

UN Economic and Social Council urges 'action now;' long-term measures to tackle natural disasters

25 October 2017 – The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on Wednesday called on UN Member States and the international community to ensure that in the wake of the devastating floods, hurricanes and earthquakes that impacted numerous countries, the humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Following yesterday's ECOSOC [Special Meeting](#) on the 'Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient [2030 Agenda](#),' Council President Marie Chatardová issued a Statement expressing the UN body's deepest condolences to the victims, and extending solidarity to all the affected people and Governments in the hurricane-hit Caribbean, Central America and the United States, as well as in Mexico, which was struck by successive earthquakes, and in Africa and South Asia, where severe flooding wreaked havoc.

"Early [humanitarian response has been critical](#) for saving lives and livelihoods and the provision of essential services," said the Statement. "Preparedness and partnerships played an essential role as prepositioned personnel, logistics and stocks allowed the humanitarian response and emergency supplies to arrive more quickly."

As assessments continue amid displacement and disruptions to livelihoods, immediate needs concentrate in the sectors of health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and shelter.

The Statement emphasized that the international community must ensure that a humanitarian response is complemented by medium- and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts to put countries "on a sustainable path to achieve a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda."

It stressed that efforts build on existing initiatives to help affected countries reconstruct with resilience and called for greater investment in disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, early warning and early action, while urging greater risk-informed investment in infrastructure and housing.

"We call for stronger collaboration, connectivity and complementarity between humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction and climate action to define and deliver collective outcomes to reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years," said the Council, indicating that specific attention must be given to the most vulnerable people facing climate change and extreme weather events.

Elaborating on the measures needed in both the medium and long term, the

Council called for longer term recovery, development and reconstruction programmes, pointing to, among others, the regeneration of industries, including tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

“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 efforts of affected and vulnerable countries to diversify their economies and harness the benefits of digital economy to enhance their economic resilience,” the Statement continued.

“We need to act urgently,” the members of the Council asserted, adding: “The Council is committed to continue to promote coordination in the work of the UN development system and intends to follow-up in 2018 to ensure strong progress on the ground.