



SOPAC

Communiqué

Inaugural Pacific Regional Disaster Risk Management Meeting for CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management

24-25th July 2008, Nadi, Fiji Islands

“A Call for Action”

Adopted by the CEOs of Finance and/or Planning and Disaster Management as representatives of the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) member countries including Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, together with representatives of donor partners, international and regional organisations, and civil society at the closing of the “Inaugural Pacific Regional Disaster Risk Management Meeting for CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management”, held 24-25th July 2008, in Nadi, Fiji Islands. The full list of participants at this meeting is at Annex 1.

The Communiqué also incorporates the outcomes of the 14th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting and the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network held 21-23rd July 2008. These are appended in full in Annex 2 to this Communiqué.

We **underscore** that this Communiqué is a “Call for Action” to develop, and strengthen where necessary, implementation of disaster risk management as an imperative for protecting our future through strengthening national sustainable development planning and decision-making including budgetary processes. Furthermore, national disaster risk management action plans should integrate and synergise with other national sectoral action plans, and CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management have a key role to play.

Recognising that this Communiqué is a “Call for Action”, we **acknowledge** that there is no quick solution and encourage SOPAC to establish communication and dialogue with member countries in regard to updating their respective evaluation and monitoring processes to enhance the further and implementation of disaster risk management initiatives.

Preamble

We **reaffirm** that the uniqueness of Pacific island countries, like all small island developing states, results from the frequency and intensity of natural hazards, including tropical cyclones, droughts, landslides and mudflows, flooding, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis. Furthermore, related disaster risks and their impacts are increasing especially from those hazards related to climate change, extreme weather events and sea level rise. Vulnerability is increasing, and is a response to changing social and economic conditions in addition to natural hazards. The building of resilience has not kept pace with increased exposure to risks and as a result Pacific island countries face disproportionately high economic, social and environmental costs. Some of the root problems faced range from a dependency on international trade, limited employment and livelihood possibilities, costly infrastructure and administration, limited institutional capacity and natural resources, poverty, high freight costs due to rising fuel prices, geographical isolation, risk of loss of biodiversity, limited disaster response alternatives, urbanisation, and an increase in the risk of

pollution due to shipping and tourism. These circumstances exacerbate the exposure to natural hazards and the inability to respond to crisis events.

We **reaffirm** our commitment to the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005-2015 (Regional DRM Framework), with a vision for safer, more resilient Pacific island countries and communities to disasters, so that Pacific peoples may achieve sustainable livelihoods and lead free and worthwhile lives. Furthermore, the Regional DRM Framework is a guide for the development and strengthening of the capacity of Pacific island countries and communities by accelerating the implementation of disaster risk reduction and disaster management policies planning and programmes to address current and emerging challenges through:

- governance, organisational, institutional, policy and decision-making frameworks;
- knowledge, information, public awareness and education;
- analysis and evaluation of hazards, vulnerabilities and elements at risk;
- planning for effective preparedness, response and recovery;
- effective, integrated and people-focused early warning systems; and
- reduction of underlying risk factors.

We **reaffirm** as agreed in “The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”, that efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into national policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and supported through bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including partnerships. Sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster risk reduction are mutually supportive objectives, and in order to meet the challenges ahead, accelerated efforts must be made to build the necessary capacities at the community and national levels to manage and reduce risk. Furthermore, such an approach needs to be recognised as an important element for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

We are **deeply concerned** that the current record high prices for oil, the global food shortage, and the increasing impacts of climate change are likely to further worsen our capacity to cope with disasters, especially in regard to response and recovery.

We **note** that this Meeting is in part a response to a call made by Pacific Island Leaders last year to support the Pacific Plan, in regard to climate change. Leaders:

- agreed that national action plans for climate change should be developed and implemented and climate change should be mainstreamed into national development planning drawing on the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change and the associated implementation plan, and directed Pacific intergovernmental regional organisations to:
 - intensify joint programming with the aim of advancing the implementation of regional frameworks and action plans, in particular, the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change and the Regional DRM Framework to better assist members develop adaptation measures in response to the effects of climate change;
 - facilitate the collection and analysis of scientific, social and economic information and traditional knowledge in a manner that will allow for appropriate and informed decision making by members; and
 - identify sustainable financing options at national, sub-regional and/or regional levels to support climate change adaptation and mitigation by members.
- requested that the issue of climate change be considered where possible or necessary in other regional meetings such as ministerial and officials’ meetings including partnerships for water resources and disaster risk reduction.

