



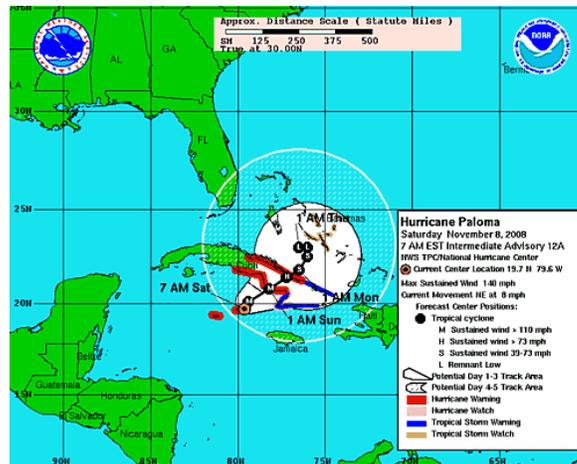
United Nations  
Office of the Resident Coordinator in Cuba

From: Office of the Resident Coordinator in Cuba

Subject: Situation Report No. 1 “Hurricane Paloma”— 10 November 2008, 16:00 hrs.

**Situation:**

At a moment in which Cuba is engaged in recovering from the enormous damage to its territory caused by hurricanes **GUSTAV** and **IKE** and tropical storms **FAY** and **HANNA**, powerful hurricane **PALOMA** lashed at the Cuban central-eastern portion, less than ten weeks after, as a category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale. The losses caused by this hurricane add to the US\$ 8.6 billion in total losses left by hurricanes **GUSTAV** and **IKE**, as reported today in *Granma* newspaper.



<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>

This map shows the course followed by **PALOMA** through the Cuban central-eastern territory.

Its entry point into the Cuban territory was the seaport village of Santa Cruz del Sur, on the southern coast of Camagüey province, in the early hours of Saturday, 8 November. Coincidentally, 72 years ago on the same date, that seaside town was struck by a category 5 hurricane which left a death toll of over 3,000 people – reportedly the greatest natural catastrophe in Cuban history. Hurricane **PALOMA** lunged at Santa Cruz del Sur with wind gusts of 215 km. per hour and mammoth waves that traveled 1.5 kilometers inland.

During its passage through the Cuban territory from the southwest to the northwest, **PALOMA** weakened as it made landfall and clashed with unfavorable strong winds at altitudes from 10-12 kilometers, causing it to lose force quickly and to come out on the north coast as a tropical depression which subsequently dissolved.

No human lives were lost. The authorities in the affected territories are currently engaged in the preliminary assessment of damage caused by **PALOMA**.

## **Measures adopted by the Government of Cuba:**

The National Joint Chiefs of Staff of Cuba's Civil Defense, in its Note No. 3 of 07:00 hrs. of Saturday, 8 November 2008, declared the HURRICANE ALERT for Cuba's central and eastern provinces: Camagüey, Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo and the southern municipalities of Ciego de Ávila. Note No. 4 of 08:00 hrs. of Sunday, 9 November 2008, declared the RECOVERY PHASE for the three municipalities of Camagüey; namely, Santa Cruz del Sur, Najasa and Guáimaro. The rest of the Cuban territory resumed its normal activities.

Some 1,200,000 people were evacuated from the danger areas within less than 48 hours, accounting for 10.7% of the total Cuban population; with 18% of them – 220,000 people – relocated in 1,448 shelters and the rest in homes of relatives and friends. In order to undertake this evacuation plan, some 1,763 management bodies were activated and 4,000 means of transportation and 13 trains were made operational. Also in operation were 927 food processing centers and 72 soup kitchens.

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. Mechanical equipment or installations were disassembled and secured (for example, 196 irrigation systems were dismantled and high-sea fishing boats were transferred to safer places).

Priority was given to the control and protection of food supplies in ports, warehouses and stores in order to prevent them from spoiling.

Prior to the weather event, measures were put in place for garbage and rubble collection and disposal, cutting of trees, cleaning of streets and dispatching of medical brigades to the mountain-based municipalities in danger of being cut off from any means of communication. Medicines and first-aid kits were made available; and the communication network ensuring information and the exchange of instructions was appropriately deployed.

## **Preliminary Damage:**

The hardest-hit municipalities were Santa Cruz del Sur, Najasa and Guáimaro in Camagüey province and Amancio Rodríguez in Las Tunas province. In Santa Cruz del Sur municipality, the sea waves traveled over 1.5 km. inland, while in Amancio Rodríguez they did so up to 700 meters.

