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Agenda items 19 (b), (c) and (d) and 73 (a)

Sustainable development:

Follow-up to and implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Disaster risk reduction

Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 2 November 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Czechia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward the statement issued under my authority on the occasion of the special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda”, held on 24 October 2017 (see annex). I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you and the Deputy Secretary-General for her participation at this important meeting. Her presence and your strong commitment to assisting affected communities contributed in no small measure to its success.

The special meeting provided an opportunity to take stock of existing initiatives and efforts aimed at helping hurricane-affected countries and territories and to explore ways of assisting them effectively to reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience. During the meeting, the Caribbean Community made a strong appeal for urgent access to financing, including for climate change adaptation, and engagement at the upcoming high-level donor conference, to be held in New York on 21 November to help the region access much-needed support. The work on post-disaster needs assessments by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the European Union, and the damage and loss assessment by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), were



considered important in evaluating the scope and scale of the damage and informing the international response.

The discussions underscored the disproportionate impact of hurricanes in countries with a high level of exposure and vulnerability to climate change, in particular small island developing States. Affected States, most of which are middle-income States, appealed for increased access to concessional finance, including through a change in criteria to include the concept of vulnerability. ECLAC proposed an initiative for swapping debt for climate adaptation and resilience-building, aimed at addressing the debt burden of affected States while redirecting resources to build resilience.

One of the strongest messages concerned the urgency of combating climate change and the need to implement the commitments made in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Paris Agreement to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There are high expectations for the upcoming session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Bonn, to address the vulnerabilities of small island developing States.

In the presidential statement, I outline immediate, medium and long-term actions needed to assist affected countries in their efforts to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda. We call on the United Nations system to enhance its collaboration and coherence to better support countries in taking a risk-informed approach to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the attached presidential statement as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 19 (b), (c) and (d) and 73 (a).

The Economic and Social Council counts on your support to implement and advocate for the relevant recommendations that would be instrumental in helping affected countries in their recovery and resilience efforts. In recognition of the need for a strong and effective response, the Council will convene a follow-up meeting to take stock of progress on these actions in 2018.

(Signed) Marie **Chatardová**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

**Annex to the letter dated 2 November 2017 from the
Permanent Representative of Czechia to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Presidential statement on the occasion of the special meeting
of the Economic and Social Council on the aftermath of recent
hurricanes: achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda**

The Economic and Social Council convened a special meeting on “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda” on 24 October 2017. As President of the Economic and Social Council, I am pleased to share the key messages and recommendations that emerged from our discussions during the meeting.

During the past six months, we have witnessed severe disasters resulting from natural hazards: the severe floods in Africa and South Asia, the earthquakes in Mexico and the devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean, Central America and the United States of America. We express our deepest condolences to the victims and their families, and extend our solidarity to all the affected people and Governments.

We heard from affected States about the devastation caused by the recent hurricanes, floods and earthquakes and their negative impact on the capability of affected communities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We acknowledge the more profound and disproportionate impact of disasters in countries with a high level of exposure and vulnerability to climate change, in particular small island developing States. Most of the affected countries are categorized as middle income and are ineligible for concessional development financing from multilateral financial institutions and official development assistance, owing to the use of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as the primary criterion for access. These disasters are a reminder that the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 are all interconnected.

Early humanitarian response has been critical for saving lives and livelihoods and for the provision of essential services. Preparedness and partnerships played an essential role, as pre-positioned personnel, logistics and stocks allowed the humanitarian response and emergency supplies to arrive more quickly. We commend the efforts made by countries themselves, the United Nations system, regional organizations and the international community at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations system, together with partners, deployed early and is helping countries to meet the urgent needs of the most vulnerable people. As assessments continue, the immediate needs that have been identified are concentrated in the sectors of health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, shelter and early recovery support for livelihoods, as displacement and disruptions to livelihoods are expected to last for several months.

Action now

- We emphasize the importance of disaster preparedness and humanitarian assistance in saving lives and livelihoods. We welcome the actions undertaken by the United Nations system and partners in response to the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean and call for further funding to meet the requirements of the humanitarian appeals launched in their aftermath

