



RE: The situation in Puerto Rico

This has been a horrific hurricane season which has affected many parts of the Caribbean and parts of the southern United States. Although we at IBNS are of course concerned about all of the people impacted by these storms throughout the world, most recently, Puerto Rico, the site of next year's annual meeting suffered a direct hit from hurricane Maria. Although it is still early in the initial recovery effort, it is apparent that the infrastructure on the island has been substantially impacted, and there has been substantial loss of life and property. There is currently the threat of a major humanitarian crisis to which governmental authorities are responding, as well as non-governmental organizations. Our hearts go out to all of those affected in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, and we encourage all of our members to help where they can. With that in mind, I would like to pass on a link to a letter from Giovanna Guerrero-Medina, PhD, Executive Director of Ciencia Puerto Rico, about [ways to help Puerto Rico](#) overall, and scientists and students affected by this disaster, in particular.

At IBNS, as individuals, and as an organization, we are looking at ways to help in the short-term, as well as later in the recovery effort. Many of us will be in Puerto Rico next year for the IBNS meeting after the initial recovery is over, the news cycle has moved on and Puerto Rico has moved out of the public eye. Thus, we will be looking for ways that IBNS meeting attendees may be able to make concrete contributions to the later recovery effort while they are in Puerto Rico. More information on those possibilities, in cooperation with other organizations helping in the recovery effort will be forthcoming.

Finally, with regard to the meeting itself, although the island infrastructure is certainly devastated at the moment, we have every confidence that this will not impact the meeting next year. El Conquistador Resort, the meeting hotel, did not suffer structural damage, and the roads are open between San Juan and the hotel. Because of the current situation on the island overall, and to clean up and make non-structural repairs, the hotel is temporarily closed. Under such circumstances, it might be logical to simply hedge our bets and change our plans, whether we think the recovery will be long complete by next year or not. However, we do not wish to move the site of the meeting as this would be, firstly, unnecessary, and secondly, would be a further economic impact to Puerto Rico. One of the best ways that we can support the people of Puerto Rico is to keep our meeting there next year, and if this is at all possible, we intend to do so.

F. Scott Hall, PhD  
IBNS President