

**JOINT MEETING  
of the  
2013 PACIFIC PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT &  
PACIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE ROUNDTABLE**

*8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> July  
Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa, Denarau Island, Nadi, Fiji*

**Special Session 3: High Level Dialogue  
The Vision and Role of Political Governance in Integrating Disaster Risk  
Management and Climate Change**

**Introduction**

The Pacific is a highly disaster-prone region. Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are characterized by small and scattered populations spread out across a vast ocean, vulnerable to a disproportionate amount of the world's disasters. PICTs are threatened by a variety of natural hazards of geological and meteorological origin, the most frequent cause of disaster being tropical cyclones.

In the Pacific, even relatively minor disasters can significantly affect populations, overwhelm national and local capacities, and slow down development gains. In terms of annual economic impacts from disasters, 8 Pacific island countries are among the 20 countries with highest average annual disaster losses as a percentage of GDP. In some PICTs, annual disaster losses have even exceeded their GDP.

In addition, climate change is increasingly showing adverse effects in Pacific island countries and territories, resulting in high costs of adaptation relative to GDP<sup>1</sup>. It is anticipated that the observed frequency and intensity of extreme weather and climate events will further increase in the Pacific due to global warming<sup>2,3</sup>. The comparative smallness, remoteness and archipelagic character of the Pacific island nations contribute significantly to their vulnerability to climate change and disasters<sup>4</sup>.

While disaster and climate change concerns have different origins, they overlap in many aspects through the common factors of weather and climate and the similar tools used to monitor, analyse and address adverse consequences. Therefore, it makes sense to consider and implement them in a systematic and integrated manner. For example, risk assessments, flood management systems and building code enforcement contribute to both policy goals.

Past experience in implementing disaster risk reduction can contribute greatly to climate change adaptation, in terms of policy and institutional approaches as well as technical

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<sup>1</sup> Key messages from the Pacific Delegation to the 2011 Global Platform for DRR. 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Hay, J. and Mimura, N. 2010. The changing nature of extreme weather and climate events: risks to sustainable development.

<sup>3</sup> Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific: An Institutional and Policy Analysis. UNISDR & UNDP 2012.

<sup>4</sup> MacLellan, N. 2011. Policy Brief - Turning the Tide: Improving Access to Climate Financing in the Pacific Islands.

methods and tools. These include, for example, multi-stakeholder national platforms, technical networks, and approaches to community participation. Equally, many of the approaches being developed for climate change adaptation, such as vulnerability assessments, sectoral and national planning, capacity building and response strategies, are directly supportive of disaster risk reduction.

The shared aim of Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation is to reduce the vulnerability of societies to hazards by improving their ability to better anticipate, resist, prepare for, respond to and recover from their impacts. An integrated approach, that reduces the risks to sustainable national development from multiple hazards or phenomena, whether climate-related or geophysical and of sudden or slow onset, is more effective and takes into account the existing national and regional capacities to address these concerns.

With limited capacities to respond to these increasing threats, the PICTS have resolved to increase coordination efforts between DRM and climate change policies, programs and activities. At national level, most PICs have decided to either implement an integrated DRM and CC strategic planning approach, or programme implementation or even institutional governance arrangements. To echo this progress at the regional level, in 2011, they have decided to support the development of a Pacific integrated regional strategy for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change by 2015, to succeed the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 and the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006 – 2015.

The integrated strategy will cover both disaster and climate change risks and will provide overall guidance for investments that aim to reduce the vulnerability of PICTs to a wide variety of natural hazards, of slow and sudden onset. It is recognized that a strong coordination at the regional level will enhance national and sub-national efforts of integration.

National and regional consultations on the Post-2015 DRR and climate change frameworks in the Pacific have indicated that stakeholders prioritize the need for strong political governance, leadership and ownership at regional, national and sub-national level as well as accountability, as key elements for success of the integrated strategy.

The role of political leadership in supporting the development of the new integrated strategy and its implementation at regional, national, subnational and community level is critical to its success.

### **Purpose**

The High Level Dialogue will provide the opportunity for key decision makers to participate, share their views and experiences on the benefits and challenges of adopting a joint DRM-CC approach in the Pacific, and identify opportunities for improving joint DRM and CC action that will maximize the benefit for communities. This session will also look at ways in which political leadership can spearhead and strengthen integrated approaches at the national and regional level.

### **Discussion**

Discussions will be centered on the role of key decision makers in guiding and carrying forward the integration agenda at regional, national, subnational and community level, to ensure effective action and results on the ground.

## **Intended Outcomes**

- Decision makers are given insights to how they would lead and support national integration of CC and DRM
- Decision makers are acquainted with the Road Map process and the opportunity to guide (or provide inputs) the development of the integrated strategy
- Key issues and opportunities for action are identified for the successful integration of DRM and CC at regional, national, subnational and community levels in the Pacific, and fully understand Government's role at the national and community levels.

## **Format**

The session will be a moderated panel discussion, followed by a Q&A session

- Moderator: Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction

## **Panelists:**

- Sectoral Ministers (finance, planning, environment, interior, etc.) from Tonga, Cook Islands, Republic of Marshall Islands and Vanuatu
- Hon. Connie Hedegaard, EU Commissioner responsible for Climate Change
- Hon. Richard Marles, MP, Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs

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