



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

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**Pathways to resilience in climate-affected SIDS:  
A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda  
Promises, results and next steps  
13 November 2018**

**ECOSOC President  
Opening Remarks**

Special Envoy Ambassador Louis Alfonso De Alba,  
Assistant Secretary-General of CARICOM,  
Administrator of UNDP,  
Executive Secretary of ECLAC,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you to this meeting of the Economic and Social Council on *Pathways to resilience in climate-affected Small Island Developing States (SIDS)– A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda: Promises, results and next steps*.

Last year, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, the Economic and Social Council convened a Special Meeting on the “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda”. My predecessor, Ambassador Marie Chatardová issued a Presidential Statement on the key messages and recommendations from that meeting.

In that statement and in solidarity with the affected countries and territories, we called on all Member States and the international community to ensure that the humanitarian response be complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

We also called for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action.

Donors and international financial institutions were encouraged to explore financial solutions in view of the high debt and the urgent need for reconstruction financing in affected SIDS. We appealed for increased concessional finance to all SIDS.

We underscored the need for sustained and coherent international support to accelerate recovery and ensure risk-informed reconstruction.

These steps were essential to put these countries on a sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda.

We called attention to the urgency to combat climate change. The recent special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is reinforcing this urgency.

According to UNISDR, climate-related disasters over 1998-2017 caused US\$2,245 billion in direct economic losses in disaster-hit countries. Given the size of their economies, all the top 10 worst affected countries/territories in terms of losses as a percentage of GDP were small Caribbean countries/territories. To give you an example, Dominica recorded losses equal to 259% of GDP due to Hurricane Maria.

This is not only an issue for the Caribbean, but all the climate-affected SIDS around the world. In 2015, Vanuatu experienced a loss of 61% of its GDP due to Cyclone Pam, which reversed its development gains for years.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction calls on countries to prepare to build back better ahead of a disaster. This requires strengthening disaster risk reduction governance and securing access to adequate financing before a disaster.

Following the devastating hurricanes last year, the international community came together to assist affected countries and territories. I commend the leadership of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The high-level CARICOM-UN Pledging Conference, supported by UNDP, convened on 21 November 2017 was a huge success in mobilizing the international community and the private sector.

Today, we gather here to take stock of results achieved to date, it is important to once again make the case for vulnerability to be used as a criterion for ensuring that country classification allows climate vulnerable SIDS' access concessional financing. Additionally, at a time of heightened vulnerability, ODA remains important to SIDS as catalytic financing and it is important that this support continue. At the same time, innovative and risk-informed financing is important as well as new instruments including insurance products to better help us manage risks. For this, the support of the international community is required.

I would also like to note that going forward, the emphasis has to be on a holistic notion of resilience which also encompasses economic and environment since building resilience is not only about more effectively managing the risks associated with hurricanes. Therefore, for SIDS which largely rely on one major export product, economic diversification is key including tapping into emerging sectors such as the blue economy where again support is required as well as enhanced South-South collaboration. On social resilience, cooperation is also required in areas such as health where those of us in the Pacific and Caribbean are amongst the most challenged globally by Non-Communicable Diseases.

Given these challenges, I urge those who are gathered here today to reflect on the multidimensional nature of resilience and together let us propose a forward-looking agenda to help transform the development trajectory of SIDS and deliver on the promise of the SDGs so resilience can be achieved.

I am grateful for your presence. The Secretary-General Special Envoy will share with us the broader UN perspective and the UN's vision on pathways to resilience in climate-affected SIDS. We will continue with global and regional perspectives. We will also have an opportunity to hear from affected islands and partners working on the ground. I count on you all to think outside of the box in proposing an action-oriented agenda with clear and practical actions going forward.