



**GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS
OFFICIAL STATEMENT AT THE FORTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM 2013
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

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Chairman, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, a warm greetings from the Cook Islands.

May I take this opportunity to thank UNISDR for the kind invitation that have enabled the Cook Islands to be represented at this important event.

We prefer to define ourselves as Big Ocean Development States and not as small island development states scattered and separated over a vast body of the Pacific Ocean.

While many see the distance between islands as a challenge, we in the Pacific view each island as a suburb linked by the ocean, not an island separated by the ocean.

Chairman,

Since we last congregated here in Geneva 2011, the Cook Islands informed this Platform that it was serious about disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

We were in the process of developing a Joint National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation to be further operationalised through Community level action plans.

We expressed that we did not see DRR and CCA as two separate issues that could be viewed in isolation from the bigger Cook Islands development picture given our vulnerability to disasters and the slow onset of the adverse impacts of climate change.

I am pleased to inform this Platform today that we are now in the implementation stage of our Joint National Action Plan for DRM and CCA – also called our JNAP.

Endorsed by our Cabinet not long after the Third Global Platform, our JNAP, is linked directly to our Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan and Goal 5 of Resilient and Sustainable Communities:

'A Cook Islands where our people are resilient to disasters and climate change to achieve sustainable livelihoods'.

Our JNAP explicitly builds in the economic, social development and improved livelihoods objectives of our national plan.

In fact, both Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change are now under the auspice of the Office of Prime Minister reflecting the priority now placed on DRM and Climate Change in the Cook Islands.

We have continued the momentum since we last reported to this Platform of working towards a durable and sustainable effort from all actors to take shared responsibility in reducing risks and reinforcing resilience in our communities.

We are currently implementing our 'Strengthening Resilience of our Island Communities' programme.

A programme which is directly linked to the implementation of our JNAP - a partnership approach to strengthening resilience across government, non- government and community actors - a programme financially supported by the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund - a programme that so far works.

From a government perspective, this includes efforts to include JNAP implementation as not only a core function of the Office of the Prime Minister but of each implementing agency; including a criteria for disaster risk reduction, climate change, environmental risks and resilience in each of our agencies business plans; establishing policy and legislative frameworks that recognise these linkages.

The Cook Islands experience shows that we must build on what we have, what is working and what can be strengthened.

In closing

If anything, this platform needs to continue on the momentum built and result in some concrete actions going forward.

Actions that will ensure that we reduce risks and reinforce resilience on the ground, actions that will make a difference to the livelihoods of our communities.

Kia Orana e kia Manuia - Thank you!