

## Terms of Reference

### Environmental experts in response to the 2024 Hurricane season: General environmental experts

UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit

## Background

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Service of the United States of America has predicted an above-normal hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin for this year. NOAA's outlook for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, spanning from June 1 to November 30, forecasts an 85% chance of an above-normal season, with a range of 17 to 25 total named storms. Of those, 8 to 13 are expected to become hurricanes (winds of 119 km/h or higher), including 4 to 7 major hurricanes (category 3, 4, or 5; with winds of 178 km/h or higher).

This increased activity is influenced by several factors, including near-record warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean, the development of La Niña conditions in the Pacific, reduced Atlantic trade winds, and less wind shear—all of which tend to favour tropical storms formation. An example of the current above-normal conditions is Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, the second named storm this season and the first major hurricane of the year, also notable as the earliest-forming Category 5 Atlantic hurricane on record in the Caribbean. Beryl's impact highlights the exceptionally active nature of the 2024 Atlantic Hurricane season.

Following the impact of Hurricane Beryl on Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica, and the subsequent response by the United Nations with strong support from the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), the Joint Environment Unit (JEU) is activating its preparedness and response mechanisms. This includes the pre-identification of experts in technical fields typically required to respond to environmental emergencies caused by hurricanes. These experts, in collaboration with OCHA and UNEP staff, will be part of UNDAC teams, JEU standalone environmental missions, or government-led missions, depending on the requests received from Caribbean Member States. The current document highlights the requirements for **general environmental experts**.

## Responsibilities/Expected Activities

- In collaboration with national authorities and responding agencies/bodies, identify, assess, and advise on potential environmental risks and hazards resulting from the hurricane(s). Also, evaluate the immediate and long-term environmental impacts of hurricanes, including damage to ecosystems, pollution, and infrastructure.
- Work closely with national and international emergency responders to address acute environmental hazards, while coordinating efficiently with disaster responders and local emergency management authorities to ensure a cohesive approach to managing environmental impacts.
- Provide technical advice and guidance on environmental mitigation strategies, including erosion control, habitat restoration, and pollution prevention. Also, identify and communicate any outstanding expertise or equipment needs to effectively address immediate environmental risks and impacts.
- Offer advice, guidance, and training to national and local authorities on conducting environmental assessments and implementing mitigation measures. promote early consideration of environmental risks and cascading impacts in disaster response planning.
- Advise national and international actors on critical environmental issues while identifying short-, medium-, and long-term follow-up measures to address and mitigate environmental hazards.
- Perform other tasks in support of the operation as required, ensuring a comprehensive and effective environmental response to hurricane impacts.

## Qualifications and skills

- **Educational Background:** degree in environmental sciences, environmental engineering, civil engineering, or related fields, with a solid background in Environmental Management, Ecosystem Restoration, or Infrastructure Engineering.
- **Language proficiency:** fluency in English is essential. Proficiency in other languages relevant to the affected region is an asset.
- **Rapid environmental assessment expertise:** proficiency in using rapid environmental assessment tools and frameworks. Experience in assessing and mitigating environmental damage from hurricanes, including infrastructure and ecosystem impacts.
- **Interdisciplinary integration:** ability to integrate environmental considerations across various disciplines, particularly within disaster response and recovery planning.
- **Environmental coordination:** Experience in coordinating with international and local agencies involved in disaster response and environmental management. Familiarity with humanitarian coordination frameworks is a plus.
- **Adaptability and initiative:** High motivation and ability to adapt effectively in rapidly changing and challenging situations with minimal guidance.
- **Team collaboration:** Strong team skills for working in a multi-disciplinary, multi-national team in challenging field conditions. Capability to assume leadership when necessary.
- **Training and certification:** Completed relevant training courses, such as the Environment and Emergencies Training (EET), UNDAC training, or trainings from standby partners.
- **IT Proficiency:** Proficiency in MS Windows and MS Office applications, and ability to operate standard IT and communications equipment.

#### Notes

- *Contact with media, including interviews, will only be undertaken if authorized by the RC and with the support of OCHA/UNEP head of public information unit.*
- *Indicating availability and interest in these terms of reference does not constitute an obligation for actual deployment. The purpose of this process is to pre-identify and assess the availability of experts with the specified qualifications and skills. This pre-identification is intended to facilitate rapid mobilization should the need arise during the hurricane season. Being listed as available does not guarantee deployment, but ensures that experts are prepared and can be swiftly contacted if a situation demands their expertise.*