

FIJI MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Mr Chairman/Madam Chair, Hon. Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed an honor and privilege to address this august global body on this fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. I bring with me warm greetings from the people and the Government of Fiji. Fiji is indeed honored to be part of this global event and we are deeply humbled to be able to be privy to its many initiatives, shared experiences and honorable intentions.

Chair, ladies and gentlemen, Fiji as you would have probably know, is located in the Pacific ‘ring of fire’ and is therefore exposed to geo-physical and hydro-meteorological hazards. Hydro-meteorological hazards include tropical cyclones, storm surges, floods and drought whereas geo-physical hazards include earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides. Fiji is also located within the cyclone belt of the Southern Hemisphere, consequently it experiences on average one cyclone per year. This poses difficulties and hardships for the Government of Fiji as rehabilitation and reconstruction of national infrastructure and its inhabitant’s livelihood, required after a cyclone or any other hazardous events, drains the limited national financial resources.

The adoption of Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) has indeed assisted our efforts to become more resilient to, and cope better with the hazards that threaten our development gains. Fiji has made progress towards addressing the priorities for action of the HFA and I will highlight some of this.

Fiji’s main institutional framework is the Disaster Management Act and the Disaster Management Plan which is under review and will soon be adopted. DRR and Climate Change Adaptation are factored into the regulations so that we ensure that these initiatives become National priority. The review stresses that an effective crisis and emergency management system under national leadership is essential. The system would adequately facilitate all aspects of Disaster Management which has both Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management.

Fiji is currently working with the Japanese Government through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the installations of flood warning systems (flood gauges) in some of our major river ways. This work is projected to be completed by July of this year after three years from the beginning of the project. These flood gauges will provide early warning to communities downstream of impending flood thus allowing them adequate time to secure their properties and relocate to higher safe grounds.

Fiji is also working on identification and assessing of high disaster risk areas especially communities who are likely to be affected by the impacts of Climate Change and actually formulating viable courses of action to reduce the risk or mitigate the impacts of hazards. To this effect, a number of communities were relocated to more sustainable locality.

Training at all levels remains one of our top priorities and we are indeed grateful for the assistance from international friends and regional donor organizations alike in this field. Trainings and awareness are carried out for government agency officials and NGO's, at national level and is taken down to Division level where community based training are coordinated. We are also working towards strengthening the mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation between all stakeholders.

On reducing the underlying factors, the managing of the environment by environment officials sees them implementing and introducing methodologies of managing forests to safeguard bio-diversity and livelihoods in a changing climate situation we are faced with. Even though environmental management for disaster risk reduction does not exist as a formal field of practice in Fiji, it is surely an integral part of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Lastly on the regional front, Fiji is planning to upgrade its National Emergency Operations Centre together with its Warehouse. We are of the idea that these two facilities can be utilized by relevant stakeholders for prepositioning or forward basing of relief supplies for the South Pacific region and coordinating of efforts all under one roof. This should be an option for efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of services within the region as Fiji is centrally located in the South Pacific in relation to other neighboring Pacific Island Countries (PIC) and is the transit route both by air and sea to most of PIC. With noble intentions of ensuring that our regional partners are assisted efficiently and effectively, Fiji puts forward delivery of disaster relief service using the Hub and Spoke concept with Fiji

being the hub due to its geographical location. This will be an issue that will need to be developed further and we will again require your utmost considerations, advice and assistance in kind to bring this initiative to fruition.

To conclude, investments in DRR would help reduce the direct costs for reconstruction and recovery to the government. In addition, investing in DRR would also help reduce losses which are larger and more difficult to measure and have greater impacts on development of the country. The way forward would be information sharing and cooperation and for our small island country, we have learned that no man is an island, thus we can only progress and are confident that with your continued support and generous assistance and cooperation will assist all of us in realizing the Expected Outcome of the HFA.

Thank You.