Key challenges to be addressed through this “Call for Action”

We **agree** that the following remain key challenges to be addressed through this “Call for Action”.

The Impact of Disasters on Small Island Economies and the Role of Economic Tools to Support Disaster Risk Management

There is a need to implement guidelines for estimating the economic impact of natural disasters on development in the Pacific, together with a toolkit for assessing the costs and benefits of disaster risk management measures in the Pacific, because the official estimates of the impact of disasters on small island economies do not give the whole story of how disasters affect people in the Pacific. The real total impact of natural disasters, including long-term impacts on the social conditions, livelihoods, economic performance and environmental assets of Pacific island countries, is likely to be much larger. In addition, due to the small populations, economies and land areas of many Pacific island countries, disaster-related damages that are not large relative to the damages elsewhere in the world can have large impacts relative to the country's total GDP and population. Recent examples are the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Heta on Niue in January 2004, and the tsunami in the Western Solomon Islands in April 2007.

Economic analyses to advocate for disaster risk management are valuable, and if supported by strategic communications work, the information generated can increase transparency in decision-making at all levels. The challenge for Pacific island countries is to determine when to conduct analyses and how to resource them. CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management have a key role to play.

- There is a need to address the challenges encountered in a feasibility study by the World Bank to scope the potential for a Pacific Catastrophe Risk Pool Initiative, and the World Bank is encouraged to continue its work in full consultation and collaboration with Pacific island countries and other stakeholders, once it is completed. In regard to reducing underlying risk factors, the Regional DRM Framework identifies financial risk sharing mechanism should be considered particularly insurance and reinsurance and other financial modalities for risk transfer.

Disaster Risk Management Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming disaster risk management remains a challenge, inter alia through lack of national capacity, political will, technical support and financial resources. Pacific island countries are at different stages in this regard, and countries are encouraged to share lessons learnt. It is a shared action at national level, and is a responsibility that requires not just a "whole of government" but a "whole of country" integrated approach to be effective, including through developing existing and strengthening new partnerships. CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management have a key role to play.

Recognising that whilst each country will have its own approach, countries are encouraged to make use of the guide provided by SOPAC for the development of disaster risk management national action plans. The guide incorporates a staged process over time: planning for engagement, high level advocacy, situation analysis, plan development including institutional arrangements, costing the plan and its implementation, approval process, country and donor discussions, plan implementation including monitoring and evaluation.

Hazard Risk Assessments and the Role of Technical Solutions in Informing National Policy

Human activity continues to exacerbate the potentially disastrous impacts of geological and climate/hydrometeorological processes especially in the coastal zone in which most of the social and economic activity takes place in Pacific island countries. CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management have a key role to play.

In order to reduce the impacts of disasters there remains a challenge to ensure people at all levels are well informed and motivated to take action towards a culture of prevention and resilience and in addition prioritise risk reduction needs, which in turn requires the compilation, analysis and

dissemination of relevant information and knowledge on hazards and their impacts. Advocacy is an important tool in this regard.

Hazard and risk assessments through the provision of spatial and highly visual solutions based upon the application of applied science and technology are today a new and essential prerequisite to reducing disaster risks, planning for disaster risk management and for promoting a culture of resilience and better informed communities. They result in a greater level of understanding of the causes and effects of hazards and the physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities to disasters that Pacific island countries and communities face.

Countries still need assistance to build capacity in using tools, technology and information developed for assessing their hazards and vulnerabilities. This includes the need to collect and analyse comprehensive data on the direct and indirect impacts of disasters on development in both the short and long - term, and development of strategies to increase engagement of communities and incorporate traditional knowledge in disaster risk management.

There is a two-way information sharing challenge to ensure that the scientists and technicians who collect, analyse, and provide this necessary data understand what the planners and decision-makers need. There is a need for cooperatively establishing databases and data sets that could be shared and are interoperable. Likewise, there is a need to ensure an understanding of the implications of this data.

Disaster Response Mechanisms in the Pacific: The regional and international support structure and current policies

Many partners who support an international response effort, strive to provide timely and valuable assistance to Pacific island countries in times of need to respond and recover from a disaster. Such partners include assisting Governments, UN agencies, regional organisations, the Red Cross movement and non governmental organisations (NGOs)/non state actors (NSAs). One of the challenges remains coordination not only between these partners, but also within country in the context of the national disaster response and preparedness planning, and between the partners and the recipient country.

