

Hon Nikki Kaye – New Zealand’s Ministerial Statement to the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

New Zealand’s geology and unique location mean living with hazard and risk is inescapable. Some hazards are common - such as flooding - while others are much less frequent, but can have devastating impact. For instance, the earthquakes in the Canterbury region in 2010 and 2011 are expected to occur once every ten thousand years, but have caused an estimated \$40 billion worth of damage - or 20 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product.

Managing risks is critical to New Zealand’s ability to prosper as a nation. Our approach is to generate resilience – ensuring New Zealanders understand the risks they face, and have the capacity to manage those risks; respond; and recover and adapt from any emergencies. New Zealand aims to achieve this through a balance of activities and investments in the 4Rs: Risk Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery.

The Canterbury earthquakes in 2010 and 2011 highlight the value of a strong framework for emergency management. A strong framework must include legislation, plans and arrangements that cover roles and responsibilities at all levels, and procedures and guidance that are fit for purpose and practiced. Learning from the Canterbury earthquakes presents us with opportunities to reduce risk in the future. We want to share those lessons with other nations, as New Zealand’s contribution to enhancing risk reduction globally.

Some of those lessons have been the importance of harnessing community involvement both before and during an emergency; coordinating spontaneous volunteers; strengthening the delivery of emergency welfare services; and building community resilience.

The Canterbury earthquakes also have shown the importance of emergency management being community-centred. By involving individuals and communities in risk reduction and readiness, they will better understand those risks and how their

community might respond, without needing to wait for formal intervention. A resilient nation requires strong partnerships between the community, and local and central government.

In addition, the experience of the Canterbury earthquakes showed that the current recovery framework may need review, so the scale and complexity of planning and resources required for recovery can be managed well.

Public awareness is critical. Our public education programme has improved levels of awareness and preparedness in communities. It includes a programme for schools which develops students' knowledge, skills and attitudes in preparing and responding to emergencies.

We also know that investment in research saves lives. It contributes to strengthening legislative and operational frameworks; informing practices; and improving risk management. Research has contributed to improved land use planning, building codes and construction standards.

New Zealand is committed to sharing these lessons, and supporting our international neighbours in the Pacific and wider region. We have assisted Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tokelau, Niue and Tonga to develop and strengthen their disaster risk management capacities, and we work with a number of regional organisations such as ASEAN, EAS and APEC, to contribute to disaster risk reduction initiatives at a regional level.

The New Zealand Government firmly supports the United Nations' initiatives for disaster risk reduction. We hope this meeting will lead to greater collaboration and co-ordination among nations and organisations, and that the actions agreed by this Global Platform will add significant value to the work already undertaken around the world.