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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS, NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMISSIONER ZACHARY ISCOL ANNOUNCE DEPLOYMENT OF NYC EMERGENCY MANAGERS IN WAKE OF HURRICANE FIONA

Commissioner Zachary Iscol, NYC Emergency Management: Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today. New York City Emergency Management is very proud to join our mayor, Eric Adams, along with elected officials and members of the administration who are part of the Puerto Rican, Dominican, Caribbean diaspora in New York City to answer the call after the devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona.

One of the things our mayor makes clear all the time — no matter what the emergency is that we're dealing with — is one of the first questions you always get is, "How are we working together? What are you doing to work with the private sector? What are you doing to work with other agencies?" It is a question you know you always need to be prepared for. And so yesterday I'm very proud to report that we've deployed a small team to Puerto Rico.

They will be assessing the situation. They are already working alongside Puerto Rican Emergency Management Bureau, and FEMA, and a host of other municipalities and other agencies. They've also started working alongside the mayor of San Juan. And they are currently on their way to more significantly affected areas in the south part of the island.

Right now the most pressing emergency is restoring electricity. And tomorrow our team will be met by a larger contingent, an interagency contingent from the city. Staff from these agencies will join other emergency responders already on the ground. Their job will be to assess damages to infrastructure and essential services caused by heavy rains, floods, and wind. And they will continue to work alongside our local partners and FEMA to make sure support is getting exactly where it is needed. And so, first, I would just like to start by thanking you, Mr. Mayor, for your leadership and mostly for the team that you've assembled.

Through this emergency and other emergencies that we've faced, whether you're talking to a deputy mayor, or other commissioners, there's no egos in the room, and the question is always, "What can we do to help?" This is no different. And so I'd like to also thank our agency partners for their support and our logistics and support teams at Emergency Management for helping organize and prepare this group that is going down tomorrow. Our city has very strong ties to the

people that have been affected by Fiona. And we are proud to answer this call beyond the five boroughs.

We all know, especially here at Emergency Management, how daunting rebuilding can be. It requires a strong commitment and collaboration with other agencies and partners. And that's what we're here to do. And as we have in the past, our team is dedicated to this work, and we will be with the people of Puerto Rico, of the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean in the days ahead. So thank you all very much. And sir, turn it over to you.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thanks so much, commissioner. And really want to thank my colleagues in government that are here with us: commissioner of HPD, Commissioner Carrión; Director of MOCS Lisa Flores; Commissioner DFTA Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez; Reverend Cabrera, Mayor's Office of Faith Based and Community Partnerships; Louis Molina, commissioner of DOC, Kizzy Charles-Guzman, who will be speaking after me, director of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice; Ana Bermúdez, Commissioner of Probation; Annabel Palma, commissioner of Commission on Human Rights; Sheriff Anthony Miranda; Commissioner Vilda Vera Mayuga; Councilperson Marjorie Velazquez — some of our elected officials who are here — Councilmember Rafael Salamanca; Councilmember Carmen De la Rosa; also the Bronx borough president, the borough president is Vanessa Gibson; and Commissioner Rodriguez; and we're also joined by the consul general of the Dominican Republic, Consul General Jáquez. We're all here together.

We're here because we realize that five years ago we were here dealing with Hurricane Maria. It brought devastation to Puerto Rico. And once again, our brothers and sisters are facing darkness because of Hurricane Fiona. We know we have to get through this together. Millions in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and neighboring countries are without electricity, as flooding and mudslides recede and leave a path of destruction in their wake. Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic are extremely significant to our city. We have the largest Puerto Rican and Dominican population outside the islands themselves. Even the neighboring areas, we have a substantial population throughout the Caribbean diaspora. And I'm proud to be mayor of these large populations and large elected leaderships of that not only speak on behalf of their residents here in the city, but those who are home in their respective islands.

We know this is a painful moment. So many in our city are unable to communicate directly with their loved ones immediately after a hurricane like this. There are moments where you are unclear of what is taking place on the ground. Family members and friends are desperately trying to get some answers, and we want to do the best we can here at NYCEM to ensure we supply those answers. Immediately after the hurricane, even after the conclusion of the rainfall, I appointed Commissioner Iscol as our incident commander. He's going to coordinate all of our agencies and our response from the city. He will communicate with our local electeds so they can remain updated on what is happening on the ground. The impact of this whole hurricane — as in all major tragedies — when it happens abroad, it plays out on our streets. This community and these communities are significant part of the New York City population. And I want to be clear, New York stands with our brothers and sisters from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and all affected countries. And we're here to help. And that help is going to come from listening to them and making sure that we're guided by our elected officials and experts that are here.

