



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
22 December 2017

Original: English

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## 2018 session

27 July 2017–26 July 2018

### Special meeting on the “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda”

#### Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 24 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Ms. King (Vice-President). . . . . (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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*In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Interactive panel discussion (continued)**

1. **Mr. Favre** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the recent hurricane season, which had devastated the Caribbean and the southern United States, had once again highlighted the serious and disruptive effects of climate change. Disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were closely linked, and responses must be integrated. Disaster risk reduction strategies must be forward-looking and climate-informed, and climate change adaptation strategies must prepare countries to handle ever larger climate-induced hazards. Switzerland provided support to partner countries and organizations in implementing an integrated approach. In addition to the loss of lives, hurricanes, earthquakes and forest fires had a significant economic cost, which undid years of progress in sustainable development and poverty reduction. It was therefore in the interest of the international community to strengthen the resilience of communities and economies and to seek innovative and mutually beneficial ways to collaborate with the private sector in order to scale up disaster risk reduction and investment.

2. Switzerland had long supported Central American and Caribbean States in prevention, preparedness and response, and would continue to engage with Cuba, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as the Central American region. In recent months, Switzerland had provided additional assistance to the affected countries, including approximately \$2 million in emergency funding, through operational partners such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Food Programme. A rapid response team, which included structural engineers, had been sent to Mexico after the earthquake, and additional personnel had been dispatched to provide assistance in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene.

3. **Ms. Zahir** (Observer for Maldives) said that her country stood in solidarity with the people and Governments of the countries recently devastated by the hurricanes and earthquakes, in particular the small island developing States of Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba and Dominica. Not long ago, people in the Caribbean would have seen only one category 5 hurricane during their lifetime. The current hurricane season had already consisted of nine hurricanes, two of which had been category 5. For years, small island

States had been warning that those devastating events would become commonplace. They were working to build resilience but could not prepare for the impacts of disasters on their own. The international community must therefore work with States at the national, regional and international levels to develop effective policies and frameworks to improve resilience and response.

4. On small islands, people were often unable to evacuate in emergencies, and disasters could interrupt connectivity, causing further isolation. Maldives was participating in the current discussion to make the case for the unique situation of small islands and would continue to push for special consideration to be given to their circumstances. Small island developing States required specific assistance in adaptation, capacity-building and disaster preparedness at the national and regional levels. They also needed technical and financial support to assist in building back in a more resilient and sustainable way. The impacts of disasters were driving many of those countries to unsustainable levels of debt and pushing people into poverty. According to initial estimates, the three largest hurricanes of the season had caused \$184 billion in damages. The United Nations system should therefore employ a unified approach to development at all levels and encourage international financial institutions to take a more holistic approach to financing for small island developing States, especially concessional financing.

5. In the wake of the recent hurricanes, the international community must not lose sight of those who were still recovering from previous extreme weather events, as was the case in Haiti, where hundreds of thousands of people remained displaced five years after the earthquake. Given the high possibility of additional disasters, the international community could not afford to move slowly. The United Nations must be able to respond quickly and effectively to disasters and assist countries at the earliest stages. Maldives and other small island developing States remained committed to finding solutions to those difficult and consequential issues and looked forward to strengthening collaboration and engagement.

6. **Mr. Kafle** (Observer for Nepal) said that his delegation expressed its condolences for the loss of lives caused by the deadly hurricanes and stood by Member States in their recovery and rebuilding efforts. It wished to share the experiences and lessons learned by Nepal following the devastating earthquake of 2015. While natural disasters caused untold suffering, they could also be a source of strength and bring countries and people together. In order to achieve the best results, a vision to “build back better” and smarter should be developed well ahead of the reconstruction phase. During all stages

of rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction, Governments and other stakeholders must address the special needs of communities, including mental health, cultural heritage and social cohesion. In that regard, investments in mitigation and resilience would be helpful. Equal focus should be given to protecting the environment and restoring economic opportunities and productive sectors. In the experience of Nepal, international cooperation had been crucial. It should focus on the particular needs of vulnerable countries, including capacity-building, resilience, adaptation and mitigation.

