

Press release

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UNISDR COMMENDS FIJI GOVERNMENT FOR ITS STATES OF PREPAREDNESS IN FACE OF CYCLONE WINSTON

22 February 2016, GENEVA – The head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Robert Glasser, today extended his condolences to Fiji on the loss of life from Cyclone Winston and commended the government for its efforts to reduce mortality and the numbers of people affected by the strongest cyclone ever to hit the Pacific country.

Mr. Glasser said: “Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families who have lost loved ones. At the same time we recognise that the death toll could have been significantly higher if the Government, the National Disaster Management Centre and the Meteorological Service had not united in their efforts to disseminate warnings and urge the population to avail of the 735 evacuation centres which were opened in advance of the cyclone’s arrival.

“Fiji’s Prime Minister Mr. Frank Bainimarama demonstrated real leadership in making a personal appeal to people to heed the warnings and to get out of harm’s way. Political leadership and good governance is a vital part of disaster risk reduction and ensuring that people are risk informed.

“A key target of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in March last year as a global blueprint for reducing disaster risk and disaster losses is to ensure that fewer people lose their lives or get injured in these types of events which are becoming more intense as a result of climate change.

“There were 90 major storms recorded last year and the reported death toll was 996 which was significantly down on the ten year average of 17,778. Everything possible must be done to avoid any reversal in this trend. Fiji will have suffered significant economic losses and will need international support to build back in a way that makes it more resilient to future disaster events.”

About UNISDR: UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses, in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.”

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