

Tonga

**STATEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA
SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION**

18-22 January 2005

Kobe, Japan

MR. CHAIRMAN

YOUR EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

PREVIOUS SPEAKERS FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS HAS CLEARLY STATED THE ACTIVITIES, NEEDS AND THE HOPES OF ISLAND COUNTRIES IN RELATION TO DISASTER REDUCTION, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND THE CREATION OF MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES.

MY PACIFIC COLLEAQUES HAS ALSO STATED THE CRITICAL ROLE THAT SOPAC WAS, IS AND HOPEFULLY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY IN OUR REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL SEARCH FOR BUILDING OF A COMMUNITY THAT ENHANCES THE CAPABILITIES OF PEOPLE TO LIVE FREE, WORTHWHILE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVILIHOODS.

MY PACIFIC COLLEAQUES HAVE ALSO EXTENDED TO OUR DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS OUR DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT WHICH HAS MADE A MAJOR DIFFERENCE TO OUR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL EFFORTS.

TONGA WILL THEREFORE NOT REITERATE WHAT THEY HAVE STATED BUT ONLY WISH TO SAY THAT WE FULLY SUPPORT THE VIEWS THEY HAVE EXPRESSED, THE SPECIFICATIONS OF NEEDS AND PRIORITIES AND THEIR EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION TO DONOR AND HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR FULL SUPPORT FOR THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL, ANWAR K. CHOUDHURY AND BY THE AOSIS CHAIR, AMBASSADOR KONJUL OF MAURITIUS. AS STATED BY UNDER-SECRETARY CHAUDHURY, THIS U.N CONFERENCE SHOULD REAFFIRM THE UN-SID'S CONFERENCE AND ITS MAURITIUS DECLARATION AND STRATEGY THAT THE SIDS

CONTINUE TO BE A SPECIAL CASE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNISES THE NEED TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN EFFECTIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS, EMERGENCY RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION CAPACITIES AND FURTHER SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS OF SIDS, ALSO THROUGH RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, CAPACITY-BUILDING AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN COUNTRIES.

WE, IN THE SMALL ISLANDS ARE USED TO BEING SWAMPED BY THE THE OCEAN AND WE TRY TO COPE WITH IT. TONGA HOPES THAT THE U.N OCEAN TO WHICH WE HAVE COME FOR ASSISTANCE WILL NOT TURN AROUND AND SWAMP US JUST AS WE ARE SEEKING SOME FORM OF RECOGNITION AND ASSISTANCE TO AVOID BEING DROWNED BY THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

TONGA HAS BEEN FORTUNATE IN ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH SOPAC, AUSTRALIA, NZ AND THE WORLD BANK IN THAT WE ARE NOW TRYING TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY AS WELL AS REDUCTION AND BUILD SOME CAPACITY FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MITIGATION, PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL. THIS FRAMEWORK HOPEFULLY WILL ALSO RESULT IN A MORE INTEGRATED, HOLISTIC, ALL OF COUNTRY APPROACH TO DISASTER AND DEVELOPMENT.

THE SUPPORT OF THESE PARTNERS IS DEEPLY APPRECIATED.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LESSONS LEARNED FROM YOKOHAMA INDICATE THAT RHETORIC IS FAR IN FRONT OF SUPPORT AND ACTIONS. PERHAPS IT IS THE EXPECTED WAY OF THINGS. NONETHELESS, IF WE BELIEVE IN THE NEED FOR A CULTURE OF PREVENTION THEN I WILL SUGGEST, AS AS DISTINGUISHED COLLEAQUE FROM KIRIBACI HAD STATED YESTERDAY, THE NEED IN THIS CONFERENCE IS FOR A CULTURE OF COMMITMENT. PREVENTION IS NOT A POSSIBILITY IF THERE IS NO COMMITMENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2005=2015 IS ONLY A SHOPPING LIST IF THERE IS NO COMMITMENT. THE COMMITMENT TONGA REFERS TO IS NOT JUST COMMITMENTS BY LEADERS AND DONORS BUT ALSO BY GOVERNMENTS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, NGO'S, PRIVATE SECTORS AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY. PERHAPS IT IS TOO MUCH TO ASK OF OURSELVES BUT THEN PERHAPS THE REAL PROBLEM IS NOT TO HAVE ASKED.

AND IF THERE IS TO BE A CULTURE OF PREVENTION, THE CULTURE OF COMMITMENT MUST ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF PLANS, FRAMEWORK AND ACTIVITIES. WITHOUT SUSTAINABILITY IN TERMS OF COMMITMENT, FINANCES, HUMAN RESOURCES, ETC. ALL OUR EFFORTS WILL NOT PRODUCE THE DESIRED RESULTS. THE UN CONFERENCE MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE NOT ONLY FOR NOW BUT FOR THE FUTURE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, IN CLOSING, TONGA WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS ITS THANKS TO JAPAN AND THE KOBE COMMUNITY FOR THE WARMTH OF THEIR HOSPITALITY AND THE GENEROSITY OF THEIR SUPPORT.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR THANKS FOR THE PRIVILEGE AND HONOUR OF SHARING A MOMENT OF HISTORY THEIR IMPERIAL MAJESTIES AND ALSO WITH THE HON. PRIME MINISTER KOIJUMI.

MR. CHAIRMAN TONGA WISHES TO CONGRATULATE YOU IN YOUR MOST ABLE CHAIRMANSHIP AND YOUR LEADERSHIP OF THIS CONFERENCE. WE WISH ALSO TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION TO THE U.N, ISDR AND OTHERS FOR MAKING THIS CONFERENCE A REALITY.

FINALLY MR. CHAIRMAN, TO THE PEOPLE OF KOBE IN THE EVENT OF JAN. 1995, WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY, TO THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE SUFFERED THE TRAGIC EVENT OF DEC.26TH. THERE ARE NO WORDS THAT CAN EXPRESS OUR FEELINGS AND OUR HOPES FOR ALL OF THEM. TONGA AND ITS PEOPLE, LIKE THE REST OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES AND PEOPLE HAS RAISED FUNDS CONTRIBUTING TO PRESENT MISSIONS OF ASSISTANCE. IT IS NOT MUCH BUT IT COMES WITH ALL OUR HOPES AND BEST WISHES MR.CHAIRMAN.

THANK YOU