

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT

Mr Chairman

New Zealand expresses gratitude to our hosts, the Government of Japan, for making this meeting possible.

New Zealand is a Pacific Island nation of 4 million people that understands the reality of natural hazards – earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, floods and cyclones are part of our lives and our vulnerability as a nation.

But the recent Sumatran earthquake and tsunami illustrate that natural disasters know no national boundaries. We express our sincere condolences to the governments of all countries affected by this disaster ~~and~~ our government has committed \$70million(NZ) to the recovery effort.

Mr Chairman

In the 10 years since Yokohama New Zealand has made progress in implementing a comprehensive disaster management framework. We have taken action and, while there is a way to go before our communities are truly resilient, the commitment and framework are in place for it to happen.

Mr Chairman

New Zealand is very conscious of the vulnerability of small Pacific island nations to natural disasters. As an example, a year ago the small island state of Niue in the Pacific was devastated by a cyclone. That also affected 4 other Pacific nations. The cyclone demonstrated that the social and economic infrastructure of such small nations can be almost destroyed in a matter of hours.

It is therefore important that the mechanisms we agree at this conference for building resilience to the impact of disasters have relevance and applicability to small island states.

Mr Chairman

New Zealand supports the call, made this morning at the session on the Indian ocean tsunami, to enhance local, regional and especially global early warning systems. We endorse the UN role in co-ordinating these global systems.

We also strongly support calls to ensure that such global systems might be suitable for communicating information needed to manage other rapidly emerging global disasters.

New Zealand believes the review of the Yokohama Strategy showed that there has been progress worldwide in reducing disaster risk over the past 10 years. But there is still a way to go.

We support the call by Mr Egeland for this conference to agree concrete steps for action and implementation, and to build knowledge and capacity at a local level.

Thank you

Dr Helen Anderson
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New Zealand