There is a need to strengthen the capacity of civil society such as community-based groups, faith-based organisations and NGOs/NSAs, who are active during time of disaster response and recovery. Furthermore, national societies need to have clearly defined roles and agreed responsibilities with the national disaster risk management planning framework, noting that this would greatly assist the Federation support efforts.

There remains a challenge for Pacific island countries to consider and respond to the draft guidelines for an International Disaster Response Law (IDRL). This requires continued efforts to develop or strengthen legal and institutional arrangements for disaster risk reduction and disaster management with support from regional partners as required. The pending recruitment of an officer to the IFRC regional office to support this need is appreciated.

There remains a challenge to ensure the following government actions support international response efforts. These include: political commitment and leadership to prepare and respond at all levels; a detailed contingency plan with in-depth analysis of risks, vulnerabilities and capacities; national action plan; good baseline data which is collected, collated and maintained for the disaster management purposes; international disaster response law in place before the international response from any agency; strong, well-functioning national coordinating mechanisms with relevant delegated authority for rapid decision-making; up-to-date policies, procedures and legislation; government counterparts work closely with response clusters; and financial reserves and emergency funding mechanisms are in place to support preparedness response and early recovery.

National emergency communications procedures need to be agreed and support networks established together with emergency operations centres developed and/or strengthened where appropriate, especially in regard to information flows to and from remote, often isolated outer island communities during times of an emergency.

Disaster Risk Management- An Imperative for strengthening National Sustainable Development Planning and Decision-Making

Sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster risk reduction are mutually supportive objectives, and in order to meet the challenges ahead, accelerated efforts must be made to build the necessary capacities at the community and national levels to manage and reduce risk. Coordination amongst all stakeholders is crucial, gender equality is important, and attention needs to highlight the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly and people with disabilities.

Examples of disaster risk management initiatives at the global, regional, national and community levels illustrate the challenge that efforts must be accelerated to reduce disaster risks, and that these efforts must be systematically integrated into national policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction,

An essential and urgent challenge for Pacific island countries is to allocate national financial resources and identify and secure necessary, bilateral, regional and international financing for implementation of disaster risk management priorities.

CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster Management have a key role to play, as they are at the nexus of national planning and decision-making including allocation of budgetary resources. Synergies and interlinkages “horizontally” across governmental sectoral agencies, including National Disaster Management Offices need strengthening. Similarly the synergies and linkages “vertically” into the overall national development plan need strengthening,

The Regional DRM Framework provides a starting-point for countries which have not completed a national action plan for disaster risk management. SOPAC needs to continue through its Community Risk Programme and the High Level Advocacy Team together with members of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network (Partnership Network) to support countries in this regard on an “as requested” basis.

General

We **strongly support** the Partnership Network facilitated by SOPAC, and acknowledge the extensive work that national, regional and international members of the Network have already undertaken in the Pacific Island Countries in the area of disaster risk management at the community, national and regional levels. Furthermore, we support in principle the proposal for the establishment of a Pacific Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Management to serve as a link with the UN/ISDR-facilitated Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in order to increase the representation and participation of Pacific regional stakeholders in disaster risk reduction at the global level and improve outreach of disaster risk initiatives and for SOPAC to continue discussions with countries and partners on this in order to finalise in time for consideration by the SOPAC Governing Council in October 2008.

We **recognise** the new information management initiative and strongly support SOPAC’s efforts to finalise the development of a web-based Pacific Disaster Net, that will serve as a valuable portal and up-to-date resource database that can be used to assist disaster risk management mainstreaming efforts by Pacific island countries. It is to be available through the Internet and will be distributed on DVD as an offline version on a regular basis. The custom built database will contain material from countries, organisations and agencies at regional, national and international level, relating to various aspects of disaster risk management such as: governance; hazard and risk assessment; early warning and monitoring; reduction of underlying risk factors; preparedness

and response; training and tools. Searches will be simple and be able to access inter alia reports, data inventories, maps, publications, events, links, and audio visuals. The launch of PDN is anticipated at the SOPAC Governing Council meeting in October 2008.

