



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT

on the occasion of the ECOSOC Meeting on

Pathways to resilience in climate-affected SIDS

A Forward-Looking Resilience Building Agenda: Promises, results and next steps

The Economic and Social Council convened 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. As President of the Economic and Social Council, I convened this meeting to take stock of the current situation and assess progress since the Presidential Statement on the 2017 ECOSOC Special Meeting on “*Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk informed and resilient 2030 Agenda*”.

We focused on commitments made and results achieved to date in SIDS vulnerable to shocks. We also discussed new and innovative approaches to financing and building climate resilience. I am pleased to share the key messages and recommendations that emerged from our discussions.

- Climate change is an existential threat to Small Island Developing States, jeopardizing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The recent special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has sounded the alarm for urgently needed climate action.
- We must be prepared by investing in disaster risk reduction in order to build our resilience. The devastation caused by 2017 Atlantic hurricanes is a reminder that we cannot continue to wait to respond until a disaster strikes. The November 2017 high-level CARICOM-UN Pledging Conference, supported by UNDP, mobilized over US\$1.6 billion in grant pledges plus US\$1.6 billion loans including debt relief. Yet, some US\$6.9 billion dollars in damage, losses and addition costs were sustained in 2017 alone.
- We emphasize that for countries with high vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards including small island developing States, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and key areas in the Samoa Pathway which identifies the key vulnerabilities of SIDS, is contingent on reducing disaster risk. We therefore call on Member States to invest in and develop national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020, aligned to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, with stepped up international support to developing countries to formulate and implement these strategies. They are a requisite for a disaster risk-informed and adaptation approach to sustainable development. We underline the importance of action at the regional and sub-regional level to foster advancement of knowledge and mutual learning in addressing common and transboundary disaster risks.
- We recognize and commend the ambitious commitments by countries affected by the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season to resilient reconstruction in order to break the cycle of disasters, rebuilding and recovery that undermines progress towards sustainable development. It is important for SIDS at the greatest risk of disasters, and for all countries, to include within their disaster risk reduction strategies the objective of preparing to build back better. Furthermore, strengthening disaster risk governance would be crucial.
- SIDS are facing challenges in securing adequate financing for resilience. The St. John’s Call for Action (Antigua and Barbuda) called for strong action on building resilience, financing and economic diversification and partnerships. Building resilience in SIDS needs to go beyond disaster risk reduction.

- As noted in the Financing for Sustainable Development report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, the international community is serving as an “insurer of last resort” for emergencies through an ad hoc system of voluntary responses, but this financial response can be inefficient and insufficient. These ex post measures also do not incentivize disaster risk reduction.
- We call for much greater attention to developing tailored ex-ante financing instruments for disaster risk reduction that will not add to fiscal stresses, in addition to ongoing efforts for disaster risk financing. These could help enable and incentivize public and private investment decisions that avoid the creation of new disaster risk. This is key to turning national and local strategies into action. And it would help finance retrofitting and maintenance of infrastructure and services to reduce existing risk. Innovative insurance instruments, among others, could lead to more effective management of disaster risk. Contributors to disaster response should work to realign their financing from ex post to ex ante provision of risk-pooling funds and instruments, improving efficiency, predictability and speed of response.
- Building on existing exceptions, such as the IDA small-state exception, we call on the international financial institutions to consider greater use of vulnerability as a criterion to allow SIDS’ access to concessional financing, including for those labelled as middle-income countries. Many also urged donor countries to further mainstream disaster risk reduction in Official Development Assistance across all sectors and to use the disaster risk reduction policy marker approved by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- Development cooperation must become more risk-informed and “resilience-smart,” with stronger links to disaster risk reduction to build sustainable and resilient societies. This means addressing not only climate action, but also the significant links between conflict, instability and poverty in policies and implementation actions. And it means taking genuinely integrated approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need to reduce aid fragmentation and more direct budget support was underscored.
- Greater and well-tailored support should be provided, in particular, to countries with limited capacities to move from managing disasters to managing and reducing risk and building resilience, as called for by ECOSOC’s Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). This should be informed by the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability, as well as on easily accessible, up-to-date, comprehensive, science-based, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by traditional knowledge. Response capacities and networks at the regional level, including regional multi-hazard early warning systems, should also be strengthened and further leveraged.
- Such support should build on existing national capacities and policy frameworks, putting greater emphasis on strengthening the relevant institutions at the national and sub-national levels. National Governments should take the lead in assessing capacity gaps, including in articulating projects, and identifying the support needed from international actors. We encourage ministers of finance, economy and planning to consider disaster risk reduction in macro-economic policy decisions and to include disaster risk reduction in budgeting and financial planning across all relevant sectors. We need integrated national financing frameworks for sustainable development that include project pipelines and infrastructure plans that are disaster risk-informed and aligned with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies. We need to enhance domestic public finance for disaster risk reduction, where possible. Generally, all policies to implement the SDGs should be risk-informed.
- A strong partnership with the private sector in building resilience and helping to inject much needed private capital inflows in climate affected SIDS is strongly encouraged. Global problems often call for global solutions but for island nations, global problems also call for local solutions and the private sector can be a crucial part of that solution. Governments can support a positive engagement through incentives and regulations that support disaster risk-informed private sector investments.

- Climate change impact is putting increasing pressure on Governments to finance climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as reconstruction from disasters. The speed, predictability and accessibility of climate financing, especially for adaptation and resilience for small island developing States and least developed countries, should be further improved and scaled up. While new innovative sources, such as blue and green bonds, were welcomed as a supplement, calls were made for grant-based financing for climate change adaptation.
- We acknowledged the importance of the Green Climate Fund and underscored the importance of a reliable and predictable replenishment process to ensure adequate levels of climate finance for developing countries. The Warsaw International Mechanism to Address Loss and Damage should accelerate progress, in particular with regard to mobilizing reliable sources of funding for vulnerable SIDS.
- The prevalent use of debt instruments in climate finance raises concerns, given the already rising level of indebtedness among developing countries. CARICOM called for innovative approaches, including conversion of bilateral and multilateral debt into special funds to address disasters and economic shocks. We welcome innovative strategies that aim to harness concessionary flows to transform debt into a source of investment in resilience, such as ECLAC's debt for climate adaptation swap initiative.
- We recognize the importance of innovative financial instruments to help build resilience and to more effectively manage risk including in the key area of insurance.
- Given the alarming predictions for the future on the interaction between climate impacts and disasters worldwide, a Global Financial Facility dedicated to addressing extreme events as a global public good should also be contemplated.
- The United Nations needs to work as one to build resilience in these climate vulnerable SIDS with limited financial and technical capacities. We look forward to the deliberations at the upcoming COP24 in Katowice, to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS to climate change impact.
- We need effective partnerships for resilience that can help unleash innovation and capacity development, and promote transitions in energy, land, urban development and infrastructure.
- We should strive for resilience in economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Economic diversification, innovation, transition to knowledge economies, green and blue economies would be critical for resilience in all dimensions of sustainable development.
- Let us work together to ensure that SIDS' voices and concerns are heard and addressed at key events in 2019, including the 2019 HLPF Summit, the Secretary-General's Climate Summit, the High-level Policy Dialogue on financing for development, the high-level mid-term review of SAMOA Pathway and the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.