Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Third session Geneva, Switzerland

8th – 13th May 2011

Mr Peter Korisa

Research and Planning Officer,

National Disaster Management Officer

Vanuatu

Madame Chair,

I bring warm greetings from the Republic of Vanuatu, one of the most hazard prone Pacific Island Countries on the front line of climate change.

The location of Vanuatu in the ‘Pacific ring of fire’ means that it is exposed to a greater range of hazards compared to most other Pacific countries. It is exposed to both hydro-meterological hazards such as tropical cyclones, floods, and droughts in addition to geo-physical hazards such as volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides. Climate change is likely to increase the frequency of some of if not all of these events.

Last year alone, 2010, the National Government through the coordination of National Disaster Management Office, directly responded to six major events in Vanuatu caused by droughts, flash flooding, cyclone and volcanic eruption costing in the region USD2 million. In addition to this there were also some smaller hazardous events, which caused significant damage to properties but were not large enough to warrant a National response.

Vanuatu has made some key achievements in the Disaster Risk Management arena we were the first country in the Pacific region to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management (DRR-DM). The NAP was developed in 2005 and endorsed by Vanuatu’s Council of Ministers in 2006. It builds upon the Pacific Disaster *Risk Reduction and* Disaster *Management Framework for Action (2005 – 2015)* and the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015).

The development of the NAP has helped to demonstrate the importance of DRR-DM as a multi-stakeholder and cross-cutting development issue, establishing appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, and mainstreaming consideration of DRR-DM into all development programs, sector plans and budgets. As a result in the past year Vanuatu has had significant successes in mainstreaming DRM in to the planning and budgetary processes. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management has been fully supportive of incorporating risk assessments in to the new policy proposal process. This will be done in order to encourage sectors to recognize disasters as an issue for development. In addition to this the reporting process for the National budget is also being modified in an attempt to make investments in DRR and DM more visible.

To further demonstrate the recognition disaster risk reduction is receiving in country the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu is including the economic impact of disasters in some of their key publications. In particular, the inclusion of some questions on disasters in the Business Expectations Survey (BES). This will help to establish current thinking in relation to disasters which will then help Vanuatu to establish what needs to be done to raise awareness of the potential impact of disasters going forward. Both of these are key objectives of Theme 2 of the NAP.

There have been discussions in country relating to the potential for the merger of the Vanuatu National Advisory Committee on Climate Change (NACCC) with the NAP Task Force and also the development of a joint set of implementation arrangements/plans for the NAP, the National Action Plan for Adaptation and Climate Change Policy. Both the NDMO and the Department of Meteorological Services are highly supportive of the integration.

These initiatives would not have been possible without the support from regional and multilateral partners, without them, we as small and vulnerable countries would not be able to deal with the increasing risks that are now being compounded by the impacts of climate change. Please allow me to thank the Applied Geoscience & Technology Division (SOPAC) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) for their unrelenting support.

Madame Chair, these are but a few examples of the initiatives undertaken to realize the commitment to reduce the impacts of disasters in Vanuatu. However, we still face significant challenges. For example, although the NAP has been officially endorsed by the cabinet and incorporated into the Government’s Priority Action Agenda (PAA) it is not fully implemented at all levels. Little attention is given to risk reduction efforts as a heavy emphasis is placed on response measures. We therefore support all the efforts made by donors and development partners to assist in our endeavors to improve the understanding of disasters as a development issue and encourage investment in risk reduction measures.

Thank you Madame Chair