Conclusions

We **urge** as country representatives to commit to promoting the elements of this Communiqué in their future endeavours to support sustainable development at national level in order to mainstream disaster risk management into national planning and policy initiatives. Effective disaster risk management will require effective commitment, cooperation and coordination.

We **express our deep appreciation** for the technical and financial support by members of the Partnership Network and SOPAC to the region in implementing disaster risk management. Furthermore, we **urge** all the representatives of partner organisations to develop where necessary and strengthen wherever appropriate their endeavours to build the resilience of Pacific peoples to disasters.

We **request** SOPAC as the regional organisation mandated to coordinate efforts in disaster risk management to consider this Communiqué at its next Council Meeting with a view to prioritising actions and assist countries to secure the necessary technical and financial resources.

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**Inaugural Pacific Regional DRM Meeting for CEOs of Finance/Planning and Disaster
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14th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting

Summary of Key Outcomes

*Adopted by Regional Disaster Managers at the 14th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting, Nadi, Fiji
21st-22nd July 2008*

1. The 14th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting was convened in Nadi from the 21st to 22nd July 2008 and was chaired by Fiji. The theme of the meeting was *Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management in Pacific Island Countries – Addressing National Challenges to Enhance Mainstreaming*. Specific goals were to: increase the understanding of mainstreaming initiatives and share experience from across the Pacific and Asia regions; improve the understanding of mainstreaming strategies and tools; and improve the understanding of accountability and reporting requirements in relation to international and regional instruments for disaster risk management.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The meeting was also attended by members of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network (Partnership Network) and other international, regional and national organisations. A full list of attendees is in the Annex. Apologies were noted from Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Official Opening

3. The meeting was officially opened by the Fiji Interim Minister of Defence, National Security, Disaster Management and Immigration, Ratu Epeli Ganilau. In opening, the Minister recognised that 2008 marked the first time that regional disaster managers were to meet on an annual basis, rather than biennially as they had done in the past. He welcomed this change as an opportunity to extend relationships and partnerships to improve disaster risk management in the Pacific. The Minister also acknowledged the recent move in the Pacific to address disaster risk reduction but cautioned regional disaster managers not to lose sight of the ongoing need to address disaster management, emphasising the need to treat the two approaches as one.
4. Recognising the theme of partnerships in the Meeting, the Minister emphasised the need to get all stakeholders to participate in disaster risk management in the Pacific, including national governments, NGOs, communities, the private sector and local, national, regional and international partners.

Key Outcomes

5. The Meeting commits to continue to coordinate activities and to work cooperatively and collaboratively to implement the *Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Regional Framework for Action 2005 – 2015: An Investment for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Island Countries* (Regional Framework), which was endorsed by the Leaders in 2005. The meeting recognised that the Regional Framework is fundamentally about sustainable

development and that disaster risk management should be mainstreamed into national development planning and budgetary processes if this is to be achieved.

6. The Meeting expresses deep appreciation for the participation of and contribution made by Dr Ir Suprayoga Hadi, Director for Special Areas and Disadvantaged Regions, National Planning Agency (BAPPENAS, Republic of Indonesia). The Meeting acknowledges also the importance of sharing ideas and experiences with its Asian neighbours and hopes that this is the beginning of a south-south partnership.

7. The Meeting:

- Recognised the importance of the Regional Framework and the Hyogo Framework of Action as the key guides to mainstream disaster risk management and contribute to sustainable development in the Pacific;
- Affirmed the importance of accurate data and information to support disaster risk management;
- Recognised the critical efforts of national disaster management organisations in coordinating and/ or implementing disaster risk management but acknowledged their often limited capacity and the need for support across government and the importance of linking national, provincial and local efforts;
- Recognised the increase in the number of donors and agencies concerned with disaster risk management in the Pacific and acknowledged the importance of the Partnership Network in helping to coordinate their activities and pool resources;
- Acknowledged the valuable work that SOPAC and other organisations, including those that are members of the Partnership Network, have already undertaken in the Pacific Island countries in the area of disaster risk management, including capacity building;
- Recognised the value of high level advocacy teams to garner the support and commitment of governments in mainstreaming disaster risk management, particularly in budgeting and planning;
- Recognised the efforts by SOPAC to encourage SPREP, as the regional organisation with the remit for coordinating climate change work, to actively participate in the Partnership Network and to work in close collaboration to integrate climate change with disaster risk management initiatives;
- Noted the progress to date on the World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction initiative on Reducing the Risks of Disaster and Climate Variability in the Pacific island countries;
- Acknowledged the existing efforts of national, regional and international agencies in capacity building to support the implementation of disaster risk management;
- Acknowledged the invitation by SOPAC to submit suggestions for priority disaster risk management activities in the forthcoming year;
- Was deeply appreciative of the financial and technical support from national and international donor agencies in implementing disaster risk management across the Pacific and encouraged donor agencies to mainstream disaster risk management in all programmes;
- Valued the assistance of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in sharing lessons from the Asia region on the mainstreaming of disaster risk management into development;
- Was cognisant of the need for greater harmonisation and consolidation of mainstreaming efforts in disaster risk management and climate change initiatives as a way of contributing to sustainable development;
- Was cognisant of the need for monitoring and reporting on the Regional Framework as a way to achieve accountability and effective use of resources, and acknowledges the work of SOPAC in generating an online reporting tool to achieve this. The Meeting also reiterated the commitment of the Pacific region to contribute to the Global Biennial Hyogo Framework for Action Progress Review process 2007-2009.

