

Intense rains in eastern Cuba: An unusual event for which we must prepare ourselves



Díaz-Canel checks on the recovery of damages caused by heavy rains. Photo: Estudios Revolución

Havana, June 13 (RHC)-- The President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, met on Monday with authorities of the affected territories, to check on the recovery of the damages caused by heavy rains in the eastern region, from Camagüey to Santiago de Cuba.

Undoubtedly, this has been a non-typical event; although in our country we are used to work in conditions of heavy rains, this has to do directly with climate change, said the also First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

The president commented that during the event, there were places where flooding reached levels that had not been seen in the last 30 years and even in many places the inhabitants say that it is the first time that the water reached such heights, especially after an extreme drought.

The check-up of the country's leadership on the recovery work, which will be systematically maintained, was also headed by the members of the Political Bureau, Roberto Morales Ojeda, Secretary of Organization of the Central Committee, and Salvador Valdés Mesa, Vice President of the Republic.

The meeting was held by videoconference with the main political and governmental authorities of Camagüey, Las Tunas, Granma, Holguín and Santiago de Cuba.

Members of the government commission sent to the territories, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jorge Luis Tapia Fonseca, and the government commission sent to the territories, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jorge Luis Tapia Fonseca, intervened from the field. Fonseca, and the Party commission, led by members of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, Jorge Luis Broche Lorenzo, Félix Duarte Ortega and Joel Queipo Ruiz.

The Head of State indicated, among the immediate tasks after the recovery stage, to study everything that happened and update the disaster reduction plans for this type of heavy rains.

He informed that the willingness of the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to support the recovery has already been received, as well as that of the United Nations system of organizations that are in our country.

He oriented to facilitate the bank account numbers and other procedures to people and institutions abroad that are expressing their efforts to help, such as the solidarity groups, as well as to make viable the donations of the population, led by the mass organizations.

He asked the Minister of Economy and Planning, Deputy Prime Minister Alejandro Gil Fernandez, to make a balance of the resources that can be flowing and evaluate with the national industry, such as the Dujo furniture company, and others, what they can produce from the limitations they have, and do the same with the private sector, whose help has also been given at other times.

The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party indicated to make an important effort in housing, although the number of affected is not high, but keeping at the same time the priority to the provinces damaged by Hurricane Ian, such as Pinar del Rio.

"Take advantage and sow a lot," also noted Diaz-Canel, who asked to make a fundamental effort in the planting of various crops and sugar cane, taking advantage of the humidity conditions left by the event.

He asked to "rectify or update the permanent cycle plantations that have had some damage; and to make a short cycle strategy so that we can immediately have higher levels of food products for the population", in addition to the need to make an intensive effort for the collection of all possible agricultural products, based on the damage in plantations and what is in production.

He requested "to work promptly in the places with more complexity with drinking water, so that people can have the supply of this important resource". And he demanded that everything that is sold and offered to the population in those affected areas be of a controlled nature, so that what is distributed additionally arrives in the most equitable manner and with the necessary priorities.

The President instructed the construction and transportation authorities, among others, to carry out a survey and look for solutions to respond to the enormous damage to roads and railways, using all variants and technologies.

Díaz-Canel acknowledged the work of the authorities and the population. Due to the recent elections, this event -he said- takes place when in several provinces there are new governors, as well as new leaders in the municipal assemblies, "therefore, there are comrades who do not have all the experience; however, they worked in a cohesive, organized, decisive and fast way".

The First Secretary praised as correct the decision to send a governmental commission with Vice Prime Minister Jorge Luis Tapia at the head, and a commission of the Central Committee of the Party with three members of the Secretariat, who have been able to support, help and maintain a direct relationship with the nation to unblock things.

Acknowledging the efforts of the FAR and the MININT, he commented that "there were places where the situation was very complicated, especially because many of these floods (...) occurred in the early morning hours, and enormous evacuation efforts had to be made with boats and helicopters. We worked in a very timely manner to avoid more deaths than we have had".

Díaz-Canel made special recognition to the population of the eastern provinces. "The people did not collapse, they responded.

