



**United Nations  
Office of the Resident Coordinator in Cuba**

**From: Office of the Resident Coordinator - Cuba**

**Item: Situation Report No. 1 “Intense Rains in the Eastern Part of the Country” – November 20, 2008, 16:00.**

**Situation:**

As a result of the fourth cold front of the winter Season, which passed over the Eastern region of Cuba from the 17th to the 20th of November 2008, torrential rains fell on the region which caused severe flooding in the areas of Holguin and Granma provinces.



As a result of the rains, which in the mountainous zones of Holguin and Sagua-Nipe-Baracoa Plateau reached precipitation levels of 600 millimeters, thousands of hectares of crops have been flooded and Civil Defense needed to evacuate thousands of people in the provinces of Holguin and Granma. All of the evacuees were attended to by local authorities.

Dams in the region are at full capacity and some rivers have spilled their banks, interrupting road service, as was the case of the Sagua River, in Holguin province, and the Buey, Hicotea and Yara rivers in Granma.

This situation adds to the very serious damage caused by the three hurricanes and two tropical storms that affected Cuba in the summer of 2008: the tropical storms Fay and Hanna and the hurricanes Gustav, Ike, and Paloma.

According to official information, these hurricanes have caused damage to Cuba of around 10 billions dollars.

In their weather forecast for Thursday, November 20, the Cuban Institute of Meteorology expected a decrease of the winter rains in all of the country, including the affected zones.

**Measures Taken by the Cuban Government:**

The Cuban authorities have taken the following measures and actions in response to the intense rains and flooding:

- Have activated the Disaster Management Bodies in the provinces of Holguin and Granma, undertaking basic measures to save lives and material resources, and organizing visits by local authorities to the affected areas.

- Have evacuated some 20,000 people, 18,000 thousand of which were in the Sagua de Tánamo and Mayarí areas of Holguin. The majority of the evacuees went to the homes of family and friends, with a minority going to shelters. For example, in Mayarí, of the 3,000 people evacuated to safe areas, 2,740 went to the homes of family and friends and only 260 went to shelters.
- Have been monitoring all the dams in Holguin and Granma and have opened the spill-ways for flood release at the majority of these dams so as to be able to accommodate the rains and avoid even more severe flooding.
- Have temporarily suspended the operation of the Santa Isabel water treatment plant in Bayamo, since the turbidity of the water could present a health risk to the population.
- Have distributed water in water-trucks to public health, educational and food service institutions, along with some special social institutions.

### **Initial Damage:**

The most affected municipalities have been Yara, Bayamo, and Manzanillo in Granma province and Sagua de Tánamo, Frank País and Mayarí en Holguin province.



In the agricultural sector, although losses have yet to be quantified, cultivated areas in the affected territory remain under water and it is estimated that all of the rice, bean, squash, sweet potato and corn crops have been lost. Moreover, a large quantity of the short-cycle crops, which formed part of the agricultural production recovery plan following the previous hurricanes and storms, have suffered, thus affecting the support plan

for food security that the local governments had undertaken.

In the housing sector, around 400 homes are flooded in Granma, with around 232 of them in the municipality of Bayamo, 142 in the municipality of Yara, and 26 in the Manzanillo area. More than 2,000 homes are flooded in the province of Holguin.

In the province of Granma, thus far this year the communities of La Pompita in Bayamo, Blanquizar-Vuelta del Caño in Manzanillo and Sofía, Las Caobas, Gutierrez and Yamagual in Yara have all had to confront this situation of extensive flooding on more than three occasions.

The supply of drinking water was affected in Bayamo, the capital city of Granma, due to the paralization of the water treatment plant.

The swollen Rio Grande in Holguin interrupted road traffic for several hours in the eastern corner of this province (the road link between the municipalities of Mayarí and Sagua de Tánamo).

### **Actions Taken by the United Nations (UN) System in Cuba:**

The United Nations System in Cuba maintains all of its disaster management mechanisms activated, due to the situation that the country is going through. The United Nations Country Team in Cuba and UNETE (United Nations Emergency Technical Team) continue to closely monitor the present situation and work on the preliminary evaluation of severe effects.

The offices of OCHA and the UNDSS located in Panama have maintained constant contact with the Resident Coordinator/Designated Official, offering their support. The central and regional headquarters of the agencies of the United Nations System remain in contact with their agencies in Cuba.

### **Information:**

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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>