Yesterday, as the commissioner announced, we deployed a team to join the Puerto Rican Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, and other emergency responders to assess damages to infrastructure and essential services. Our team met with the mayor of San Juan, and is working with FEMA and PREMA to see what is needed and how we can help. I will get on the call later today with the mayor of San Juan, so that we can continue to let him know that we're here to fortify the services on the ground. They will be fanning out across the island into small localities in the next coming days. And I will make sure that we give as much support that's needed. And later this week, we will be deploying an additional multi-agency team of emergency specialists to help out on the ground.

We will also monitor the situation in the neighboring counties and neighboring countries, including Dominican Republic, to make sure that we are there to give the assistance that's needed. New Yorkers have made it clear, these are our brothers and sisters, these are our families, and we're going to do everything possible to be there for them during this devastating time. What mother nature may have created we can be there to combat and ensure they get the resources they deserve.

I'm going to now turn it over to Commissioner Kizzy Charles-Guzman to give a few comments in Spanish, and then we will turn over to the Consul General Dominican Republic.

Kizzy Charles-Guzman, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice: Thank you. (Speaks in Spanish.)

Mayor Adams: Thank you. We will now bring on the Consul General Jáquez from the Dominican Republic. Counsel general. Kizzy, you want to translate for us? Okay.

(Consul General of the Dominican Republic in New York City Eligio Jáquez speaks.)

Charles-Guzman: The consul general is grateful for the assistance being offered here today. There has been a lot of devastation, not only in the Dominican Republic, but all neighboring islands. And often these lifelines are the remedy that we need to bounce back just a little bit faster. All of this tragedy is obviously incredibly, incredibly stressful for our entire populations and every hand helps. Every bit of assistance helps. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Any questions? On-topic?

Question: The first team that was deployed yesterday, can you give us details about that? Also, is there plans to send actual dollar amounts of aid to the island that have been affected?

Commissioner Iscol: Certainly. The team that deployed yesterday, there's actually two separate groups. There is two people that are part of our urban search and rescue team, that is we administer, but is a FEMA resource. They went down as members of FEMA's Incident Management Team. That's a separate deployment. Then yesterday, we sent down three people, two from our agency, one from NYPD ESU. Their job right now is — we're right now very much in the assessment phase. And so I think we need to figure out what the needs are before we

make any type of commitment as to what type of support we will be providing. The primary goal is to be providing technical assistance and guidance and to help make sure that the municipalities are getting the resources they need through FEMA and other channels. Thank you.

Question: Commissioner, if I hear you correctly that you're going to wait to hear back from the team that's currently on the ground before you determine how the agency will be (inaudible)?

Commissioner Iscol: So we have more people who are going down tomorrow. It's an interagency team. Folks from Parks, DOB, DOT, DDC, and others who can provide technical assistance as we're doing assessments in different municipalities to understand what the needs are.

Question: How big is that team, roughly?

Commissioner Iscol: I think it's about a dozen people. I can get you the exact number, though.

Question: This is for the mayor. Is there any plan to send actual dollar amounts of assistance to the islands that have been affected by this storm?

Mayor Adams: A lot of funding during these crises come through FEMA, but I think the commissioner is right. We need to get on the ground, like his team did — automatically, right away — to identify exactly what we're dealing with, where should resources go, and what type of resources should go. So this is the first step is get down and do an assessment. It's unfortunate that this is not the first crisis we had to address. This team here at NYCCEM is well-organized on addressing these crises and FEMA is well-organized. And so this phase is to get down on the islands and determine exactly what the needs are.

Question: Mayor, how does the experience from the last hurricane help you this time around in terms of response?

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry?

Question: How does the experience from Maria... And I know you weren't mayor back then, five years ago, but in talking to local relief efforts and organizers here they say, "Having gone through this five years ago with Maria, we have a Rolodex — I'm dating myself — a Rolodex full of contacts that we can now immediately call, and the response is that much quicker, and that much more effective." Does the same apply at a governmental level, that having had this experience before and the response is more effective, more targeted, and quicker?

Mayor Adams: Well one, we have a president that identifies Puerto Rico as part of our country. That's number one. And number two, there's a coordination that we're going to do with not only my office but the governor's office and with FEMA. So the coordination is crucial. Thank you. Thank you, all. Thank you.

Commissioner Iscol: Thank you all so much. I would be remiss if I didn't also let you know, we are doing a blood drive downstairs. And so welcome, folks, to donate blood. I believe it's ending soon. But if you're interested you can participate. Thank you.

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