Key Recommendations

8. After consideration of the issues noted above and discussion of very informative and proactive reports by NDMOs, regional and international organisations and agencies, the meeting agreed that there is a need to identify concrete initiatives for greater immediate focus. The meeting agreed to recommend for endorsement and implementation, the following actions:
- Consistent with decision of the 36th SOPAC Governing Council in relation to the Regional Institutional Framework (as articulated in paragraph 19b of the 2007 Forum Communiqué), SOPAC to continue to provide coordination of post disaster technical assessment work, subject to the availability of appropriate capacity. The Meeting also directs SOPAC to enhance this service by supporting implementation of an inter-NDMO support mechanism that would be mobilised following extreme events;
 - Pacific island countries to continue to progress mainstreaming disaster risk management to national planning and budgetary processes. In this respect, the Meeting invites countries mainstreaming disaster risk management to approach SOPAC and the Partnership Network for assistance. It also directs SOPAC to work with Pacific island countries to address priority DRM actions, to continue and enhance existing support in mainstreaming to national agencies and to extend that service to new countries;
 - SOPAC to progress establishment of a regional mechanism to support the sharing of NDMO staff and skills between countries in times of disaster as a means to supplement the work of existing agencies and response structures;
 - SOPAC to support continued and enhanced regional training programmes for NDMOs in disaster risk management;
 - Pacific island countries to enhance disaster risk management mainstreaming by harmonising climate change and disaster risk management initiatives;
 - The engagement of SOPAC's High Level Advocacy Team (HLAT) to continue as a valuable means to achieve national political and leadership support to underpin the mainstreaming of disaster risk management;
 - Countries, donors and partners to continue targeted capacity building, including both appropriate mentoring and twinning arrangements as well as the extension of training to all sectors relevant to natural disasters as a way to underpin the effectiveness of disaster risk management;
 - Donors and partner agencies to continue to enhance their coordination of international level activities, particularly through the Partnership Network so that assistance is conducted in line with national priorities and assistance is efficiently delivered;
 - Taking into account the recommendations of the Bali Plan of Action, countries, donors and partners to support the greater integration of climate change and disaster risk management initiatives at the national and regional level, in particular, SOPAC to continue to develop and support cooperative efforts with SPREP and to coordinate climate change adaptation assistance with disaster risk reduction work and that of the Partnership network;
 - SOPAC to strengthen the Regional Disaster Managers meeting in future by scheduling a day-long closed session to enable Disaster Managers to meet in private to share ideas, and to invite SOPAC Associate Members to participate in future regional disaster meetings as an opportunity to maximise benefits from the meeting more widely;
 - Countries, partners and donors to continue supporting efforts to improve the efficient collection of scientific data to underpin disaster risk management;
 - Countries and partners to note the progress to date on the potential for the development of a Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Pool;
 - Encourage implementing agencies to continue supporting disaster risk management work in the region, while acknowledging the lead regional coordination role of SOPAC, supported by the Partnership Network, in implementing the Regional Framework. In this respect, the Meeting requests SOPAC to continue to enhance the coordination of regional disaster risk management activities in the Pacific;
 - Partners and donors to acknowledge Pacific island country efforts to prioritise their disaster risk management objectives through national action plans and actively support their implementation through funding and other resources. In this respect, the Meeting

requests SOPAC to coordinate regional assistance for NAPs, consistent with its role in managing various facilities including the AusAID NAP Facility and the ACP/EU Natural Disaster Facility;

- SOPAC to continue engaging with stakeholders and NDMOs on the development of a monitoring and reporting tool for the Pacific Regional Framework that is linked to the Global Hyogo Framework for Action Review process;
- Acknowledging the proposal for the establishment of a Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management, SOPAC to undertake further consultations with countries and partners prior to seeking the endorsement of the SOPAC governing council in October 2008.

