

GRANMA

Havana. September 16, 2008

Official information on preliminary data of damages caused by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike

THE combined action of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in winds, rain and flooding as they passed through almost the entire country between August 30 and September 9 - including the previous and subsequent effects as the hurricanes entered and left national territory – unquestionably made them the most destructive in the history of these meteorological phenomena in Cuba with respect to the magnitude of the material damage caused.

For our people, prepared for years to confront natural disasters thanks to the organization and efficiency demonstrated by their strong, energetic and farsighted Civil Defense - as Fidel described it - the experiences of hundreds thousands of directly affected compatriots have been horrific, as have images broadcast by the media in the locations affected.

In the face of such significant effects on the nation's economic/productive activities, services and entire infrastructure, it is only the Revolution that is preventing the provinces of Pinar del Río, Holguín, Las Tunas and Camagüey and the special municipality of the Isle of Youth - to mention those that were hit hardest - from being declared disaster zones, and their inhabitants from being immersed in desolation. On the contrary, what prevails in those regions and throughout the country is the confidence that we will leave this complex situation behind; it is the security that, united under the Party's leadership, we will develop an intense and effective, although prolonged, process of recuperation and reestablishment.

Both Hurricane Gustav and Ike, as they followed their courses, placed virtually the entire country in tension beginning August 25, when the Civil Defense issued its first note on those hurricanes, placing the eastern provinces in the informative stage, until Note No. 9 referring to Ike on September 11, which placed Pinar del Río in the recuperation stage.

Between the two meteorological events, not a single province escaped their threat and impact. In the run-up to Ike's landfall and its exit via Pinar del Río province, just a few kilometers' distance from the location of its predecessor - Ike placed the entire country in the alarm phase. The story is sufficiently known.

As people know, as soon as risk possibilities are forecast, the country's first priority in these circumstances is to safeguard human life. Some data illustrates the scope of efforts made in this context.

In total, 3,179,846 people were protected from these two hurricanes - 2,772,615 during Ike - only about 500,000 of whom were in evacuation centers; the rest received solidarity shelter from friends and neighbors. More than 10,000 means of transport were employed, and hundreds of shelters outfitted for the occasion. In addition, as a consequence of the measures adapted for Ike, 176,113 students were

returned home from their boarding schools, and 2,818 tourists were relocated.

More than 87,000 comrades worked in the service of the Civil Defense system and related missions during the two hurricanes, including those who were mobilized and personnel at command posts, both national and in defense zones.

And although during Gustav no human lives were lost, during the days of Ike - as was opportunely reported - we mourned the deaths of seven citizens in a number of provinces, not just as a direct result of the hurricane's effects, but of a failure to strictly observe measures adopted by the Civil Defense authorities.

SUBSTANTIAL MATERIAL LOSSES

Very preliminary assessments of the damage caused in the less than 10 days during which the two hurricanes impacted national territory place total losses at around five billion dollars.

Unquestionably, one of the most calamitous effects of Gustav and Ike was on housing: more than 444,000 homes damaged, a large number of them with partially or totally destroyed roofs and other impacts; and of that total, 63,249 houses completely demolished.

Every province was affected. The final figures have not yet been determined, given that these could increase due to the combined effects of heavy rainfall and the passing of the first few days. However, the majority of the effects were directly related to those places hit hardest by the worst of the rainfall and winds, in addition to flooding and coastal deluges before, during and after: Pinar del Río and the Isle of Youth, particularly by Gustav (with its Category 4), and Holguín, Las Tunas and Camagüey by Ike (Category 3).

This may also be described as the most complex type of problem - not only because in the case of housing it leaves more than 200,000 people homeless for some time, and hundreds of thousands more whose homes require repairs -but because building and rebuilding involves financial investment and resources in the millions, and requires years of intense work.

