

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK, PRESIDENT OF THE
72ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT HIGH-LEVEL
MEETING ON HURRICANE IRMA
18 September 2017
New York**

Thank you for participating in this High-Level Meeting on Hurricane Irma.

Irma swept through the Caribbean and slammed into Florida leaving in her wake a trail of destruction. As one of the most powerful tropical systems on record, the hurricane wreaked havoc in numerous countries and territories in the region.

Loss of life is reported as at least 35 people. Damage to property is beyond extensive as we will see in a short while. The full financial cost is not yet fully known.

What we do know, is that the toll on people's lives is almost immeasurable and it will take a tremendous deal of support of all kinds for people and countries to recover.

I offer sincere condolences to the families of all those who lost their lives, and join in solidarity with the survivors who now face the task of rebuilding.

Now more than ever, those affected by catastrophe look to the global family to stand with them on their path to recovery.

I thank all those who are here today offering their support.

Climate change is affecting each and every country around the world. Current trends of GHG emissions will increase the likelihood of severe weather events

Small Island Developing States face particular vulnerabilities. Before communities even have a chance to rebuild they face yet another looming devastation with Hurricane Maria making landfall in the Caribbean even as we speak.

What the impact of Irma, Maria and other recent systems reminds us is the importance of adaptation and resilience to climate change and further strengthening mitigation efforts, through the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is a milestone for collective engagements towards the planet's sustainability.

I commend those who have been working tirelessly in the field to support those affected and to begin the recovery and rebuilding effort.

Let us not let the lives lost be in vain. Rather, let us be inspired to take personal and collective action to support the victims and survivors rebuild their communities, homes and lives, stronger than even before.