

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

At

Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction

Kobe, Japan
18-22nd January 2005

By

Sir Peter Barter, Kt, OBE, MP
Minister for Inter-Government Relations & Bougainville Affairs

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to echo the voices of the previous speakers to congratulate you and other Chairpersons including the Chairman and members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, the Task Force, and the numerous working groups and officials involved in officiating, and the preparations, planning and organising this very important world humanitarian event. I also would like to congratulate the Director of the ISDR Secretariat and his untiring and hard working team without whose guidance we all might not be here this week. Further, I would like to express my Government's appreciation to the Government of Japan for hosting the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and the development, regional and international organisations that have made it possible for Small Island States to attend this conference. I also acknowledge all the participants, stakeholders and partners as your presence at the conference displays your preparedness to network and interact on humanitarian concerns.

Papua New Guinea associates itself with the statements of Ambassador of Mauritius speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the representatives of the South Pacific Island Countries, and Australia.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea is pleased to have been represented and participated in the preparatory stages for this conference. We associate ourselves with the island developing states in the Pacific because we also have small land areas surrounded by large ocean. Whilst such a situation of being small might have its advantages we do experience every disaster and emergency both natural and those occasioned by human contributions. This vulnerability

manifests itself in all areas of our efforts to work towards ensuring national sustainable development and address poverty in accordance with both the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the international development goals including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea is prone to a large number of natural hazards including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, drought, floods, tropical cyclones, landslides and the impacts of climate change, climate variability and sea level rise. In addition, there is high potential risk of technological and human caused disasters related to oil spills, industrial pollution, unregulated land use and development, as well as population changes in disposition and size.

Furthermore, societal crisis such as civil unrest and HIV/AIDS have already made their presence known in the country, and not least "human made disasters".

I would also like to inform delegates of the PNG National Appeal for the recent Asia tsunami which is expected to exceed K5m kina, plus fund a team of doctors and nurses who have joined the Australian contingent that are already dispensing medical assistance in Indonesia, whilst this may appear modest, it does however express our sincere feelings of the people of PNG.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea has taken heed of the 2002 Pacific Islands Forum of Heads of Government when our Leaders recognised the need to build resilience of our small island communities at all levels. In addition, the Government of Papua New Guinea has had operating for many years now a National Disaster Management Act and the National Disaster Management Plan, and recently the government approved a National Disaster Mitigation Policy. This policy is supported by a framework of strategic activities, plans and programmes, which are consistent with the intentions and initiatives of SOPAC and the Pacific Island Countries as presented earlier by the region delegates at the Second Preparatory Committee, which is also consistent with the way ahead from this conference as expressed in its 2005-2015 Implementation Plan. This mitigation policy is also in accordance with Chapter 7 on Small Island Developing States and the Johannesburg Plan of

Implementation which emphasis the need for managing vulnerability and building resilience against disasters.

Mr. Chairman,

The disasters that have beset Papua New Guinea have had severe impact on our social, economic and environmental sectors. In the last 5-Years, the country experienced 63 calamities where over 2, 000 of our people lost their lives out of over three million affected people. In narrow financial terms, the disasters cost the government US\$26 million. But the cost to the economy and society would be many multiples of that figure if indirect costs were taken into account. We, therefore, have recognised the need to strengthen our capacity to respond and recover from disasters and for disaster risk reduction to be mainstreamed into national, provincial and district planning process. Papua New Guinea enjoys numerous and diversified traditions and cultures, and what could be great difficulty in communicating with each other with over 800 languages, is looking forward to the outcomes of this world conference, which combined together with our initiatives and in collaboration with our partners both domestic and abroad will provide us the necessary support to further the two major challenges of improved disaster response capacity and risk reduction.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea recognises the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, which identifies natural disasters as major inhibiting factor to development. Papua New Guinea is encouraged to have witnessed the parallel review of SIDS recently concluded in Mauritius and preparations for this world conference. We feel confident that such processes and undertakings, and by working very closely together will ensure inclusion of our needs.

Mr. Chairman,

Papua New Guinea acknowledges and expresses our appreciation of the leadership, the untiring efforts and dedication by the numerous committees, task force and officials towards the success of this world event. We acknowledge the evolution in the management of disasters from pre-IDNDR right through to Yokohama to this Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction. PNG commits itself to work with ISDR, our Pacific Island neighbours

and our regional organization SOPAC in seeing how we can integrate the outcomes of the Kobe Conference in our national strategies and plans. I am pleased to advise the conference that the best vehicle on which to commence this process will be the Pacific Regional Disaster Managers' Conference. This conference will be co-hosted by SOPAC and my Government in 7-9th June 2005 in Madang, Papua New Guinea and I take this opportunity now to reaffirm my Government's invitation to our Pacific Island neighbours and other interested stakeholders who may wish to join us at the conference.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to, on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, thank JICA and the Governments of Japan, Australia, other donors and international organisations who have provided so much assistance in the recent Aitape tsunami and the current Manam Island Volcanic eruption, which has displaced 11,000 who are now living in care centres on the mainland.

PNG is very appreciative of the initiatives by partners on early warning on all hazards. In this context PNG supports the Government of Germany who will host the Third Conference on Early Warning Systems in Bonn in early 2006. I also invite our partners to a dedicated session on developing and strengthening an effective all hazards early warning systems for our region to be held during the Pacific Regional Disaster Managers' meeting in June.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.