

# **2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

## **Australia's Official Statement**

### **24 May 2017**

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, distinguished guests and participants; Australia is delighted to participate in the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

On behalf of the Australian Government, I thank the Government of Mexico and UNISDR for organising this Global Platform.

The Australian Government is firmly committed to implementing the *Sendai Framework*.

As a famous Australian poet put it, Australia is a land of drought and flooding rains. Our wide brown landscape and population face extreme natural hazards that have major societal and economic impacts on our communities.

Most recently, a category 4 Tropical Cyclone, and the riverine flooding that it caused, significantly impacted two of Australia's most populous states – Queensland and New South Wales. It highlighted the vulnerability of many Australian communities.

However, it also demonstrated the resilience of the Australian spirit.

The Australian Government is working hard to reduce the impact that disasters have on our communities. Through the prism of shared responsibility, we are seeking to ensure that all Australians regard disaster risk management as their business.

Since we gathered in Sendai in 2015, the Australian Government has focussed on ensuring we have the right policies and governance arrangements in place to improve disaster risk management.

In 2016, we undertook a review of our emergency management arrangements and implemented a new, agile structure to enable flexible responses to emerging priorities.

We have established a Senior Official interagency committee to ensure disaster risk reduction and climate risk policies are being progressed in tandem.

In March of this year, the Australian Government hosted a high-level platform of representatives from business, the community sector and government to develop innovative solutions to disaster risk reduction.

This work has placed us in a strong position to deal with the inter-generational problem of escalating disaster risk.

The Australian Government will continue to pursue policies and programs that seek to mitigate the effects of disasters.

In particular, we will work closely with our state and territory governments to establish arrangements for how Australia will continue to implement and report against the Sendai Framework into the future.

Australia complements robust domestic action with strong regional and global action.

Our region is already the most disaster-prone in the world but climate change is affecting the frequency, intensity, magnitude and location of natural hazards.

Two of the largest cyclones in recorded history recently devastated our neighbours in the Pacific.

Tropical Cyclone Pam affected 188,000 people in Vanuatu (70 percent of total population) and cost an estimated AUD 600 million or 64 per cent of their GDP.

Tropical Cyclone Winston affected 540,400 people in Fiji (62 percent of total population) and cost an estimated USD 0.9 billion or 20 percent of their GDP.

This scale of impact thwarts economic growth and constrains development.

For the first time Vanuatu used an SMS warning system to alert communities of the approaching cyclone. As a result, the death toll was remarkably low for an event of this scale.

Similarly, Fiji's early warning systems meant the toll from Cyclone Winston was well below that experienced in past events.

Prevention and preparedness pays dividends.

We have consistently exceeded the target of investing at least one percent of our official development assistance (ODA) in disaster risk reduction.

In 2015-16, we invested almost three percent of our ODA in managing disaster risk and building disaster resilience.

Our level of investment will increase in step with our commitment to tackle climate change.

We will invest over AUD 300 million in climate and disaster resilience initiatives in Pacific Island countries over the next five years.

Working collaboratively and innovatively with partners is key to Australia's approach.

Over the past six years, our NGO partners have increased disaster resilience for over 310,000 people across 36 countries.

We have boosted our partnership with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to AUD 6.1 million over three years.

I am pleased to announce that Australia will also provide AUD 12.3 million over three years to the World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

Through the MIKTA group, we are working with Mexico, Indonesia, Korea and Turkey to strengthen the engagement of the business sector in risk reduction efforts.

The Prime Minister of Australia is a member of the UN World Bank High Level Panel on Water, which is working to achieve access to water and sanitation for all, including by ensuring water resources and essential infrastructure are resilient to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change.

Leadership is vital. We are mindful that it is the responsibility of countries to prevent and reduce disaster risk.

Australia will continue to assist where it can add real value to national actions but our development partners must lead.