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For Immediate Release

CHAIRMAN PAI MEETS WITH OFFICIALS IN PUERTO RICO

Wraps Up Two-Day Visit to Survey Damage and Reaffirms Commitment to Helping Restore Communications Networks as Quickly as Possible

WASHINGTON, November 7, 2017—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai wrapped up a two-day visit to Puerto Rico on Monday, where he met with government and industry officials to see and hear about the status of recovery efforts following Hurricane Maria.

“The devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria has been unimaginable. I saw some of it for myself, from a mountaintop tower in El Yunque National Forest, which is hard to reach due to storm damage but is precariously operational, to destroyed homes in San Juan. The path to recovery has met several challenges, most notably the lack of power and functional infrastructure. One thing is clear: overcoming these challenges won’t be easy.

“But I’m heartened by the dedication of our public safety community to the people of Puerto Rico. As I’ve said before, the worst of tragedies can also bring out the best in people. I saw that firsthand during my two days in Puerto Rico. Everyone is pitching in: the people of Puerto Rico helping their neighbors, hardworking Federal Emergency Management Agency staff (including communications personnel in Emergency Support Function #2), the dedicated regulators of the Puerto Rico Telecommunications Regulatory Board, and the FCC’s own Roberto Mussenden, who has spent the past month away from his family on the mainland in order to help the island where he grew up. Additionally, amateur radio operators, broadcasters, cable operators, fixed wireless companies, wireline carriers, and mobile providers have stepped up to the plate, working overtime to connect the disconnected. All of this work reflects the ethos I saw on many signs and t-shirts during my time on the island: ‘Puerto Rico Se Levanta’ [Puerto Rico is Rising].

“Recovering from this storm requires an all-hands-on-deck effort. The FCC remains committed to doing everything we can to help restore communications networks as quickly as possible. I was glad to hear that our work so far has helped the people of Puerto Rico. For example, I heard firsthand about how the \$77 million in advanced universal service funding that we provided has helped to facilitate the restoration of communications networks in Puerto Rico; about how the speedy decision to allow a fixed wireless provider to access 5 GHz spectrum enabled it to quickly establish connectivity; about how our recent E-rate decision will help struggling schools keep teaching students; and about how having FCC staff on the ground since the storm has been immensely helpful to both Puerto Ricans and emergency management personnel like ESF-2 (with many lamenting the field office’s closure over one year ago). Looking ahead, we’re going to keep thinking creatively and doing proactively to help restore networks on the island. Among other things, I believe that more funding will be needed in the months to come,” said Chairman

Pai.

During his stay, Chairman Pai visited various parts of San Juan and towns along the northeast Puerto Rican coast. He also inspected a tower site and associated infrastructure on mountains in El Yunque National Forest. This infrastructure serves a critical role in providing connectivity in the eastern part of Puerto Rico, particularly for first responders.

He also met with President Sandra Torres López and Associate Member Alexandra Fernández Navarro of the Telecommunications Regulatory Board (Junta Reglamentadora de Telecomunicaciones). Chairman Pai also attended a detailed briefing hosted by FEMA and attended by staff from ESF-2, the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Weather Service, the Small Business Administration, and others, covering everything from the status of communications networks to the state of the water supply to debris removal.

The Chairman also met with representatives from numerous communications entities, including fixed wireless providers Aeronet and Neptuno Networks; a wide array of radio broadcasters; wired providers like Claro/PRTC and Liberty; and wireless companies like AT&T, Open Mobile, T-Mobile, and Verizon.

For more information on the FCC's response to Hurricane Maria, please visit www.fcc.gov/maria.

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