- We call on all Member States and the international community to ensure that the humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put these countries on a sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda. These efforts should address risks and rebuild better, adhering to the commitments contained in the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement. We must build on existing initiatives and efforts that are aimed at helping the affected countries and territories rebuild with resilience, enhancing their complementarity and avoiding duplication
- We recognize the coordinated and coherent response by humanitarian and development actors, which has been illustrated by a stronger impact and results on the ground. We call for sufficient funding for both, which is critical in putting these communities on the path to sustainable development. We must ensure that funding pledges, whether bilateral or through the United Nations system, are delivered urgently
- We call for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including disaster preparedness, early warning and early action, and for ensuring a well-coordinated, timely and effective response to future disaster events, supported with predictable, timely, flexible and adequate risk-informed financing, including forecast-based financing. We urge greater risk-informed investment in infrastructure and housing and call for more effective public-private partnerships, with the engagement of all stakeholders, including the insurance sector, the wider investment community and international actors
- We encourage affected States to review their national policies and legal frameworks for disaster risk reduction, with a view to integrating disaster risk management in development planning; to review and adhere to building codes; to enhance multi-hazard early warning systems, preparedness, response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts; and to guide new investment. We call on Member States and the international community to actively engage in the planned donor conference being spearheaded by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary-General, as mandated by the CARICOM Heads of Government, and to mobilize international support for reconstruction and the building of long-term resilience across the region. The work on a post-disaster needs assessment by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the European Union, and the damage and loss assessment by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), will be important in evaluating the scope and scale of the damage caused by recent hurricanes in the Caribbean region and in informing international responses thereto
- We call for stronger collaboration, connectivity and complementarity with regard to humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate action to define and deliver collective outcomes to reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years. By doing this, we can help contribute towards transformative changes in the resilience and lives of the most vulnerable people and ensure that no one is left behind in the face of the adverse effects of climate change and extreme weather events

Medium- to long-term measures

- We call for longer-term recovery, development and reconstruction programmes, including the regeneration of key industries such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries, to generate much-needed jobs. Importantly, key industries and

livelihoods must be made sustainable and resilient to the impacts of future extreme weather events and other hazards. We must support the efforts of affected and vulnerable countries to diversify their economies and harness the benefits of the digital economy to enhance their economic resilience. We call for concerted efforts to help small island developing States transform their power sectors by increasing their access to affordable renewable energy sources, taking into account their small markets and limited financial resources

- We note the request to change the criteria for determining access to concessionary resources, by ending the dominant use of GDP criteria and including the concept of vulnerability. We call on bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions to explore financial solutions that take into account both the high debt and the urgent need for reconstruction financing in affected small island developing States. We call for increased concessional finance to all small island developing States. We encourage development finance providers, including bilateral and multilateral creditors, to offer State-contingent debt instruments in lending to such States and other vulnerable countries. We note the proposal of ECLAC for a debt-for-climate adaptation swap and resilience-building initiative, aimed at addressing the debt burden of affected States while redirecting resources to build resilience in all dimensions of sustainable development, and look forward to progress in this regard. We also express concern about the impact of the withdrawal of correspondent banks from the Caribbean region on its financial sector and acknowledge the region's request for a concerted global response
- We also look forward to the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development on the inventory of quick disbursing mechanisms for financing in the aftermath of shocks, and encourage the Task Force to explore the question of disaster-resilient investing. We also call on the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up to discuss risk-informed investments and financing for disaster risk reduction and consider the inclusion of that topic in the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of its next session, in 2018
- We must explore ways to improve reinsurance mechanisms. More diversification, through a global fund or regional funds with enhanced reinsurance, is needed for insurance products to work effectively. Insurance mechanisms can also offer incentives to reduce existing disaster risks and avoid creating new ones
- We encourage financial intermediaries and regulatory entities to reduce the transaction cost of remittances and call on Governments to reduce the cost of remittance transfers, through policy, regulatory and technological actions that could help increase financial flows to affected countries
- We must strengthen social protection systems and safety nets to reach affected populations during disasters. Attention must be given to the accessibility of infrastructure, service provision and disaster-preparedness schemes for vulnerable groups of population
- We need to continue to build strong response capacities and effective networks at the regional, national and local levels as the first lines of defence against the impacts of extreme weather events. We call on the United Nations and the international community to reinforce these efforts
- We note with concern the role of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change as drivers of displacement and call for effective strategies to prevent

and mitigate such displacement, ensure adequate protection and assistance for those displaced, and promote and support durable solutions

- As an international community, we have a responsibility to come together to intensify our efforts to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We call for an integrated approach to implementing the commitments made in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We also urge the full and effective implementation of the commitments and partnerships announced at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States and the fulfilment of the provisions on all means of implementation, as contained in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway
- We underline the importance of geospatial information and services in preventing or reducing the human, socioeconomic and environmental risks and impacts of disasters and, in this context, acknowledge the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, adopted by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. We call for systematic accounting of loss and damage from disasters and climate change, as highlighted at the 2017 session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to provide statistical evidence of risk for policymakers, development planners and the private sector to make risk-informed choices
- We call for sustained and coherent international support to accelerate recovery, ensure risk-informed reconstruction and strengthen resilience in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this regard, we call on the international community to respect the principle of national ownership and align with the national priorities of affected States
- We emphasize the urgency of combating climate change and call for intensified efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as to enhance support for adaptation. We look forward to the deliberations at the upcoming twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Bonn, Germany, in November 2017, which we hope will use as a benchmark for action the need to address the vulnerabilities of small island developing States
- We need to act urgently. The Council is committed to continuing to promote coordination in the work of the United Nations development system and intends to follow up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground