

## GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

**OFFICIAL STATEMENT AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**GENEVA, 10 – 13 MAY 2011**

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**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you warm greetings from the Cook Islands. It is my privilege to be here today to speak on behalf of my country, its Government and people.

At the outset, allow me to convey my deepest gratitude to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) for the kind invitation and the excellent arrangements that have enabled the Cook Islands to be represented at this important event.

Chairman,

Investing today for a safer tomorrow – focusing on reconstruction and recovery, the economics of disaster risk reduction and integration with climate change and development are critical issues for the Cook Islands. From the Cook Islands perspective, Disaster Risk Reduction cannot be approached in isolation but as part of a bigger picture. As a Small Island Developing State, we are extremely vulnerable to the impact of a single disaster that can erase and severely set back our country’s development journey. The impacts of disasters be they natural or otherwise will erode our ongoing initiatives to achieve sustainable development.

Chairman,

We have since the 2009 Global Platform, made significant progress in our national efforts in building the resilience of our communities. It is our conviction that Disaster Risk Management coupled with our vulnerability to the impacts of Climate Change and our need to adapt, is imperative for our survival.

Chairman,

Let me stress that the Cook Islands is very serious about Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation. We are developing a Joint National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation. This will be further operationalised through Community level action plans.

Both Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change are now under the auspice of the Office of Prime Minister reflecting the priority now placed on Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change.

Our Government is also currently strengthening existing and developing more robust Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation Policies supported by stronger legislation and governance structures.

The Cook Islands Cabinet, as of last week, committed to the establishment of a Disaster Risk Management Trust Fund by pledging $260,000 from our national budget to begin the fund. The policies governing the fund dictate that funding cannot be used for any other purposes but disaster risk management including adaptation to climate change. It is our Government’s hope that this Fund will serve to mobilise both national and external investments targeting the building of resilience in our communities.

Chairman,

The Cook Islands is committed to being proactive in building our peoples’ resilience against all forms of disasters. We acknowledge that we do not have the capacity to do this alone. We can drive our efforts to move from risk to resilience but we need the support of bilateral, regional and multilateral partners. Our own efforts thus far can guarantee that the Cook Islands is not seeking a ‘hand out’ but rather a ‘hand up’.

Addressing Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation, requires a collective approach that can facilitate the sharing of ideas, best practices, technologies, skills and financial resources in our pursuit for resilient communities.

Chairman,

It is the hope and expectation of the Cook Islands, that this week’s dialogue will not be a talkfest of good ideas. But rather will translate Disaster Risk Management from the domain of discussion into the empowerment of communities with appropriate structures and resources to ensure action on the ground – this will truly demonstrate investing today for a safer tomorrow – now is the time for action.

Thank you Kia Orana e Kia Manuia.