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**RESILIENT PUERTO RICO ADVISORY COMMISSION RELEASES
“REIMAGINA PUERTO RICO” STRATEGY**

A Blueprint co-created by Leaders from Puerto Rico’s Philanthropic, Business, Government, and NGO Sectors, Includes 97 Concrete Actions and Initiatives to Build a Resilient, More Equitable Island

ReImagina Puerto Rico Seeks To Provide a Unified Set of Recommendations for Building Holistic Resilience and Ensuring Billions in Relief Funds Have the Greatest Possible Impact

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — The [Resilient Puerto Rico Advisory Commission](#) (RPRAC) today released “ReImagina Puerto Rico,” an ambitious and pragmatic strategy to rebuild Puerto Rico as a more resilient and equitable island in the wake of Hurricane Maria. The blueprint contains 97 concrete actions and recommendations designed to be carried out by a wide variety of actors from the public, private, and NGO sectors.

The commission was created last fall with the most innovative and tested solutions, drawn from island stakeholders from all sectors and international experts, to help rebuild Puerto Rico in a way that makes the island stronger— physically, economically, and socially – and better prepared to confront future challenges. The result is a unified set of actionable recommendations to guide funding from a wide variety of sources – including billions of dollars in federal relief funds.

RPRAC is led by executive director Malu Blázquez Arsuaga and a group of five co-chairs, all of whom have strong connections to the island, and is supported with funding from The Rockefeller Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, and the Ford Foundation. The three organizations have deep experience in building resilience and helping jurisdictions recover from natural disasters, including hurricanes Sandy and Katrina. The five co-chairs selected 24 commissioners to lead this work, in partnership with 100 Resilient Cities, an organization that helps governments around the world build actionable resilience strategies.

Seventy-seven meetings were held island-wide and more than 750 people participated in the process including community leaders, government officials, non-profit associations, business leaders and professional associations. Some of these participants include: Puerto Rico Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience (COR3) of the Government of Puerto Rico, FEMA, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Center for a New Economy, Espacios Abiertos, the Instituto Nueva Escuela, faculty from the University of Puerto Rico and La Red de Fundaciones, among others.

Since coming together in November 2017, the group has spent the last seven months identifying key risks, engaging with the federal, state, and municipal governments, and laying out recommendations to a make

Puerto Rico a better place, for all of its citizens. Support for the commission comes from a pool of funds that are also being used to improve the capacity of philanthropic institutions on the island; develop a more comprehensive damage assessment; and provide immediate recovery assistance.

The document contains 97 recommendations, 17 of which are considered immediate priorities that address critical elements in the recovery and reconstruction of Puerto Rico.

As an immediate next step, RPRAC will present the document to local and federal government officials, municipalities, and NGOs; as well as coordinate a series of town hall meetings across the Island – open to the public – the first will be held on June 26 at the University of Sacred Heart in Santurce. The Commission will also serve as facilitator to connect leaders, collaborators, and sponsors of these initiatives and will begin meetings with organizations such as PECES and the University of Puerto Rico, School of Law, to lead the implementation of the recommendations.

Also, this initiative aims to influence the preparation, development and implementation of the reconstruction plan being developed by the Government of Puerto Rico for US Congress, as well as the CDBG-DR action plan to be presented to HUD.

Sample projects include:

- **Developing feasible models to establish land tenure and community ownership in Puerto Rico's housing market.**

Puerto Rico has an informal housing market that leaves many residents without legal tenure in the form of a land title, a certificate of occupancy, or both – disproportionately exposing the island's most vulnerable citizens to natural hazard risks and reducing access to basic services. In the aftermath of disasters like Hurricane María, lack of formal legal tenure prevented residents from benefiting from resources such as homeowners' insurance coverage and post-disaster FEMA funding. Addressing this challenge will improve access to basic services; allow for quicker recovery in the event of a disaster; and reduce inequality by providing opportunity for building wealth.

- **Establishing reliable and diversified backup energy systems for vulnerable individuals and critical facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and emergency shelters and service facilities.**

Access to backup energy equipment is vital for such critical institutions as hospitals, schools, nursing homes, fire and police stations, water supply systems, wastewater treatment plants, fuel pumping and pressurization stations, cellular communications towers, community centers, and emergency shelters, among others. The electrical systems of these facilities should be hardened and made redundant to protect assets and systems against natural hazards and power system failures. Keeping these institutions operational during a disaster would not only save lives but reduce the cost of recovery.

- **Developing and implementing a disaster resilience strategy for the micro and small businesses of Puerto Rico.**

With up to 80 percent of the island’s formal employment in the micro and small business sector, it is critical to provide tools to support baseline economic resilience through disaster preparedness. Two funds are being established – one focused on grants and loans to help businesses repair the damage, and one to help them install solar power and other systems that can function independently from the electrical grid.

“This document is an initial step in the long journey of reimagining Puerto Rico. The Commission firmly trusts that the set of recommendations presented in the ReImagina Puerto Rico project provides an initial and clear route to the long-term recovery and reconstruction of Puerto Rico. The history of the new Puerto Rico has begun, and we are proud to be part of its rebirth,” said RPRAC executive director Malu Blázquez Arsuaga.

“All of us want to see a Puerto Rico that is more equitable for our American brothers and sisters, more resilient to shocks and disasters, and provides opportunity for all Puerto Ricans in good times and bad,” said Dr. Rajiv J. Shah, president of The Rockefeller Foundation. “I’m confident that this strategy will accelerate the public and private sectors—especially in the areas of education, sustainable power, more resilient health care services, and modern infrastructure—to help build back Puerto Rico better than before.”

“We believe it’s critical to chart a path toward equitable recovery and growth that benefits all Puerto Ricans,” said Xavier de Souza Briggs, vice president for Inclusive Economies and Markets at the Ford Foundation. “To get this right will demand engagement by business, government and community leaders committed to the long-term recovery. But we also need to ensure that families and communities whose homes and livelihoods have been up-ended by Maria have a voice at the table as the plan goes into action.”

“The people of Puerto Rico have suffered unimaginable hardships since the storm hit,” said Patrick Gaspard, president of the Open Society Foundations. “It is time to move from recovery to rebirth. We are proud to support the work of the commission, fueled by the wisdom of local voices, to help chart the many ways the island can build on the strength and determination of its people, and map a brighter future.”