In addition to the specific damage caused in various sectors, there is a large number of personal belongings and assets of all types that were lost, from cooking utensils, clothing and furniture to new household appliances.

The damage caused by this hurricane must also include the expenses incurred in the implementation of the numerous preventive measures and the unearned revenues in some of the country's industries, particularly in tourism.

## **Agriculture**

- A preliminary report indicates the loss of 24.5 *caballerías* (1 *caballería* equals 13.4 hectares) of assorted crops, which had already been recovered after the passage of Hurricane Ike.
- Banana is one of the most affected crops, which will require a long period of recovery.
- Large stretches of crops are still flooded.



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## **Food**

- There are reports of affected groceries, warehouses and food dispensing outlets.

## **Industry**

Disruptions in Camagüey province include:

- The local fish farming station for farmed shrimp and the shipyard in Santa Cruz del Sur municipality.
- The sugar agro-industry in Santa Cruz del Sur, particularly the machinery and boiler room in *Cándido González* sugar mill.



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Disruptions in Las Tunas province include:

- The shrimp processing facilities.
- The *Granma* bulk sugar shipping terminal, the sugar mill and the by-product industry of Amancio Rodríguez municipality, which lost some of the roof covers and the carpentry work.

## **Electricity**

Santa Cruz del Sur municipality, in Camagüey province, is still facing some interruptions.

Las Tunas province is still reporting electricity interruptions in Amancio Rodríguez, Colombia, Jobabo and Manatí municipalities.

## **Telecommunications**

In Camagüey province:

- The main disruptions were reported in Santa Cruz del Sur municipality. The ETECSA (telecommunications company) tower in this municipality broke in two due to the strong winds. This municipality is still cut off from the other means of communication.
- Some 51 communities (villages) within the territory were still cut off.



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In Las Tunas province, the main disruptions are concentrated in Amancio Rodríguez municipality.

## **Roads**

There is damage caused to road infrastructure on the southern coasts of Camagüey and Las Tunas provinces. There are reports of stretches of roads and highways stripped of pavement, with downed trees and large quantities of sand and stones washed inland from the seabed.

## **Housing**

Damage reports in Camagüey province are as follows:

- In Santa Cruz municipality, over 4,000 houses were reported as damaged. In the seaside village of La Playa, with 440 homes, more than 400 were totally destroyed, accounting for 91% of its housing stock.
- In Najasa municipality, there are reports of 80 house cave-ins, 30 of which were total.



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Damage reports in Las Tunas province are as follows:

- In the coastal village of Guayabal, in Amancio Rodríguez municipality, out of 273 houses, 110 homes are reported as totally collapsed and another 127 with partial disruptions.

## **Incommunicado communities**

In Santiago de Cuba province, because of the flooding of Contra maestre and Mogote rivers, some 7,000 farmers were held incommunicado, as well as four school centers in the area of Arroyo Rico People's Power. Also due to the level rise of Avispero river, some 4,700 villagers of La Plata, La Magdalena and Ocuja del Turquino were isolated.

## **Actions taken by the United Nations in Cuba:**

The United Nations System (UNS) in Cuba maintains its disaster management mechanisms activated in light of the serious situation that the country is going through. The Cuba UN Country Team and UNETE are still engaged in close monitoring of the current situation and the preliminary evaluation of the severe disruptions.

The Resident Coordinator, on behalf of UNS in Cuba, has provided the system's support to go along with the national authorities in their endeavor to expedite the country's recovery.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) offices located in Panama have maintained constant contact with the Resident Coordinator/Designated Officer, offering their support. The headquarters and regional agencies of the United Nations System are in contact with their Cuba-based agencies.

## **Information:**

For further information, please contact the **Office of the Resident Coordinator in Cuba**, at the following e-mail addresses:

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Consult the United Nations Website in Cuba: [www.onu.org.cu](http://www.onu.org.cu)

For national information, consult:

Instituto de Meteorología de Cuba at <http://www.insmet.cu>  
Infomed Red de Salud Cubana at <http://www.sld.cu/sitios/huracanes/>  
Periódico Granma at <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu>  
Periódico Juventud Rebelde at <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/>  
Agencia Cubana de Noticias at <http://www.ain.cu>