9. SOPAC in collaboration, consultation and cooperation with the National Disaster Management Offices, relevant national agencies and regional and international organisations are called upon to provide direct support for the realisation of the above recommendations.

Concluding Remarks

10. The meeting wishes to extend its gratitude to the interim Government of the Republic of Fiji and the people of the Fiji islands for hosting the 14th Regional Disaster Managers Meeting. The meeting agreed that the words of the interim Minister will continue to serve as a wake-up call in the pursuit of achieving the aspirations and goals of our Pacific Leaders. The meeting commended the Chair of the meeting.
11. The meeting extended its appreciation to development partners of the Partnership Network and other regional and international organisations for their attendance and valuable contributions.
12. The meeting also extended its appreciation to the SOPAC Secretariat for their continuing leadership and support for this regional meeting and disaster risk management and capacity building in the Pacific.

22nd July 2008
Nadi
Fiji.



3rd Annual Meeting of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network

SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

Adopted by the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network meeting, Nadi, Republic of Fiji
22nd-23 July 2008

The 3rd Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network Meeting was convened in Fiji from the 22-23 July 2008 and was chaired by SOPAC. The theme of the meeting was *A Call for Action: Strengthening the Partnership Network* and had the specific objective to:

- review the status of current and planned Partnership activities in the Pacific;
- endorse the Partnership as the 'Pacific Platform' for Disaster Risk Reduction; and
- examine opportunities for improved strategic alliances and engagement at regional and national level within Pacific countries.

As well as members of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network (Partnership Network), the Meeting was attended by representatives of other international, regional and national organisations and numerous Pacific island countries (Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). A full list of participants is in Annex 1.

Official Opening

The meeting was officially opened by the Director of SOPAC, Cristelle Pratt. In opening the meeting Ms Pratt observed that, while the Partnership Network is still in its infancy, the region has already started to benefit from its work through a number of initiatives. Nevertheless, she challenged the Partnership Network to be increasingly responsive to Pacific Island countries in providing technical support to the region, and invited partners to focus on options to bring together resources and to position the Partnership Network strategically to deliver enhanced solutions for disaster risk management.

Key Outcomes

The Meeting committed to work cooperatively and collaboratively to address disaster risk management as guided by the *Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Regional Framework for Action 2005 – 2015: An Investment for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Island Countries* (henceforth referred to as the *Regional Framework*), which was endorsed by the Leaders in 2005. Members were reminded that the Partnership Network was open ended and that new partners would be welcomed. The Meeting:

- Recognised that disaster risk management, which covers both disaster risk reduction and disaster management, is a sustainable development imperative and that national governments, as the principal owners and leaders, have the critical role in establishing national priorities in disaster risk management, national arrangements to implement activities, as well as in leading the mainstreaming of disaster risk management at the national level;
- Reaffirmed the critical role of continuing disaster risk management education, awareness, training and advocacy at local, national and regional levels by relevant national, regional and international organisations;

- Emphasised the importance of an inclusive whole-of-country approach to disaster risk management involving the support and participation of all stakeholder from the community through to the international level;
- Was cognisant of the extensive work that national, regional and international members of the Network have already undertaken in the Pacific Island Countries in the area of disaster risk management at the community, national and regional levels;
- Recognised the broad ranging expertise that different Partners in the Network bring to disaster risk management and acknowledged the need for Partners to work together in sharing information and implementing initiatives;
- Acknowledged the continuing importance of generating, sharing and coordinating access to accurate data and information to support disaster risk management across all levels of society. In this respect it also recognised the need to strengthen observation networks in the region as well support the establishment of appropriate end to end early warning systems;
- Welcomed the increasing interest from additional national, regional and international agencies to join and support the Network to improve the quality of Pacific island lives;
- Was appreciative of the support by development partners, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Taiwan, the European Union, various agencies of the United Nations and the United States of America, to the region in implementing disaster risk management;
- Fully recognised the critical role of the development partners in the implementation of National Action Plans for Disaster Risk Management (NAP DRM);
- Acknowledged the in-principle support of the meeting of Regional Disaster Managers for a proposal on the establishment of a Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management to increase the representation and participation of Pacific regional stakeholders in disaster risk reduction at the global level and improve outreach of disaster risk initiatives.