MAIN EFFECTS OF GUSTAV IN OTHER AREAS

The preliminary assessment of Gustav's damage reveals that the most significant impact was in the special municipality of the Isle of Youth and Pinar del Río province, mostly in the towns of San Cristóbal, Los Palacios, Consolación del Sur, Viñales, La Palma, Minas de Matahambre, Candelaria and Bahía Honda.

It should be taken into account that estimates of housing losses are based on historic and conventional prices, not real values at international prices. Suffice it to say that in order to have a durable house that can stand up to the fiercest winds, one essential element is necessary and very scarce: a labor force. This is needed both for temporary repairs and lasting construction. That labor force has to be divided among

all centers of production and services, some significantly damaged, which is why the real value of a house in the world and the recovery of the corresponding investment is much greater.

- The situation is critical for the 120,105 houses affected by Gustav in Pinar del Río province, particularly in the municipalities of Los Palacios and San Cristóbal.
- Associated with impact on housing, more than 4,000 water storage tanks for apartment buildings were damaged.
- In western Cuba, serious impacts were reported on the electric power infrastructure:

Along the 220-kW Mariel-Pinar del Río transmission line, 137 towers were destroyed, and along the 110-kW line, 13 towers were destroyed.

Among other elements: 4,500 posts knocked down, 530 transformers broken and 5,000 streetlights damaged.

- In the special municipality of the Isle of Youth, 100% of electrical lines were affected.
- More than 55,700 hectares of crops suffered total losses in western Cuba, mostly tubers and sugar cane. In addition, 877 organic vegetable gardens and
- 392 intensive farming sites were affected.
- Eighty percent of the Isle of Youth's poultry industry was seriously affected, and 100% of that industry was affected in the eight municipalities of Pinar del Río that were hit.
- In the tobacco sector, 3,414 storage facilities were destroyed and 1,590 damaged, and more than 800 tons of tobacco was affected.
- More than 180,000 hectares of tree farms were affected.
- In industrial food production: 28 bakeries, eight sweet shops and a fruit and vegetable preserves enterprise were affected, mostly by the total loss of their roofs, but they did have generators.
- 4,355 tons of food in warehouses and neighborhood stores were affected
- The main damage to the national radio system occurred as a result of the total destruction of its medium-wave towers (2) and the television tower on the Isle of Youth, affecting radio and television services. A similar situation occurred in Pinar del Río, to the towers of facilities in San Cristóbal, La Palma and Los Palacios and their three television centers. In Havana, the centers in Artemisa and Bauta were damaged.
- In telecommunications, 9,316 services were affected, most of them in the special municipality (7,797) and Pinar del Río (1,021).
- Losses are still being calculated in computer equipment, televisions and VCRs. In the health and education sectors, 794 computers were affected.
- In the public health sector in the western region, considerable damage was done to 31 facilities, including 26 hospitals, 18 polyclinics, 191 doctors' offices, 14 senior citizen homes and 41 pharmacies, with the most critical situation on the Isle of Youth and several municipalities in Pinar del Río: San Cristóbal, Los Palacios, La Palma and Consolación del Sur.
- In education, 1,160 schools were affected, included 599 in Pinar del Río, 218 in La Habana province, 225 in City of Havana, and 87 on the Isle of Youth.

- Important installations were destroyed in the Nueva Gerona port, and the Isle of Youth's airport, and almost all passenger transport was affected there.

MAJOR DAMAGE CAUSED BY IKE

Without assessments being concluded, at the close of this report on September 12, the worst damage by province occurred in the aforementioned provinces, mostly in the following municipalities:

- Guantánamo: Baracoa and Maisí.
- Holguín: mostly in the capital city of Holguín, Banes, Antilla, Moa, Rafael Freyre, Mayarí and Gibara.
- Las Tunas: the capital, Puerto Padre, Manatí and Jesús Menéndez.
- Camagüey: the capital, Nuevitas, Guáimaro, Najasa, Florida, Sibanicú, Minas and Santa Cruz del Sur.
- Ciego de Avila: the capital, Venezuela, Baraguá y Majagua.
- Sancti Spíritus: the capital, Trinidad and La Sierpe.
- Villa Clara: Manicaragua, Encrucijada, Santo Domingo and Sagua la Grande.
- Cienfuegos: Cumanayagua and Aguada de Pasajeros.
- Matanzas: the capital, Unión de Reyes, Calimete, Perico and Jagüey Grande.

