



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Speech by Honorable Dr. Culwick Togamana (MP) on the occasion of Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Your Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and People of the Solomon Islands, I wish to extend my delegation's sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government and People of Mongolia for hosting us here in this beautiful city. I also extend our appreciation to UNISDR and your partners for the arrangements put in place for this meeting.

The Solomon Islands is an island country of more than 600,000 people located in the south-west Pacific with a total land area of 28,900 km² spread over 1.32 million square kilometer of ocean, and encircled by the "Pacific ring of fire". Our economy is narrowly based on forestry, agriculture and a modest service sector. We have an elevated baseline disposition to disasters arising from hydro-meteorological hazards, geo-hazards as well as man-made driven disasters, and climate change.

Today I shall focus on what we have done so far since the coming into operation of the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction in 2015.

A major step towards the implementation of the Sendai framework is the clear stipulation of disaster risk reduction in the 4th objective of our National Development Strategy (NDS: 2016-2035): ***"Resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery"*** - targeting enablers of economic development, and building capacity to assess and understand risks, and respond to and recover from disasters, and address climate change. The NDS compliments our National Disaster Council Act (1989).

Let me narrate some of the actions we have taken at the national level to address the priorities of the Sendai Framework.

Priority 1. Understanding disaster risk

- a) Creation of a centralised GIS based-portal for natural hazards, vulnerability and risk information sharing system for government and partners.
- b) Improvement of weather forecasting and early warning capabilities of the national meteorological service.
- c) Expansion of weather observation by the establishment 12 automatic weather stations and 5 seismic monitoring stations.

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

- a) We reached a conclusion that whilst disaster management and disaster risk reduction are intricately connected, the challenges confronting the implementation of disaster risk reduction lie in its association with the former (disaster management). Whereas disaster management is episodic and dramatic, disaster risk reduction is developmental and therefore has to be approached in its implementation differently. In addition, we also reached a conclusion that disaster risk reduction has to be aligned with climate change adaptation as they are both developmental in their outlook for implementation.
- b) The Solomon Islands has a new National Disaster Management Plan (2018). The new plan presents a practical, sector-based and explicit framework for preparing for, managing disaster events and supporting resilience in our provinces and villages.

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

- a) Development of local planning schemes with clear consideration of climate change and disaster risks.
- b) Major public infrastructures (e.g. roads, bridges and wharfs) now have to be designed and built taking into consideration disaster risks and climate change.
- c) Incorporation of disaster risks and climate change into the development control process through the environmental and social impact assessment of prescribed developments under the Environment Act.

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

- a) Our new national disaster management plan reinforces the leadership role of government in disaster management, promotes self-help, and encourages the management of disasters through sectors, provincial and local level with coordination and support provided by the national level agencies.
- b) Arrangements of the new disaster management plan built on existing processes, institutional and social structures across all levels.
- c) Involvement of women in arrangements at all levels, and promotion gender and social inclusiveness in disaster management.

Although the above narrations speak favorably of the steps we took to operationalize the Sendai Framework, we are also confronted with a variety of challenges ranging from limited and the lack thereof of technical and institutional capacities and financial resources, to competing national and partner priorities. We have sought to address some of these challenges by drawing on our partnerships with stakeholders within and outside of the Solomon Islands. Nevertheless, there is still a lot more to be done, and therefore the means of implementation of the Sendai Framework must be looked into seriously at the international level to support national level activities especially in highly vulnerable countries such as the Solomon Islands.

Distinguished delegates, the Solomon Islands is without doubt very prone to natural and man-made disasters. We have taken steps to strengthen our institutional arrangements for

disaster management and to align risk reduction and climate change adaption, and internalize them across sectors within government, the private sector and communities throughout the country. We are faced with challenges as well, and this is where collaboration and cooperation across jurisdictions have proven useful in addressing some of our national challenges in furthering the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Tagio Tumas!