

Press release: UK leads the way to build back better after Hurricanes

The UK government is to set up a private sector Task Force to help long-term reconstruction in countries and territories hit by last month's Caribbean hurricanes, International Development Secretary Priti Patel will announce today (Friday, October 13).

It will mobilise private sector support to rebuild critical infrastructure such as roads and power supplies essential to get economies up and running again, and better withstand future natural disasters.

The team of top business leaders, either CEOs or Chairs with experience in the Caribbean, will sit on the Task Force.

Ms Patel will announce the Task Force at a meeting to discuss the response to the hurricanes and how to enhance global crisis preparedness and response, hosted by the World Bank in Washington D.C.

The Task Force will look at ways in which support from the private sector, both financial and technical, in industries such as construction, insurance, banking and tourism, can be used to help reconstruction on the three UK Overseas Territories worst hit by last month's Hurricane Irma: British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Turks and Caicos.

Ms Patel will convene a meeting in London in November to discuss how best to maximise the contribution of the private sector.

The UK government has already committed over £62 million towards the immediate relief effort, and has delivered or procured nearly 180 tonnes of aid for the region.

It also established a UK Joint Task Force, led by DFID's Chris Austin, in the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes to deal with the humanitarian crisis on the ground and the initial relief effort as well as to carry out assessments to identify both short and longer term needs.

The focus of the private sector Task Force announced today will specifically be the long-term reconstruction on the affected islands.

Ms Patel will say at the World Bank hosted event:

No small island can reasonably be expected to recover and rebuild from a catastrophic disaster that undermines their entire economy without international support.

They need businesses to step up. The private sector is key to reviving the region's economies and must play a central role in the reconstruction of these islands, helping them to build back better.

Ms Patel, who visited British Virgin Islands and Anguilla last month, will say the longer-term reconstruction involves “working with the affected islands to build back better and more resilient hospitals, schools and other public services like water and power on which people survive.”

She will add:

we need to reduce the future potential impact on public services and livelihoods of any future disasters. Investing in preparedness makes good financial sense: each pound saves two pounds of aid.

Ms Patel will also confirm today that the UK-led Centre for Global Disaster Protection in London will offer all the hurricane-hit countries and territories support and advice on disaster risk financing and insurance to ensure they are better prepared to cope with any future hurricanes. The Centre will also offer advice on building more resilient infrastructure.

DFID will work with experts to ensure new buildings and systems are more resilient, efficient and use more renewable energy options.

This will include more than 12 major climate resilient infrastructure projects, at least 50 strengthened health facilities, and geothermal energy development where the potential exists.

These projects were already planned before the hurricanes and will now be able to quickly mobilise to build resilience. They include £25 million set aside for Dominica and £14 million for Antigua and Barbuda.

Ms Patel’s words on building back better come amid wider calls from her for reform of the international system.

She will say:

“The international system needs to explore new ways to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises in the future.”

The UK is also today publishing its Humanitarian Reform Policy, which reaffirms its leadership in responding to global emergencies and reforming the international humanitarian system.

Notes to Editors

- The UK government has already committed £62 million towards the immediate relief effort in the region, and is doubling any UK public donations to the British Red Cross Hurricanes appeal up to £3 million.
- So far nearly 180 tonnes of UK aid has arrived or been procured in the region, including food, water, shelter kits, solar lanterns and building materials. The UK government has also helped reinstall airport runways and power lines in the islands, and provided shelter, food and water.
- Private sector insurance (for businesses, some homes and property) is already likely to provide considerable support for reconstruction – with

pay outs estimated by leading catastrophe modellers Risk Management Solutions to be up to £27.4 billion (\$36 billion) for the region, of which £4.6 billion (\$6 billion) is for the UK Overseas Territories, including £3 billion (\$4 billion) for the British Virgin Islands.

- The Prime Minister announced the London-based Centre for Global Disaster Protection at the G20 Summit earlier this year. It aims to save lives and help countries get back on their feet quickly after a disaster strikes, working with governments to strengthen plans and help them to use tools like insurance to access quick and reliable finance in emergencies.
- The Centre will also work with the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) and private sector partners to consider options to step up the risk financing available to the Caribbean. The UK, alongside the World Bank and other donors, helped to establish CCRIF a decade ago. It has paid out over £91.2 million (\$120 million) since then, including £38 million (\$50 million) to islands affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
- The UK has a long-standing development partnership with the Caribbean. It already has programming in place to support the construction of disaster-resilient infrastructure. This includes £300 million from UKCIF (UK Caribbean Infrastructure Fund) to build more than 12 climate resilient infrastructure projects, including roads and ports, and a £38 million Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) programme to help at least 50 health clinics to better withstand natural disasters. This is all UK aid money. From the UKCIF fund, £25 million can now be set aside for Dominica and £14 million for Antigua and Barbuda to help reconstruction after the hurricanes.
- The UK has also confirmed its core contributions to United Nations Humanitarian Agencies, including CERF, OCHA, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and M&E. This constitutes total contributions of £684 million. Almost a third of this funding will be dependent on improved results and progress on reform priorities, as the International Development Secretary announced at the United Nations General Assembly in September.
- Footage and photos: [click here](#) for new content from Dominica