond the immediate humanitarian response to address the underlying vulnerability and build resilience of these countries. I call on all of you to support Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe in the critical recovery phase where needs will be enormous. As the international community, we need to scale up action to reduce disaster risks before the next extreme weather event strikes. We need to continue to keep focus on helping these countries to rebound in a sustainable and resilient manner. As we get ready for the Financing for Development Forum in two weeks, I would also like to note the financial challenges. The economic losses are at such scale that the recovery and rebuilding of what was lost and destroyed by Cyclone Idai and the floods, will require significant funding of government-led efforts. In this context, we need to look at more systemic solutions, including access to concessional finance, be it climate finance, or other forms of development cooperation and consider options in relation to debt relief.

Third, we need more collaboration, coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and climate action. We need to invest more in disaster risk reduction including in preparedness, early warning, and early action at all levels.

Today, I have the honor of being joined by several esteemed colleagues, including



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Her Excellency,

The Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohamed

Also, with me on the podium are the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, and Mr. David Beasley, the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, will join by videoconference; and Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

I would also like to note the presence of the Ambassadors from each of the affected countries, all of whom will give remarks in a few moments

His Excellency Dr. Perks Master Ligoya, the Permanent Representative of Malawi,

His Excellency Antonio Gumende, Permanent Representative of Mozambique,

His Excellency Frederick Musiiwa Makmure Shava, the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe

Finally, I would like to introduce His Excellency, Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco, who will speak in his capacity as Vice President of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

Before handing the floor to The Deputy Secretary-General we will watch a short video on the on-the-ground realities for communities ravaged by Cyclone Idai.



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