

## At UN, over \$2 billion pledged to help hurricane-affected Caribbean nations 'build back better'

22 November 2017 – The international community mobilized over \$1.3 billion in pledges and more than \$1 billion in loans and debt relief to help Caribbean nations recover from the strong hurricanes that pummelled the region a few months ago, during a meeting at United Nations Headquarters on Tuesday.

"I think we're extremely happy with the results of the conference," said Stephen O'Malley, the UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) for Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

The powerful category-5 hurricanes Irma and Maria hit the Caribbean in September causing a number of deaths and widespread devastation in the Caribbean. According to the latest needs estimates, recovery costs are expected to surpass \$5 billion.

Barbuda, the smaller of the two-island State of Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica were among the most severely affected, along with Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands. Haiti and St. Kitts and Nevis also suffered damage, while St. Maarten/St. Martin as well as Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico were also impacted.

"It is a very long road to recovery," Mr. O'Malley said in an interview with *UN News*, noting that while the roads in the capital, Roseau, are more or less clear and water is back, only three per cent of the country currently has electricity. In addition, agriculture has been badly affected. "It's still a hard time."

Meanwhile, on Barbuda, water was restored yesterday and people are trickling back to the island. The roads have been cleared and people are beginning to repair their homes, and trying to determine whether they can come back and resettle or wait longer until the conditions are right for returning. Schools have not re-opened and medical services are very limited, Mr. O'Malley noted.

Nearly 400 high-level representatives from governments, multilateral and civil society organizations and the private sector [gathered](#) in New York, along with the Secretaries-General of the UN and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to help the affected countries "build back better."

"They want to be a climate-resilient region," Mr. O'Malley stated, explaining that this involves practical steps from the way a country's road network and electricity grid are designed to ensuring that schools and hospitals are built to withstand the impact of climate change.

"It's your infrastructure. It's also better planning and preparedness by the

governments so that they can respond more quickly,” he pointed out. “They have the capacity to do that [...] there’s a variety of different things there to make everybody more climate resilient.”

Addressing the conference yesterday, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres noted that countries in the Caribbean need support now to rebuild, and to take effective climate action.

“We need a new generation of infrastructure that is risk-informed, to underpin resilient economies, communities and livelihoods,” he told the gathering.

*Find out more about the UN’s efforts to assist countries impacted by the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season [here](#)*

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## [ISIL ‘down but not out’ in Iraq; UN envoy urges efforts to defeat group’s extremist ideology](#)

22 November 2017 – The military victory against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) is only one component of a complex battle that addresses the root causes of extremist ideology, the United Nations envoy for Iraq said Wednesday.

“Da’esh remains able and determined to continue devastating random attacks against the Iraqi civilian population, against civilians globally,” Ján Kubiš, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq ([UNAMI](#)), [told](#) the Security Council.

“Da’esh is down but not yet out even in Iraq,” he stressed, adding that “only by defeating its loathsome ‘takfiri’ ideology, choking off its external support, and addressing the causes that prompted so many Iraqis to join or tolerate Da’esh can this terrorist organization finally be eliminated.”

He noted that on 17 November, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) fully recaptured Rawa, the last remaining densely settled area under Da’esh control in Iraq. Since summer 2014, Da’esh has lost 95 per cent of the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria and more than 7.5 million people have been liberated from its grasp.

But “this victory has come at a very high cost,” said Mr. Kubiš, noting that thousands of fighters and civilians were killed or wounded, hundreds of thousands of children brainwashed, entire cities in ruins, and some six million people have been displaced.

Further, Da'esh has exterminated or enslaved thousands of Muslims, as well as minority communities, particularly women and girls, in action amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, perhaps even genocide.

Mr. Kubiš encouraged the global coalition against Da'esh to continue both military and non military efforts to help Iraq ensure the lasting and sustainable defeat of Da'esh.

He said that inside Iraq, priority must be accorded to facilitating the voluntary return of internally displaced persons, stabilization, reconstruction and rehabilitation. It would also be crucial to reform the security sector and to enforce law and order against armed groups outside State control, including criminal gangs, militias and tribal elements.