7. **Mr. Hoshino** (Japan) said that the Government and people of Japan expressed their condolences to the victims of the recent devastating natural disasters. Japan had sent an international emergency rescue team to Mexico to carry out search and rescue activities and to offer assistance in “building back better”. The country had also provided prompt disaster relief assistance in response to the recent volcanic eruptions in Vanuatu as well as to the Caribbean countries affected by Hurricane Irma, including Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba and Dominica. With regard to disaster reduction, Japan had also provided assistance to reduce the impacts of large-scale disasters and build local capacities. For example, it had supported the construction of a port on Barbuda Island, which had withstood the hurricane fairly well and had been instrumental in the delivery of relief goods. Additionally, former participants of the Japan International Cooperation Agency training programme had undertaken rescue operations after the earthquake in Mexico. The Government of Japan would continue to provide assistance for disaster reduction, with a view to building infrastructure and human capacity. It remained strongly committed to implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in sustainable development, as it was an integral part of the 2030 Agenda.

8. **Mr. Aguirre Vacchieri** (Chile) said that his delegation expressed its solidarity with those communities that had been affected by the recent hurricanes and admired their resilience in the face of adversity. As part of the global response to Hurricane Maria, Chile had provided support to Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica and Nicaragua, sending teams of firefighters specialized in urban rescue. A team had also been sent to Mexico to support rescue efforts following the earthquake.

9. The international community must address the impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affected developing countries and island States. Chile reaffirmed its commitment to address climate change

actively in multilateral and regional forums in connection with the 2030 Agenda and once again called on the United Nations development system to consider poverty in all its forms and dimensions when determining support for countries. States must employ concrete strategies to incorporate the Sendai Framework into disaster risk reduction policies, in particular target (g), to substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.

10. Chile and Japan had partnered on an initiative to strengthen the technical capacities of professionals in disaster risk management in Latin America and the Caribbean, under which 2,900 professionals had received training and an additional 2,000 were expected to participate. Through that initiative, Chile hoped to contribute to the building of resilient capacities for all countries in the region to further the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework global targets.

11. **Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the recent hurricanes highlighted the vulnerability of Caribbean island States. The intensity and frequency of extreme weather events had overwhelmingly confirmed the grave consequences of unmitigated climate change. The development possibilities of the region were significantly reduced by the recurring disasters, as scarce resources had to be diverted from other projects to fund relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Those events also imposed considerable economic setbacks and devastated the agriculture, tourism and infrastructure sectors.

12. The small economies of small island developing States in the Caribbean were severely limited in their ability to allocate the necessary resources to disaster risk reduction mechanisms, at both the national and regional levels. The income categorization of some Caribbean States, which was based solely on income per capita, denied them access to international development assistance and debt relief that could bolster their limited resources for recovery and reconstruction and accelerate sustainable economic and social development. The United Nations development system and international financial institutions should employ a multidimensional approach to development assistance, aid and concessionary financing on the basis of national priorities and specific needs stemming from inherent vulnerabilities based on geographical location, size and other criteria. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago welcomed the focus on innovative financing that would not increase the debt of small island developing States, including non-traditional instruments and concessional

loans, as well as the consideration of a Caribbean resilience fund by way of debt for climate change adaptation swaps.

13. The Caribbean region must comprehensively enhance its disaster risk management, institutional governance and operations to ensure greater efficiency and coordination. It should engage frequently with international partners, research and academic institutions, private sector agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups to minimize disaster risks, improve resilience, enhance mitigation, address the psychological impact of climate change and promote efficient and effective recovery. She encouraged all Member States to donate to the forthcoming high-level donor conference for the Caribbean region, to be held in November 2017, and to support the ongoing rebuilding efforts in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

14. **Mr. Remaoun** (Algeria) said that his delegation expressed its condolences to the people and Governments affected by the recent disasters, particularly in the Caribbean region. Algeria had made contributions to the Latin American and Caribbean Group and had provided 30 huts. With regarding to emergency response, there were lessons to be learned from relevant agencies and organizations, especially those participating in the special meeting.

15. **Mr. Sandhu** (Pakistan) said that his delegation expressed its solidarity with the people affected by the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region. The widespread damage to lives, livelihoods and infrastructure, including social and economic losses, had reversed the development gains achieved in the Caribbean region over decades and had pushed people back into poverty. Even if the hurricanes were the result of climactic variability, their intensity and magnitude could not be explained without taking into account the human-induced changes to the ecological health of the planet. Those disasters were clear indicators of the reality of climate change, which already threatened many small island countries.

