



Emergency Management Cook Islands

Office of the Prime Minister

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GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS
OFFICIAL STATEMENT AT THE ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
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DELIVERED BY
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Chairman, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, a warm greetings from the Cook Islands. May I take this opportunity to thank UNISDR and the government of Mongolia for the kind invitation that have enabled the Cook Islands delegation to be represented at this very important event. In the Cook Islands we acknowledge the three pillars of our society;

1. We acknowledge our Cook Islands Government born in 1965 who is the caretaker of our island nation
2. Secondly, we acknowledge our Christian Faith Churches and Organisations born in 1821 who are the overseers of our faith and the spiritual wellbeing of our island nation
3. Finally, we acknowledge our Traditional Leaders who are the custodians of our land, culture, traditional knowledge and practices that has been passed down generations and for generations to come.

On that note, we acknowledge the Government of Mongolia, your spiritual overseers of the nation and the traditional custodians of your beautiful country.

In 2012, at our Pacific Island Leaders Forum, it was decided to support the development of a single integrated regional framework on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management,

to succeed the two separate regional frameworks on disaster risk management and climate change in the region.

The new single integrated regional framework is called the 'Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific' (FRDP) 2017 – 2030. This is an integrated approach to address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in the region. It provides high level strategic guidance to different stakeholder groups on how to enhance resilience to climate change and disasters, in ways that contribute to and are embedded in sustainable development. Many actions contribute to eradicate poverty through building more resilient communities.

These actions have been identified from relevant regional, national and subnational policies and plans, as well as from national and regional experiences and lessons learned.

Goal 1: Strengthened Integrated Adaption and Risk Reduction to Enhance Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters;

Goal 2: Low Carbon Development; and

Goal 3: Strengthened Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

This joint Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management strengthens the Joint National Actions Plans (JNAP) for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management currently developed and implemented at the National level among the Pacific nations. Like our Pacific Neighbours, Cook Islands launched their first Joint National Action Plan 2011-2015 (JNAP) for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change. The goal is to achieve 'a resilient and Sustainable Cook Islands where our people are resilient to disasters and climate change and able to achieve sustainable livelihoods'

Last year we launch our Joint National Action plan 2016-2020 for DRM and Climate Change. The goal is to 'strengthen climate and disaster resilience to protect lives, livelihoods, economic, infrastructural, cultural and environmental assets in the Cook Islands in a collaborative, sectoral approach'.

This Joint National Action Plan is linked to our Government's National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), the Sendai Framework, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Target E1 and E2 is to adopt and implement national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework and national and local government.

We do have our challenges to achieve target E1 and E2 as DRR is not often viewed a priority by many agencies. Sometimes it takes a disaster to attract their attention. I think we would agree that it's better to learn from others experiences than learning it the hard way. I am pleased to say that from those experiences and lessons learnt from our Pacific neighbours, we have made huge inroads integrating DRR strategies across our National and sectors plans.

Cook Islands government takes DRR very seriously and this is highlighted in our National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) Goal 13 - to 'Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters'.

This goal acknowledges the vulnerability of the Cook Islands to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. It recognises the need to build resilience into people and infrastructure and to ensure an appropriate level of protection from all hazards especially cyclones. We use three key indicators for what we call our Traffic light monitoring report of our NSDP.

- Indicator 13.1 seeks to assess the overall resilience of the Cook Islands and its people using an index which considers economic, environmental, infrastructural, and social resilience.
- Indicator 13.2 measures the percentage of the population that can be accommodated by designated cyclone shelters built to recommended safety standards. This recognises the vulnerability of the Cook Islands to cyclones and the need to ensure that the community has adequate protection.
- Indicator 13.3 assesses resilience by measuring the percentage of public buildings and infrastructure which have been built to appropriate standards to withstand cyclones.

In closing, our tourism industry contributes to 70% of our GDP and any cyclone will have a devastation impact on our economy. We can't stop a cyclone but we can at least mitigate or minimise the impact of any disaster by adopting and implement national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework and national and local government.

Kia Orana e kia Manuia.