Key Recommendations

After consideration of the issues noted above and discussion of very informative and proactive reports by its many members, the Partnership Network agreed that there was a need to identify concrete initiatives for greater immediate focus. The Meeting agreed to recommend for endorsement and implementation, the following actions:

- Continued support in the provision of technical and financial support by the Partnership Network to mainstream both components of disaster risk management (disaster management and disaster risk reduction) and thereby support implementation of the *Regional Framework* to enhance the capabilities of Pacific people to lead free and worthwhile lives. The Network particularly encourages partners to incorporate risk reduction and disaster management measures to sectoral plans, development projects and early warning systems as well as to support countries in the design of technical projects and/or programmes;
- Continued support to enhance Pacific island country technical capacity in disaster risk management such as in conducting risk assessments. In the meanwhile, the Meeting encourages Partners with technical capacity in relevant assessment areas to support Pacific island countries in conducting the work;
- Partners to continue work on sharing data, information, lessons and experiences across the Partnership and to progress the transformation of critical information to tools and products to assist stakeholders at all levels to mainstream disaster risk management. In this respect, the Meeting encourages Partners that have humanitarian assistance capacity to take part in the information management cluster established by OCHA and other humanitarian partners to support the coordination of efficient and effective humanitarian response efforts;
- Partners to continue to improve communication on and coordination in their work with other partners as well as with national and community based agencies to ensure efficient delivery of assistance;
- Partners to continue to develop local partnerships with government and non-government organisations, and particularly with local community and civil society groups, to enable Pacific Island communities at all levels to participate in and implement disaster risk management;
- Partners and countries to ensure that the all hazard approach to disaster includes pandemic and animal health;

- Partners and countries to promote the lessons learnt from traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms to support disaster risk management;
- Harmonisation of partner efforts in the areas of disaster risk management and or adaptation to climate change as a way to achieve sustainable development;
- Fiji School of Medicine to work with NDMOs, working in close collaboration with relevant government departments, to lobby their governments to recognise the need for emergency health education and have it incorporated to the Fiji School of Medicine curriculum as a means to address disaster risk management. In addition, the Meeting called for an Oceanic Chapter of the World Association for Disaster and Emergency to be established under the Fiji School of Medicine and encouraged Partners to collaborate with this accordingly;
- Acknowledging the extra absorptive capacity demands imposed on countries when partners assist Pacific island governments in implementing disaster risk management, Partners to take account of in-country capacity and work as cohesively as possible with governments to minimise any burden. Additionally, acknowledging the extras demands placed on countries during times of disaster, Partners providing assistance during disasters to take account of in-country capacity and work as cohesively as possible with governments to minimise any burden;
- In an effort to improve the coordination and more efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance, humanitarian organisations (UN organisations, civil society organisations and non government organisations) to coordinate operations through thematic clusters in line with the agreed Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) global practice;
- SOPAC and other members of the Partnership Network to encourage the broadening of the Network base to include all relevant donor, non state and regional organisations and SOPAC to encourage their attendance at the Meeting in the future.
- In the interest of promoting South-South partnerships, Partners to continue to work with our Asian neighbours and between-Pacific NDMOs to share experiences and strengthen disaster risk management;
- Partners to support Pacific island governments in conducting education, awareness raising, training and advocacy work in the Pacific, including the incorporation of disaster risk management to educational curricular;
- SOPAC to hold further consultation with countries to incorporate the views of members of the Partnership Network and countries on the proposal for the establishment of a Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management with a view to submitting a finalised proposal to the SOPAC Governing Council in October 2008.

The Partnership Network, in collaboration, consultation and cooperation with the National Disaster Management Offices, relevant national, regional and international agencies and civil society organisations, are called upon to provide direct support for the realisation of the above recommendations.

Concluding Remarks

The Meeting extended its thanks to Partners for actively participating in the Meeting. It commended the Chair and the SOPAC Secretariat for its support to the Meeting.

23 July 2008
Nadi
Republic of Fiji