16. Climate change was the greatest development emergency facing the world. The international community must take concerted action to support recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts in devastated countries. A risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda required effective implementation of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework, greater political commitment and enhanced cooperation. The international community must also respond to the

adaptation needs of small island countries, which were least capable of withstanding large-scale disasters on their own, and provide financial, technological and capacity-building support for development.

17. Given that Pakistan faced severe threats from climate change and other natural disasters, the Government prioritized action to reverse the adverse impacts of climate change and was fully committed to implementing the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework. Under the national adaptation strategy, it had developed robust methodologies and mechanisms for disaster reduction and management to ensure climate- and disaster-resilient development. The national disaster management authority, established after the 2005 earthquake, had significant experience in managing natural disasters, including the massive floods in 2010 and 2011 that had impacted one fifth of the country. Pakistan would be happy to share its expertise with the international community in that regard. The country also extended support to States impacted by natural disasters. The Prime Minister had recently announced that \$600,000 of financial assistance would be provided to the Caribbean countries that had been devastated by the recent hurricanes. Pakistan remained committed to working with the international community towards disaster-resilient development for all.

18. **Mr. Chandrtri** (Observer for Thailand) said that his delegation expressed its condolences to the countries, communities and people affected by Hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Maria and hoped that they would quickly be able to “build back better”. The recent catastrophe had reminded the international community of the effect of climate change and disasters on hard-earned development gains, which could be swept away in a matter of hours. Addressing those challenges in a more rapid, effective and coherent manner was vital to sustainable development. The Government had recently contributed 5 million baht to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to support the humanitarian response and reconstruction efforts in the affected Caribbean countries and would also provide €50,000 to the Cuban Government to support ongoing relief efforts.

19. Situated in one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world, Thailand understood the need for effective and efficient disaster risk reduction and stood ready to work with the international community towards the implementation of the Sendai Framework at all levels. In March 2016, Thailand had convened the International Conference on the Implementation of the Health Aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, in cooperation with the United

Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Thailand encouraged States to integrate the Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework into their national disaster risk reduction policies. Regional and international cooperation was essential to the promotion of disaster preparedness. Thailand made regular voluntary contributions to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries and encouraged other States to do the same.

20. **Mr. Marshall** (Observer for Barbados) said that the thoughts and prayers of his delegation were with the people in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and all other countries affected by Hurricanes Maria and Irma. He called on the international community to provide assistance and take prompt and significant action to alleviate hardships and support recovery efforts in affected countries.

21. Like other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States, Barbados was a small island developing State that had contributed little to climate change but was forced to fight for its very survival. Hurricanes and natural disasters were a reminder of the perpetual threat facing those countries owing to the adverse impacts of climate change, which would significantly undermine efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Between 1980 and 2015, countries in the Caribbean had suffered from approximately 390 documented natural disasters, with losses estimated at over 2 per cent of gross domestic product per annum. His Government once again called on the international community to promote partnerships and create an enabling global environment for development. Countries such as Barbados were categorized as middle-income countries, which unfairly restricted access to international development assistance and concessionary financing and did nothing to advance sustainable development or economic resilience.

22. The higher frequency and intensity of hurricanes offered proof that climate change was real, and future generations would suffer untold consequences if the international community did not take immediate action. The Government looked forward to the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and would continue to work towards strengthening its resilience to the dangerous effects of climate change.

23. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana) said that, within the limits of its capacity and resources, Guyana had sent several containers of food supplies to the Caribbean Disaster

Emergency Management Agency and was preparing to send lumber. Guyanese technicians had also been sent to Anguilla to assist in reconstructing electrical lines. The Government had pledged \$100,000 to the relief and reconstruction effort, and private businesses and citizens had made individual donations as well.