#### ***Tensions between Central Government and Kurdistan Regional Government***

He went on to state that among the prominent current concerns are the tensions between the Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in the wake of a decision by the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to hold a unilaterally-declared independence referendum. The central authorities have rejected the referendum as unconstitutional and have taken steps to re assert federal authority over Iraq's external border crossings, including the international airports in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

On 6 November, he reported, the Federal Supreme Court issued an opinion stating that the constitution does not provide for authorizing the secession of any component of Iraq's federal system, and that the referendum was illegal.

All outstanding issues between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government must be resolved through sustainable solutions based on the constitution, he emphasized, noting that UNAMI has also called for immediate negotiations with Government representatives on such issues as the budget, salaries and oil exports.

Turning to elections, he said the new Board of Commissioners for the Independent High Electoral Commission has a herculean task ahead, including holding two simultaneous elections, a tight timeline and security concerns.

He called upon the Council of Representatives to pass legislation to ensure that elections are held on 15 May 2018, adding that a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission has been deployed to help in identifying priority areas for support. UNAMI has also completed a draft law on the Establishing of National Specialized Court on Most Serious Crimes, to be discussed with relevant authorities.

Turning to the question of missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including that country's national archives, he said Iraq and Kuwait served as models of good neighbourly relations in a region fraught with instability. Iraq's Government has made impressive efforts to identify grave sites, but efforts to identify missing Kuwaiti property has met with limited success.

Although there has been no progress in locating the national archives, the Government of Iraq has identified more than 6,000 Kuwaiti books. The United Nations and the international community will continue to pursue the matter and to support Iraq on that question until that chapter could be closed, he said.

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## [With access to modern, clean energy, poorer countries look to power ahead through innovation – UN report](#)

22 November 2017 – Energy is key to global development, but the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations fare up to six times worse than their more industrialized counterparts when it comes to accessing the vital resource, the United Nations warned on Wednesday.

In its 2017 report on the world's 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), focused on [Transformational Energy Access](#) the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) said that only four of them were on course to achieve internationally agreed targets on energy distribution by 2030.

While they have made great strides in recent years, achieving the global goal of universal access to energy by 2030, the finish line for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), will require a 350 per cent increase in their annual rate of electrification, said UNCTAD.

"Achieving Sustainable Development [Goal 7](#) is not only a question of satisfying households' basic energy needs," UNCTAD Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi said in Geneva, ahead of the report's publication on Tuesday.

"That in itself has valuable welfare implications, [but we need to go beyond](#) [...] For electrification to transform LDC economies, modern energy provision needs to spur productivity increases and unlock the production of more goods and services."

Dr. Kituyi added: "The productive use of energy is what turns access into economic development, and what ensures that investments in electricity infrastructure are economically viable. But that means looking beyond satisfying households basic needs to achieving transformational energy access – satisfying producers' needs for adequate, reliable and affordable energy."

*Find out more about the UN's work with and for the world's 47 Least Developed Countries [here](#)*

To that end, the report notes that renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, could have a revolutionary effect in rural areas, home to 82

per cent of those without power in the least developed countries, and help to overcome the historical obstacles to rural electrification.

But non-hydro renewable energy in these countries has so far come mostly from small-scale technologies, such as solar lanterns and stand-alone home systems. While these have brought some progress, they fall short of the game-changing access to power that they need to transform their economies.

Utility-scale renewable technologies capable of feeding the grids and mini-grids necessary not only to power homes, but also to grow businesses and industries, need to be deployed rapidly. But to achieve this, the least developed countries must overcome important technological, economic and institutional obstacles. This will require both the right national policies and stronger international support.

Because energy technologies, and particularly renewable technologies, are constantly evolving, it is critical that the least developed countries gain access to the technologies suited to their particular conditions and circumstances, and that they strengthen the capacity of their energy sectors to absorb such technologies.

The recently created [Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries](#) could help, but developed countries could help even more by living up to their technology-transfer obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) and the Kyoto Protocol, said UNCTAD.

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## [UN urges action so women and girls everywhere can live free from all forms of violence](#)

22 November 2017 – Achieving gender equality and the full empowerment of women is the answer to ending violence against women, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Wednesday, calling for collective global action on this cause.