And now we are going to work as we have done: "everything we are going to do, has to be better than it was. There were dirt floors or houses that because of the state of their floors were more affected, now they have to have better floors; the houses we build have to be better; the studies we do on the roads have to be to improve those systems."

GRANMA, THE MOST AFFECTED PROVINCE

Reporting on the damages caused in Granma by heavy rains, which led to the unfortunate death of two people, the governor of the province, Yanetsy Terry Gutiérrez, informed that the territory was affected in recent days by two important meteorological events in a short period of time.

The leader acknowledged and thanked on behalf of the people of Granma, "the extraordinary work done by the Air Force of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, which completed 21 flight missions and rescued 129 people".

Regarding the rainfall, he argued that it began on June 9, with significant rains in the southwest and the mountains, which caused dumping and runoff in the main basins, processes that worsened as they occurred at night and in the early hours of the morning.

The rains caused the reservoirs, which at that time were 54 percent full, to increase to 95 percent; in other words, they grew by 41 percent in a short period of time: 427 million cubic meters of water.

The most affected areas were Yara, Jiguaní, Manzanillo, Media Luna and Niquero. A total of 105 communities were isolated, of which 14 were affected by landslides and 91 by river flooding, with a population of 18,585 people. At the close of this report, submitted at around 5:00 p.m. on Monday to the country's directorate, ten communities in the municipalities of Yara, Manzanillo and one in Niquero remained isolated, without access.

The population is protected, although it has not yet been possible to make a damage assessment. Outside the area, 11,236 houses have been visited. Preliminarily, 9,045 people are reported to have been affected. Preliminarily, 145 houses were affected, in addition to 118 temporary facilities and 71 minor damages.

Intense rains increased the level of deterioration of land roads, affecting 89 kilometers (km) of roads of national interest and 71 km of roads and highways of other patronages. In railroads, significant damage was reported on the Bayamo-Santiago de Cuba line, the Bayamo-Las Tunas line, the Manzanillo branch, the Grito de Yara branch and the Sofia sub-branch.

As regards water supply, 125 communities, with a population of 84,879 people, are reported to be affected. Regarding food supply to the population, flour coverage is available for the next few days and cookies will be distributed in some isolated areas; milk for children from zero to one year old is being distributed; the standard family food basket for June has been dispatched at 75 percent.

In the electric power sector, the 370 damages have been resolved; however, since 19 circuits were opened as a preventive measure, 1,679 customers are still without service. In agriculture, 4,795 hectares of various crops are preliminarily affected.

There are plans to immediately plant 2,094 hectares (ha) of short-cycle products.

In Camagüey: Two people are reported dead. In housing, 550 total and partial damages are reported. More than 89 kilometers of roads are affected. In agriculture, about 860 hectares of various crops have been damaged and 4,503 hectares of sugar cane have been damaged. Electricity service is now back to normal.

In Las Tunas: The loss of one human life is regretted. During the rains, more than 1,500 people were evacuated; there are no more evacuees. Seventy-six communities were flooded, although the waters have subsided. Preliminarily, 76 homes are reported to be partially or totally affected. Priority is being given to the more than 1,000 homes that were flooded, with emphasis on the personal means lost. In agriculture, 1,175 hectares of the main crops were damaged. Electricity and telecommunications were restored to normal.

In Holguín: The main precipitations occurred in the municipalities of Cueto and Mayarí. More than one thousand people were evacuated. Four communities were the most affected, due to damage to roads. They are now accessible. More than 200 people who remain protected in Cacocum are being provided with food. In housing, 224 people have been affected to date. In agriculture, more than 1,000 hectares are reported damaged.

In Santiago de Cuba: One death is regretted. More than 1,700 people were protected, 35 remain protected. 40 settlements were cut off; today there are only two, in the municipality of Guamá, due to swollen rivers. Preliminary reports indicate 152 damages to homes. Damages to most of the affected customers in telecommunications and electricity were restored. In agriculture, 2,676 hectares of crops were damaged and the province is committed to planting 70,000 hectares this June. The main damage is to roads; the number of kilometers damaged is still being quantified. One of the main dissatisfactions of the population is in the water supply, due to its turbidity; the availability of chemicals for its treatment is being expedited. (Taken from the Site of the Presidency)

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