All municipalities in those provinces were affected, with only the worst affected listed above. Losses in the other municipalities will not be ignored.

With respect to principal effects, major losses were reported in the provinces of La Habana and City of Havana, although proportionally not as much as in the rest of the country.

Once again, Pinar del Río and the Isle of Youth were lashed by the winds, and this time, much more by water. The aftereffects of the hurricane were slow to disappear.

- Electric power services were affected throughout almost the entire country, which was left in darkness by the direct effect of the wind and heavy rains and by the measures of protection applied to prevent further damage.
- Moreover, reconstruction work was complicated in almost every province 24 hours after the storm headed out to sea.

Initially, electric power was reestablished with the use of micro-systems via generators, which are being gradually phased out with the activation of the National Electric Power System, except in the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Granma and part of Guantánamo, where it was possible to connect them to the Renté thermoelectric power plant. Pinar del Río province and the special municipality of the Isle of Youth are still getting power from micro-systems, and will continue to do so until transmission lines are reestablished, which will be done as soon as possible.

As of September 12, the provinces had electric power in the following percentages: Las Tunas, Camagüey and Holguín: not above 30%, due to the magnitude of breakdowns in their basic distribution networks; Granma and Santiago de Cuba in excess of 99%, and Guantánamo, 94%, although Maisí and

Baracoa, the hardest-hit municipalities, were at 53% and 79%, respectively; Ciego de Avila in excess of 92%; La Habana, almost 92%; Matanzas, 90%; Villa Clara, 87.2%; Cienfuegos, 94.7%; and Sancti Spiritus, 84%, all with their provincial capitals, as a rule, at higher percentages. Some of the most backward municipalities also suffered major damage to their grids.

City of Havana exceeded 98%, although there were specific outages to be resolved (burned-out transformers, branch lines, etc.), concentrated in Boyeros, Habana del Este, Plaza, Cerro and Playa.

The region's most compromised and complex, Pinar del Río and the Isle of Youth, were at a little over 55% and almost 67%, respectively.

- Mini- and micro-hydroelectric plants have been seriously affected.
- Wells for supplying manufactured gas to the capital have continued to operate. Only one Energás turbine is working to maintain vitality, for which some wells are being kept open to provide gas to the system.
- There are generalized outages in communications due to fallen trees, telephone posts and transmission towers, with some community television stations deactivated.
- Damage to agriculture is reported as a consequence of Ike in 205 greenhouses, and most of the facilities for semi-protected crops.
- All coffee-growing areas in eastern Cuba were affected, essentially destroying the harvest in some of the most productive municipalities due to the combined action of rain and wind in areas like Mayarí, Sagua de Tánamo, Maisí and Granma province.
- In the eastern provinces, 32,305 hectares of plantain were lost, plus more than 10,000 hectares of other crops.
- At the close of this report, more than 500,000 poultry had been registered as lost, 100,000 of which were slaughtered and sold to the population. Damage to poultry stock was significant in Sancti Spiritus, Matanzas, Las Tunas and Camagüey.
- In sugar cane, 156,600 hectares were reported as flattened, 518,879 hectares flooded and 3,895 hectares of new cane lost, and approximately 40,000 tons of sugar was reported as requiring reprocessing due to having got wet.
- There were also notable effects in the Ministry of Sugar varied crop areas, with damage recorded to more than 10,000 hectares of plantain, rice, beans and others, including organic vegetable gardens.

