



# *Take Action 4 Puerto Rico!*

## Principles for a Just Recovery and Resilient Future for Puerto Rico

**A just recovery must be in the hands of the people of Puerto Rico, led by the people, and for the people of Puerto Rico.**

### **PROTECT HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS**

Rebuilding should not be an excuse for exploitation or for waiving any civil, human, or environmental rights in the name of speed – or greed.

### **REBUILD A STRONGER, SUSTAINABLE PUERTO RICO**

A sustainable and just recovery must focus on long-term solutions. Recovery efforts must meet the needs of the present communities without compromising future generations by taking a holistic approach, achieving a balance between economic, social, and environmental development, and be led by the communities who know their needs best.

### **REBUILD SMARTER: USE DISASTER FUNDING TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A RENEWABLE ENERGY GRID**

Everything possible should be done to help the island prevent loss of life and significant economic interruption from the ongoing energy crises and prioritize meeting its goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050.

### **PROVIDE PARITY IN FEDERAL BENEFITS THAT CREATE ACCESS TO BASIC HEALTH and NUTRITION**

To ensure the health and dignity of people in Puerto Rico, it is essential that Congress finally eliminates federal health care and nutrition funding disparities. The only way Puerto Rico can build a sustainable future is by ending nearly 125 years of systemic discrimination by the federal government against Puerto Rico and its residents.

### **PROVIDE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT THE MOST VULNERABLE PUERTO RICANS**

Geographic location should not be a determinant of access to, or denial of, federal programs that support the most vulnerable U.S. citizens such as low income disabled, blind, and elderly persons.

### **BUILD STRONG LOCAL ECONOMIES**

Investing in local economies should come first. Federal funding should have a multiplier effect by prioritizing contracting and investment in local businesses and non-profit organizations to strengthen local economies and communities. That includes investments in local workforce development and hiring, including within emerging sectors (e.g. renewable energy, infrastructure, and agriculture).

### **EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT REQUIRES TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Radical transparency is a prerequisite to ensure federal dollars effectively reach impacted communities, and achieve the goals intended by federal funders. Democratization of the recovery and rebuilding process is the best way to minimize corruption, fraud, and waste. Good governance requires that federal and local contracts not be awarded to companies that have been convicted or fined for breaking any labor, environmental, or other federal or local laws.

### **RETURN TO SELF-GOVERNANCE**

In a democracy, policy decisions that impact people's lives should be made by elected representatives. A return to democratic self-governance requires that ultimate authority on all fiscal and financial decisions on the island must be returned to its elected representatives. Congress must terminate PROMESA, eliminate the unelected Financial Oversight Management Board (FOMB), and assume accountability for the outcome by requiring a transparent, independent review of its actions, and ensure a responsible transition to local control.

## **SELF DETERMINATION**

All people have the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status with no interference. The President and Congress must work with representatives of the several status options in Puerto Rico to develop and fund a federally-binding, democratic, self-determination process that includes effective education to voters about each option to move the island towards decolonization and guarantees the will of the people is respected and implemented.

## **STRENGTHEN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY**

Rebuilding the island's agriculture sector and promoting resilient and sustainable local food production is essential for communities in Puerto Rico. Access to safe, potable water is a human right. Low-income children and families in Puerto Rico deserve access to the same levels of nutrition support as other families in the U.S.

## **PREVENT FORCED DISPLACEMENT AS A BYPRODUCT OF "RECOVERY"**

People should be allowed to elect to stay, choose where to relocate, and have a say in decisions that impact rebuilding their communities. The recovery and rebuilding process should prioritize mitigation before displacement. All communities should receive equitable and just access to resources and treatment, regardless of income, property value, location, or other qualifiers.

## **PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO PROSPER VIA ACCESS TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Children and youth in Puerto Rico have the right to a quality public education that will ensure equal access to personal, professional, and labor opportunities. Access to quality public education is a key element in achieving an effective recovery, lowering poverty levels, and overcoming the long-term economic crises of the island.

## **DEBT RELIEF SHOULD NOT COME BEFORE PEOPLE**

A just recovery is not possible when those in power prioritize paying creditors instead of investing in the recovery and the future of Puerto Rico. Repaying an unaudited debt should not be a higher priority than the rebuilding and recovery of the island's physical and human infrastructure. Though most of the debt restructuring has been agreed to, other bankruptcy-like agreements remain outstanding. Providing for the basic needs of people, especially the most vulnerable after years of repeated crises should be the highest priority.

## **INDEPENDENT AUDIT**

The future of Puerto Rico must not be compromised by repaying debt that was illegally or unconstitutionally obligated. There must be an independent audit performed and certified by non-governmental experts. Any debt found to be illegal or unconstitutional must be discharged. No funds provided for disaster recovery should be used to repay creditors, directly or indirectly, or used to make economic projections for debt repayment.

## **SUPPORT PUERTO RICANS DISPLACED BY ECONOMIC AND NATURAL DISASTER**

Puerto Ricans who continue to leave the island to the states because of ineffective emergency relief, a slow recovery, and ongoing economic, energy, and health crises must not be forgotten. They are disaster victims and need ongoing support from national and local governments, and from philanthropic sources, to ensure a successful transition to the U.S. or promote a safe return to the island.

## **FACILITATE RETURN TO THE ISLAND**

Displaced people should have the right to return to their homes and communities. To recover long-term, Puerto Rico needs to retain and rebuild its social capital. The federal government should work with Puerto Rico's government and community leadership to develop economic and social support plans that promote the return of Puerto Ricans displaced by ongoing crises, and other diaspora Puerto Ricans to strengthen the island's social capital.

## **"MARSHALL" PLAN**

Effective rebuilding requires the federal government to take a holistic approach, systematically investing federal dollars to rebuild, revitalize, and revive Puerto Rico's health care system, economy, housing, public social services, and infrastructure, including its energy grid, utilities, and telecommunications system.