24. While emergency and relief supplies and services were needed in the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes, rebuilding efforts should focus on developing resilience to extreme weather events. Greater access to concessional financing was crucial to reconstruction and resilience, especially for highly indebted CARICOM member States. Guyana therefore strongly supported efforts to ensure that the development gaps and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States, including CARICOM member States, informed their income classification. His country welcomed the suggested debt for climate adaptation swaps, proposed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and strongly supported the establishment of a Caribbean resilience trust fund. The work of the various agencies, programmes and units within the United Nations system in support of small island and low-lying coastal developing States should be better coordinated and streamlined. The fragmentation and underresourcing of those efforts led to duplication and inefficiencies. The Joint Inspection Unit had recommended strengthening the coordinating role of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, and Guyana hoped that those findings would be reflected in the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General.

25. The link between global warming and the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related events had been demonstrated beyond doubt. The efforts of the international community would be in vain if it was unable to preserve the gains achieved under the Paris Agreement. Progress must continue to be made in order to leave a liveable planet to future generations.

26. **Ms. Alateibi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her country had pledged \$10 million for hurricane relief and had reallocated support under the \$50 million United Arab Emirate-Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund to sustainably rebuild the power systems in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica. She wondered about the feasibility of implementing forecast-based financing in the region and how aspirations to “build back better” could be institutionalized by Governments, United Nations agencies and donors. She asked whether the official development assistance eligibility criteria should be altered to include donor support for adaptation and disaster risk reduction when applied in developing countries that were highly vulnerable to disaster but not

included on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee list of official development assistance recipients.

27. **Ms. Carrasco Alurralde** (Observer for the Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that her delegation expressed its solidarity with the countries affected by Hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Maria and the recent earthquake. The international community must recognize that the effects of climate change exacerbated disaster risk and greatly affected the global population, especially vulnerable groups. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction estimated that 80 per cent of disasters in the past 10 years had been climate-induced and that the number would continue to increase. States must therefore explore possibilities to reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience.

28. In order to address the effects of climate change and reduce disaster risk, the international community must change the capitalist model, curb excessive industrialization and consumption and stop commercializing biodiversity. The current production and consumption methods were the main threat to humanity and Mother Earth. Despite its imperfections, the Paris Agreement was a significant global effort to address climate change, with a view to preserving the planet for future generations. To strengthen resilience, Member States must implement the Sendai Framework, share knowledge in the fields of science and technology and address the underlying factors of disaster risk, including poverty and socioeconomic and gender inequality. Her delegation proposed the adoption of a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth. The United Nations should take the lead and harmonize efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which would require strong political will.

29. **Ms. Coye-Felson** (Observer for Belize) said that the international community must rethink the role of the United Nations in responding to the challenges facing small island developing States. Those challenges had been recognized as early as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Small island developing States were on the front lines of climate change but were the least equipped to absorb the full economic, social and environmental costs. The adverse impacts of climate change were not just found in sudden-impact events such as hurricanes. For the Caribbean countries, slow-onset events included longer, more intense and more frequent drought, with limited water resources to provide relief; salinization and pollution of water resources; salinization of agricultural lands; loss of land from erosion; and acidification of coastal waters, which impacted fisheries. While the insurance option was an

important tool, it was not a definitive fix and would not be able to address those challenges. The international community should therefore consider how the United Nations could ensure that those issues also gained the necessary global attention and response alongside disaster risk reduction.

30. Small island developing States faced a significant liquidity gap between disaster relief and long-term resilience. They were unlikely to have the fiscal space to take on new debt, and their capacity to mobilize domestic resources was constrained by their size. She wondered how the United Nations could support the initiative to bridge that liquidity gap and ensure ease of access to much-needed financing. She welcomed the debt for adaptation swap suggested by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was a proven solution; the Seychelles had a specific fund for a similar initiative, and Belize also had experience with a debt for nature swap. She therefore wondered why the international community had not been able to bring that idea to fruition. Other suggestions included redefining the criteria to access financing, which continued to be of pressing urgency, as the issue had first been raised nearly two decades ago. The international community must also consider how national regulations in developed economies could impact the open economies that were characteristic of small island developing States. For example, Belize had one international bank, which did not provide loans to the productive sector. The withdrawal of correspondent banking relationships therefore essentially put the entire economy at risk. Those issues must continue to receive global attention beyond the special meeting.

31. Resilience, like adaptation, was dynamic; there would always be a need to improve resilience, especially given the likelihood of a temperature increase of 3 to 4 degrees Celsius. It was clear that small island developing States would simply not be able to survive in such a world. While focusing on disaster risk reduction, the international community must not underestimate the importance of climate action and must bring the messages from the special meeting to twenty-third Conference of the Parties in order to stress the urgency of action.

