

Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

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Agenda Item IX: Statements by intergovernmental and other organizations

**Ms Cristelle Pratt – Deputy Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
(PIFS)**

Honourable Chair, Heads of States, Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is grateful for the opportunity to speak at this important Global meeting and wishes to highlight and recognize the need for partnership, and the importance of finance and planning. We would also like to associate with the comments made by our sister regional organizations the SPC and SPREP.

As background, the Forum Secretariat is the region's premier political organization supporting the implementation of decisions of the Pacific Forum Leaders meeting and carrying forward their vision embodied in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

The Pacific region is made up of about 10 million people living on relatively small rafts of land in a watery continent spanning 42 million square kilometers. Pacific peoples have a long history of strong cultural and spiritual links to their land and ocean. We are also considered to be the region most prone and vulnerable to disasters from natural hazard risk events in the world.

In fact as we meet here in Sendai – there have been two cyclones in the Pacific - one a category 5 system that has affected 5 countries (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia and Australia), and another weather system that has caused disastrous storm surge and coastal flooding in 3 countries (Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Republic of the Marshall Islands). Therefore, the timing of this World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction is even more pertinent to the Pacific's need to strengthen disaster resilience. Simply, for the Pacific, disaster (and climate)

resilience has far-reaching implications for its extremely vulnerable economies, communities and fragile environments.

In the Pacific - disasters, climate variability, extreme weather events and future changes in climate, are real and present – and they are becoming increasingly recognized as a core development challenge given their demonstrable adverse impacts on our social and economic development. Leaders' Decisions identify the importance of protecting our natural environment through national, regional and international action.

It is for this and other reasons that countries and territories in the Pacific have embraced the need to integrate disaster risk management and climate change, and mainstream these into development planning and financing.

An important governance and policy instrument for the Pacific that would enable and advance efforts toward climate and disaster resilient development is the **Forum Compact**, which since 2009 has guided member countries through an innovative peer review process between member States, and which continues to shape good governance through strengthening national finance and planning systems, as well as improving aid coordination and effectiveness.

In respect of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation - a myriad of development partners have for many years operated on their own, on a country by country basis, on a project by project basis and have entered through numerous entry points – making it near impossible to coordinate and to engender a coherent strategy or achieve enduring, sustainable results.

Therefore, the Forum Compact seeks to ensure that partners work with governments so that assistance combines policy and practice support – and that in the case of climate change and disaster risk management – such policy and practice support would be coordinated and within the various sectors such as infrastructure, urban development, agriculture, water and coastal management.

This level of integration has manifested in many Pacific Island Countries as Joint National Action Plans for DRM and CC, and have for some countries joined up

national institutional arrangements for CC and DRM or have adopted integrated measures at programmatic level.

To match these national developments of the integration of CC and DRM - at the regional level a second **regional** policy instrument – **the Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific (or the SRDP)** has been prepared for endorsement in 2015. A regional approach can increase economies of scale, standardize approaches to save costs, improve coordination of multi-hazard and risk management efforts, and share risks across the region.

The draft SRDP seeks to place sustainable development that is resilient to climate change and to disaster risk - **front and centre**. It recognises the importance and critical role of political leadership and commitment, and the central agencies of Finance and Economic Planning as key actors. It also embraces the need to include the private sector and civil society from the outset. The Forum Secretariat will be leading the coordination of these efforts under the SRDP.

These above mentioned regional policy instruments and the institutions are important elements of an evolving risk governance landscape in the Pacific region and are integral to achieving sustainable development and to building the resilience of our economies, societies and environment to climate and disaster risks and to future changes in the climate. For the Pacific, disaster resilience is a matter for our sustainable development and a matter for ensuring and enhancing capacities to bounce back from the impact of disasters such as we are witnessing as a result of Cyclone Pam.

We are grateful to the United Nations and to the Government of Japan for organizing this important meeting and thankful for the kind support of the people of Sendai.