“Violence against women is [fundamentally about power](#),” Mr. Guterres said in his remarks alongside UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at a special event held at UN Headquarters in New York to commemorate [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), which is annually observed on 25 November.

“It will only end when gender equality and the full empowerment of women will be a reality,” he stressed, adding that his policy on gender parity in the United Nations is one step towards achieving this goal.

Mr. Guterres noted that every woman and every girl have the right to a life free of violence, but this right is violated in a variety of ways in every community, with more than one in three women worldwide face violence throughout their lifetime.

This violence, the most visible sign of pervasive patriarchy and chauvinism, directly impacts women's physical and psychological health. It affects whole families, communities and societies. While it continues, States will not achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, a master plan to end poverty and save the planet, adopted by them in 2015.

"There is increasing recognition that violence against women is a major barrier to the fulfilment of human rights, and a direct challenge to women's inclusion and participation in sustainable development and sustaining peace," said Mr. Guterres.

The United Nations is committed to addressing violence against women in all its forms, he stressed, citing such initiatives as the [UN Trust Fund](#) to End Violence Against Women, which has successfully awarded \$129 million to 463 initiatives across 139 countries and territories over the past 20 years.

These also include the [Spotlight Initiative](#) recently launched by the UN and the European Union, as well as the [UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative](#), which seeks to help end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.

Mr. Guterres is also addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse inhouse by launching a new, victim-centred approach to the offenses committed by those serving under the UN.

While noting that these initiatives should help deliver transformative change, he said much more remains to be done.

"It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from all forms of violence," he said.

### [Everything you need to know about the 16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence](#)

Led by [UN Women](#) and partners, hundreds of events will be held worldwide, including marches, flashmobs, concerts, and football and rugby games. Iconic buildings will be lit up in orange to galvanize attention during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November to 10 December, when the world marks [Human Rights Day](#).

The 16 Days campaign takes place under the umbrella of the Secretary-General's campaign [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) by 2030. Orange has been designated as the colour of the UNiTE campaign as it symbolizes hope and a violence-free world.

This year's theme for the campaign is 'Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls.'

**AUDIO:** Marking International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Secretary-General António Guterres said every woman and girl had the right to a life free from violence, while more than one in three are victims of a violent act at some point in their lives.

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## Adopt a 'common line,' UN negotiator appeals to Syrian opposition

22 November 2017 – Syrian opposition groups meeting in Saudi Arabia should do all they can to unify ahead of a fresh round of United Nations-facilitated talks in Geneva, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Wednesday.

The veteran negotiator was speaking to reporters in the Saudi capital Riyadh, at a meeting involving the principal opponents of forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al Assad.

After welcoming the “wide spectrum” of representation at the Saudi meeting, Mr. de Mistura noted the “very complicated environment” in which it was taking place – a reference to the [crisis in Syria](#) that has left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced millions.

Despite these obstacles, the UN Special Envoy called for the opposition groups to take a “common line” on their country’s future.

Their actions could help shape not one but two rounds of [intra-Syrian talks](#) in Geneva, Mr. de Mistura said.

The first discussions are due to begin next Tuesday, to be followed by a second session in December.

“We want to show, and we want to show through you, that this is the way the future of Syria can be decided,” Mr. de Mistura told all those gathered in Saudi Arabia.

He added that they had a chance to give “a new dynamic” to the UN’s efforts to secure peace in Syria, based on UN Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#). The measure calls for the Syrian Government and opposition to engage in formal negotiations on a political transition process “on an urgent basis” – something will be sure to figure prominently when intra-Syrian talks begin on Tuesday.

In his push “for real negotiations” based on resolution 2254, Mr. de Mistura explained that once back in Switzerland for the UN talks, he would be seeking progress on a new constitution and elections supervised by the United Nations.

The aim is to produce “credible, all-inclusive, non-sectarian governance” in Syria, he said, and to address the threat of terrorism in the war-torn country.

In addition, the UN Special Envoy insisted urged also to press for the release of detainees and missing persons, and humanitarian access to areas still under siege in the more than six-year war.