



**Situation Report 28 – Caribbean Hurricane Season
13 November 2008**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Assessments continue to evaluate the damages following Hurricane “Paloma”.
- Cayman Brac, in the Cayman Islands, is more seriously affected by “Paloma”, while minor damage is reported in Grand Cayman.
- Recovery has already started in Cuba’s affected provinces.



SITUATION

1. Coming toward the end of the Atlantic hurricane season on November 30, tropical storm “Paloma” has transformed into the seventh hurricane of the season, passed near the Cayman Islands, and made landfall in Cuba, near Santa Cruz del Sur, on 8 November, as a category 4 hurricane. “Paloma” quickly weakened into a category 3 hurricane



with winds of 115 mph (185 km/hrs) and torrential rains, and further, to a tropical depression. The US National Hurricane Centre reports that a new small surface low pressure system is producing a concentrated area of showers and thunderstorms about 300 miles northeast of Puerto Rico. Although winds are only marginally favorable, some development of this system is possible over the next days as it moves westward.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

CAYMAN ISLANDS

2. Hurricane “Paloma”, which passed near the main island of Grand Cayman, changed course and hit the smaller island of Cayman Brac as a Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph winds, ripping roofs from buildings and leaving devastation in its wake. Only 20% of houses were not affected on Cayman Brac. Many of the roads are still impassable. The British Red Cross Disaster Manager for the Cayman Islands reports that around a third of houses have no roof, with some completely destroyed. The majority of the houses have sustained structural damage. Some areas are also flooded as “Paloma” hit after 2 weeks of heavy rain on a saturated soil. Cayman Brac lies about 80 miles East of the main island of Grand Cayman and is home to approximately 18,000 residents, many of whom have been evacuated and are now staying with friends and relatives, or in Government shelters. Minimal damage was reported on Grand Cayman. According to the Hazard Management Committee, no injuries were reported. Local authorities, lead by the Ministry of District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing (DAPAH), are responding to the situation. The National Hurricane Committee (NHC) set up its Emergency Operations Centre at the Owen Roberts International Airport. The British Red Cross is working with the Cayman Islands Government and ADRA (Adventist Disaster Response Agency) to identify the needs of the affected persons and are distributing basic relief items such tarpaulins, hygiene items and buckets. The British Red Cross has immediately released £15,000 (or approximately USD 23,500) to support the emergency relief efforts however much more is needed as the extent of the damage becomes clearer.

CUBA

3. While Cuba is still recovering from “Gustav” and “Ike” and tropical storms “Fay” and “Hanna”, hurricane “Paloma” lashed the Cuban central-eastern portion. On a visit to the affected areas, Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba, provided information on the assessment of the damage caused by the hurricanes during this season: “Gustav” and “Ike” respective damages are valued at USD 2,072 billion and USD 7, 275 billion; with the new damage caused by “Paloma”, losses will amount to approximately USD 10 billion. The most affected territories are already in the recovery phase.

4. The Cuban authorities continue to take measures and actions to recover, facilitating the return of most evacuees to their places of origin; providing temporary accommodation and food to those who lost their homes; dispatching cleaning and rubble/garbage removal brigades; mobilizing vehicles and specialized personnel from other non-affected provinces to restore electricity and telecommunications; initiating the rehabilitation of roads/highways and railway lines; rehabilitating affected crops and restarting several public services. The Cuban authorities are currently continuing the assessments. No human lives were lost.

5. The hardest-hit municipalities are Santa Cruz del Sur, Najasa and Guáimaro in Camagüey province and Amancio Rodríguez in Las Tunas province. More than 1.2 million persons had been evacuated by the Civil Defense in less than 48 hours. According to “Granma” newspaper, 18% of the evacuated (or 220,000 persons) were in 1,448 shelters, the rest staying with friends and family. Some 4,000 vehicles, 13 trains and other transportation means supported these evacuations; 927 food processing centers and 72 soup kitchens were opened. Some of the protective measures for the agricultural, livestock and fishing sectors included the transfer of a total of 237,000 animals to less vulnerable areas and the shielding of crops. Priority was given to the protection of food supplies in ports, warehouses and stores. Medicines and first-aid kits were made available.

6. A preliminary report indicates the loss of 24.5 *caballerías* (1 *caballería* equals 13.4 hectares) of various crops. In Camagüey province, mainly in the southern municipalities, damage was caused to sugarcane plantations and fields of

roots, tubers and vegetables. Banana is also one of the most affected crops. The electricity/energy supply system was affected. There is also damage reported to the road infrastructure on the southern coasts of Camagüey and Las Tunas provinces. In the housing sector, Santa Cruz del Sur municipality reports that some 9,889 houses are either destroyed or damaged. In Camagüey, health services are disrupted and the Najasa and Guáimaro municipalities' health sector is affected.

7. The United Nations System (UNS) in Cuba maintains its disaster management mechanisms activated. The Cuba UN Country Team and UNETE are monitoring the situation. The Headquarters and Regional Offices of the United Nations are in contact with their Cuba-based agencies.

8. The European Commission, through its Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), is currently funding five relief projects in Cuba from a €2 million allocation that was provided following Hurricanes "Gustav" and "Ike", which hit Cuba in August and September 2008. ECHO is considering further support to Cuba.

REGIONAL RESPONSE

9. The OCHA Regional Office in Panama is monitoring the situation and is in close contact with the Resident Coordinators and UNETTES of the affected countries in the region.

10. The IFRC/Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) based in Panama and the Regional Representatives in Trinidad and Tobago have been coordinating early response activities with the Overseas Branch of the British Red Cross in Cayman Islands and the Bahamas Red Cross Society. The International Federation is on stand-by to support the British Red Cross as they are leading the support. IFRC/PADRU had emitted an alert for a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member to be deployed immediately to Cayman Islands. Additionally, the Regional Representative in Dominican Republic was in constant communication with the Cuban Red Cross to discuss early preparation and emergency response activities.

11. More information can be found on Reliefweb at www.reliefweb.int and REDHUM at www.redhum.org. More information on the hurricanes and storms can be found at <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov> and for Cuba on the United Nations Website in Cuba at www.onu.org.cu. Humanitarian organizations and donors are encouraged to report all contributions (cash and in-kind) to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service at fts@reliefweb.int or through the on-line contribution format www.reliefweb.int/fts, where a list of already made contributions is available.

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