

DRAFT STATEMENT: AMONGST THOSE TO LEAD THE PACIFIC
STATEMENTS AT THE 2nd WCDR

18th Jan 2005

NIUE STATEMENT

Chair, Niue associates itself with the statement of Mauritius on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and Marshall Island on behalf of the Pacific Island countries.

Niue thanks the Secretariat for the hard work culminating in the meeting this week. And echoes the acknowledgement expressed to the host country for the many ways it has supported this Conference not the least of which is the financial support that has enabled many Pacific nations to be here today. To the other donors we thank you as well.

Chair, we are gathered here in Kobe on the 10th Anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake which had unprecedented impacts here in Kobe. Last year SIDS witnessed unprecedented catastrophic events, within the SIDS regions and hitting our islands and coastal zones.

In January, my country of Niue was totally destroyed by the hurricane-strength winds of Tropical Cyclone Heta coupled with phenomenal waves and storm surges that rose 30m to sweep to sea everything in its path. It is an experience I would not wish on anyone, it has set back our efforts in recent years ~~by~~ I believe at least one generation. I recall too the victims in the recent Caribbean season, particularly Grenada, which like my own country

was almost totally destroyed by Hurricane Ivan. I also associate myself with all the sentiments in regard to the recent earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean, and in particular those who suffered in the Maldives and small islands of other countries. In bearing the pains of our losses we must resolve to understand why we were particularly vulnerable so to lend greater strength in our collective and cooperative effort to reduce these risks on our future generations.

These events, while yet again demonstrating the great and growing vulnerability of SIDS, also highlight the regional nature in the impacts of these phenomena. These dual characteristics perhaps direct that there is not only a global-approach to the solution but also and more importantly that regions localise their approaches to risk reduction programmes in keeping with their management and knowledge capabilities – scientific and social, including traditional and cultural – of those hazards significant of our region. The Pacific being a huge and diverse region, knowledge is a vital resource, and developing and sharing the cultural, historical, contemporary and future information and knowledge is crucial to successful disaster risk management. For Pacific SIDS, the extremes of hydrometeorological hazards including climate change and sea level rise remain significant hazards to all islands. Further more needs to be studied on the regional impact from geological hazards earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes.

Niue commends the decision of our Pacific leaders now resulting in the coordination of our regional approach to disaster risk management through SOPAC as our lead regional agency. The implementation on a regional basis of the Yokohama action plans has enabled the Pacific to tailor an approach

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to improve their ability to manage risks. This is being built on Comprehensive Hazard And Risk Management "CHARM" approach, an integrated all hazards all of government commitment to a whole of country approach befitting our "large ocean small islands" context. To this end Niue supports the strategies that the Pacific has collectively developed and expressed in its Draft Pacific Position Paper for this Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction and commits itself to the realization of the developing Pacific Action Plan to be finalized with the Regional Disaster Managers Meeting in Papua New Guinea in June 2005.

Chair, last week you will be aware the international community, including SIDS leaders agreed to a Mauritius strategy, for further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action of SIDS. Towards this end Niue believes it is critical to have a paragraph devoted to SIDS in the implementation section of the outcome document from this World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Whilst we share the global range of disasters with the global community the special and unique character of SIDS requires specific actions for building safer and resilient communities.

Finally the strengthening of our community resilience and increasing the public safety will be guided by our traditions and customs; by our ownership and usage of resources; by our capacity to adapt to technology; by the ability of my government to support programmes enhanced through accessibility to other resources. In this Niue accepts that initiatives are our own responsibility but we need cooperation and support from the regional and international community with technical capacity and resources to support us

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as required in strengthening implementation practices and move us towards the path of sustainable development.