32. **Mr. Bonser** (Observer for Canada) said that his delegation expressed its solidarity with the Member States and people affected by the devastating impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria and expressed its sympathies for the loved ones of those whose lives had been lost. Canada had responded quickly to meet identified needs in the aftermath of the hurricanes. It had immediately sent specialized teams to the hardest-hit countries, deployed military assets to provide relief supplies and

made contributions to regional organizations, such as the Pan American Health Organization, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency. Nevertheless, the international community could not simply focus on humanitarian and disaster relief once the storm had occurred. Canada would therefore continue to support the early recovery and longer-term reconstruction of the region. His delegation also recognized the need to address the vulnerability of small island developing States. The international community must work together to create the momentum needed for resilience, disaster risk reduction and effective climate change adaptation. Innovative financing must be included in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. His delegation had taken careful note of the ideas presented in the special meeting and gave its assurances that the Government would intensify its efforts in related areas.

33. **Mr. Daunivalu** (Observer for Fiji) said that his delegation expressed solidarity with the countries that had been affected by the recent hurricanes, in particular Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica. Fiji had also suffered widespread devastation from a category 5 cyclone in 2016. Small island developing States faced significant challenges. The hard-earned development gains that Governments had made in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework could be wiped out in an instant. States must work together and make all possible contributions to enhance and accelerate the implementation of those frameworks and address those challenges. For its part, Fiji would be the first small island developing State to preside over the Conference of the Parties and would use that opportunity to highlight the particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States. The international community must take urgent action to curb carbon emissions and focus on the agreed loss and damage mechanisms in addition to adaptation. There must be clear progress in replenishing the financing mechanisms that would assist in recovery efforts, which included providing a pathway for the Adaptation Fund to support the Paris Agreement and establishing a clearinghouse for risk transfer under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts.

34. **Ms. Pajević** (Observer for Montenegro) said that building a better future required a better understanding of the importance of climate change and an urgent response to the related complex challenges. Montenegro had hosted the fourth Global Citizen Forum, which had raised over \$400,000 to help rebuild Barbuda. The international community must redouble its efforts to

achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to resilience. Governments, the private sector and civil society must join forces to address vulnerability and the challenges facing small island developing States and other countries.

35. **Ms. Ponce** (Observer for the Philippines) said that her delegation expressed solidarity with the countries that had suffered loss of lives and property from the recent hurricanes and earthquake. The Philippines was a middle-income country that was highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Building resilience for individuals and communities through a holistic approach was an integral component of its development plans. Disaster risk reduction and management and climate budget tagging were also incorporated in planning and budgeting. Furthermore, the Government was conducting vulnerability and risk assessments and developing facilities for adaptation, including risk transfer mechanisms.

36. Middle-income countries were often excluded from concessional financing; however, economic classifications had little to do with climate change and natural disasters. The concept of vulnerability should therefore be refined and used as a basis for such financing facilities, and the issue should be addressed at the twenty-third Conference of the Parties. Her delegation also stressed the importance of data collection and encouraged States to use the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, developed by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. Finally, disaster risk reduction and climate action should be mainstreamed into development plans and integrated into the programmes and strategies of United Nations agencies.

37. **Mr. Soriano Mena** (Observer for El Salvador) said that his delegation expressed its solidarity with the countries affected by the recent hurricanes and earthquakes in the region. In El Salvador, the most recent disasters had led to loss of lives and thousands of dollars in material damage to houses and infrastructure, and dozens of people had been evacuated. El Salvador was extremely vulnerable to disasters; in addition to the recent strong hurricanes, it had often been affected by El Niño and La Niña phenomena, which continued to intensify. It was therefore necessary to implement adaptation measures and preventive strategies to reduce disaster risk, for which the country required international assistance. As a medium-income country, however, El Salvador often experienced difficulty in seeking aid. The international community should move beyond a classification system based solely on income per capita that did not take into consideration the

geographical location or vulnerability of a country, with a view to facing disasters more effectively and implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework.

38. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that the thoughts of his delegation were with those who had suffered from the recent hurricanes and earthquake. It was important to recognize the impact of natural disasters on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Immediate relief should be combined with rebuilding efforts and long-term development needs. India had therefore contributed \$2.2 million for emergency relief and rebuilding efforts through the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and had recently launched the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, which was managed by the United Nations Development Programme.

39. **Mr. George** (Observer for Sierra Leone) said that his delegation expressed its sincere condolences to the Governments and peoples of the Caribbean countries affected by the recent hurricanes and hoped that events such as the special meeting would become the norm in the future, as a way of maintaining the focus on issues related to climate change. Sierra Leone had been hit by torrential rainfall for the third consecutive year in August 2017, which had caused flash flooding and the collapse of a mountainside. The impact had been far-reaching, especially on women and children. Thousands of people had been killed or severely injured and traumatized. Approximately 7,000 people had been made homeless, and millions of dollars of physical property and assets had been lost. He thanked the international community for its support in that time of grief and need. Those disasters were a stark reminder of the reality of climate change and the vulnerability of Sierra Leone. He reiterated his country's support for the Paris Agreement and all concerted global efforts to address climate change. Financing was essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for developing countries, especially for least developed countries such as Sierra Leone and climate-vulnerable small island and coastal States.

40. **Ms. Saran** (South Africa) said that her delegation expressed its sincerest condolences to the people and countries affected by the recent natural disasters in the Caribbean region and Mexico. The impacts of climate-related disasters were wide-ranging and affected multiple sectors. Climate change therefore increased the urgency of integrating risk management into development efforts and current disaster management approaches, with a focus that should be proactive rather than reactive. There must be early warning mechanisms and procedures for identified

risks, including ecosystem- and community-based adaptation. In the wake of the recent disasters, it had been difficult for emergency teams and provisions to reach those in need owing to the resulting damage, as well as the remoteness of many locations and inadequate transportation and communication infrastructures. The international community must now come together and enhance its efforts to deliver appropriate and timely aid to those in need, assist in reconstruction and development efforts and ensure that no one was left behind in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.

41. **Mr. Slater** (Assistant Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)) said that it was clear that the Caribbean region must do its part, and that was exemplified by the efforts of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the rapid response of many CARICOM member States. Many of the Member States that had participated in the special meeting had also contributed material and financial resources, as well as ideas. Going forward, success would be achieved through collaboration. He invited Member States to participate in the forthcoming donor conference.

### Closure of the special meeting

#### *Statement by the President of the Economic and Social Council*

42. **The President** said that the participation of Member States from all regions demonstrated the solidarity of the international community and its continued belief in multilateralism and global solutions. The special meeting had provided an opportunity to take stock of existing initiatives and efforts to assist the affected countries and territories in rebuilding with resilience. The international community must build on those efforts, enhance their complementarity and avoid duplication. She called on Member States and international financial institutions to reflect on and support the new and innovative proposals for the benefit of affected States.

43. The 2017 hurricane season in the Caribbean had underscored the importance of investing in resilient, high-quality infrastructure. Resilience could be cemented in the reconstruction process by enforcing and improving building codes and adopting a risk-informed approach to land-use planning. Those efforts could also reduce poverty and other inequalities that increased the vulnerability of the poorest individuals. Geospatial information and services could be vital in preventing and reducing the human, socioeconomic and environmental risks and impacts of disasters. In that regard, she highlighted the work of the Committee of



Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. Various forums within the Economic and Social Council could be used to continue the discussion on the recommendations presented in the special meeting. For example, the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up could be used for future discussions on risk-informed investments and financing for disaster risk reduction.

44. Member States had made commitments to developing and implementing holistic disaster risk management at all levels, in line with the Sendai Framework. It was time to translate those commitments into action. She was particularly encouraged to see international partners supporting affected countries in becoming more resilient. The United Nations system must commit to working together to better support countries in taking a risk-informed approach to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Investments and development assistance must be risk-informed and adopt a long-term vision for resilience to avoid creating new risks during reconstruction. The international community must also find innovative ways to increase access to financing for vulnerable small States.

45. The Council would follow up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground. She reiterated its commitment to promote coordination in the work of the United Nations development system in coping with various global challenges and to assist affected countries in their efforts to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda.

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*