

**Situation Report 26 – Caribbean Hurricane Season
10 November 2008**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Tropical Storm Paloma, upgraded to a Hurricane 4 as it made landfall in Cuba, caused modest damage and no loss of life in Grand Cayman and Cuba.
- Assessments are on going to evaluate the damages.



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 kph) and torrential rains, and further, to a tropical depression over Cuba. The remnant of

“Paloma” is centered along the north coast of Cuba, about 60 miles north of Camaguey. The re-development of this system is not expected due to strong upper-level winds. The U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami reported that by Sunday morning, the Cuban and Bahamian governments had discontinued all warnings associated with “Paloma”.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

2. The Impact in the Cayman Islands was mainly on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, with Paloma downing trees, flooding low-lying areas and ripping off roofs. Businesses reopened and electricity and water service were restored on Saturday 8 November. According to the Hazard Management Committee, no injuries were reported and damage is minimal. A Red Cross shelter was opened due to the heavy and continuous rainfall. A disaster management volunteer from Grand Cayman was positioned in Cayman Brac to lend support to the local branch. First aid teams had been notified and pre-assigned to respective shelters, while stocks have been checked in the Grand Cayman warehouse.

3. The Impact in Jamaica was confined to some isolated flooding due to heavy rainfall and strong sea surge. Little damage and one casualty due to drowning have been reported.

4. In Cuba, more than 1.2 million persons were evacuated by the Civil Defense. According to “Granma” newspaper, 18% of the evacuated (or 220,000 persons) were in 1,448 shelters, the rest staying with friends and family. There has been no report of casualties. Some 4,000 vehicles, 13 trains and other transportation means supported these evacuations. The housing sector was the most affected, with many households items lost. Two municipalities in Santa Cruz del Sur and Amancio Rodriguez, and 71 localities were temporarily without electricity, however back up systems were implemented. There has also been damage to the infrastructure, more specifically in the south cost of the Camaguey province.

5. The recovery phase is now declared for Santa Cruz Del Sur, Najasa and Guáimaro, in Camaguey and some 180, 400 persons have now returned to their homes. Hurricane “Palom” has affected Cuba after already heavy damage from Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, and rebuilding was still underway from four earlier hurricanes and storms.

6. 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

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

8. 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. A conference call was held between the British Red Cross, the Overseas Branch of the British Red Cross in Cayman Islands and the International Federation to coordinate early relief activities. The International Federation is on stand-by to support the British Red Cross as they will be leading any support if needed. IFRC/PADRU has emitted an alert for a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) member to be deployed immediately to Cayman Islands. Additionally, the Regional Representative in Dominican Republic has been in constant communication with the Cuban Red Cross to discuss early preparation and emergency response activities.

9. 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>. 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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