- Generalized serious effects to roofs and windows of industrial facilities were reported. Production at all factories was halted for different reasons, and many of these remain in that situation.
- The Ministry of Domestic Trade reported damage to 49,000 tons of storage capacity, with the worst to Holguín's Warehouse Base, where 12,750 tons of products and 1,111 stores were seriously damaged.
- Partial or total destruction was reported to 2,642 Ministry of Education facilities, mostly roofs and windows, as well as 186 child care centers, and severe damage was reported to schools in Holguín, Las Tunas and Camagüey.
- The Ministry of Higher Education reported damage to the universities of Cienfuegos, Sancti Spíritus, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Holguín; the municipal headquarters of Puerto Padre in Las Tunas and the Institute of Agricultural Science in Havana.
- Damage was reported to 146 cultural institutions and 82 sports facilities, including six sports initiation schools (EIDE); 13 athletics colleges (ESPA) and academies; two faculties of Physical Culture; five provincial baseball stadiums and 32 municipal ones; eight multipurpose auditoriums; 13 community schools and two swimming pool complexes.
- In health facilities, the greatest damage reported was to the neonatal services of the Enrique Cabrera, Aballí, Gineco-Obstétrico Eusebio Hernández, 10 de Octubre and William Soler hospitals, as well as the Fructuoso Rodríguez Orthopedic Hospital.
- Roads were affected by fallen trees and flooding. All the bridges on Cayo Coco causeway and its water pipeline were damaged. Access, with much precaution, can be had over La Farola, Guantánamo province; the Las Tunas-Holguín and Holguín-Moa sections are being inspected, and access was blocked on two sections of the National Highway. Thousands of kilometers of roads and streets were damaged throughout the country.
- Seven ports are closed and there is serious damage to the roofs of port warehouses in Vita, Carúpano and Nuevitas, with damage to pedestrian walkways and signs at the entrances to all ports.

With respect to the volume of accumulated water in the country's 239 reservoirs managed by the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources, at the close of September 12, it was in excess of 7,892,005 million cubic meters, 86% of the total of usable capacity retained, which signifies an increase of 1,791 million of cubic meters with respect to Friday, September 5.

Currently, 128 reservoirs are releasing water into drainage channels, 94 more than before Ike's passing. In the last week, all provinces, except for the special municipality of the Isle of Youth, experienced increases in reservoir volumes. Those at 90%-plus capacity include Pinar Del Río, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos,

Holguín, Granma and Guantánamo; Santiago de Cuba is over 99%. Four more provinces are over 80%.

Much more information and data could complete and compliment the situation created in the country in less than one month by the impact of four meteorological phenomena, particularly Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, because of their destructive capacity. The country's economic, social and housing infrastructures have been devastated like never before.

"Now comes the time to analyze the objective factors, the rational and optimum use of material and human resources; what must be done in every concrete place, where we should or should not invest; what to do with every cent; respond to every question that has to be asked in situations of emergency. And under normal circumstances, when everything returns to its place and the normal lives of children, adolescents, and adults continuing moving forward, always prepared to fight and win without ever becoming disheartened in the face of the adversities of today or of tomorrow," as Fidel recently wrote.

The government has not wasted a single minute and, within a few hours, began sending material resources from its reserves to the affected territories, even though it is not possible for everything to get to everybody immediately.

The people's solidarity has been present from the first moment, and there are many examples of that. We have been educated that way over almost half a century of Revolution.

There will be no lack of rigor and rationality, as called for by Fidel and indicated by the Party, in the inevitable readjustment of economic and social programs and plans, given that our top priority today is to recover.

Support from the outside has not been lacking, either. The authorities of many governments, agencies and institutions have contacted us and sent initial aid. The seed of our internationalist conduct and solidarity has been germinating for decades. Our gratitude goes out to all of them.

Admiration is due to the cadres and members of our glorious Party; the valiant combatants of our Revolutionary Armed Forces, Ministry of the Interior and Civil Defense; the men and women of our working class; our mass organizations; our media; our journalists and intellectuals and the rest of the citizens of our heroic nation, who, with valor and discipline, have confronted this extremely hard blow dealt by nature.

We will work more united than ever, always remembering that "our duty is to overcome!"

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Translated by Granma International