

STATEMENT BY THE COOK ISLANDS
GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
CANCUN, MEXICO 22-26 MAY 2017

Your Excellencies

Heads of State and Governments

Hon. Ministers

Heads and Representatives of UN Agencies, International and Regional Organisations

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings and Kia Orana

To the Government and the people of Mexico and Cancun, as our gracious host, I bring you special greetings from the Government and people of the Cook Islands.

Chair,

Since Sendai, and the adoption of the Sendai Framework, our global family have also agreed on actions to address climate change through the Paris Agreement. As a Small Islands Developing State, the Cook Islands is pleased that both these powerful instruments are aligned to the SAMOA Pathway adopted in 2014, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Development and its 17 Goals and associated targets in building resilience for all countries and communities.

Chair,

In Sendai, we explained, how in 2005, the Cook Islands suffered the onslaught of five category 4, tropical cyclones in the space of one month. Again in 2010, on our island of Aitutaki, Cyclone Pat caused damage to more than 80% of infrastructure.

Chair,

Our experience is clear evidence that the devastation of one or more events, has astronomical impacts on a small and vulnerable developing island state. The destruction caused to both physical surroundings and emotional suffering catalysed change in our approach to disaster risk reduction and management.

In Sendai, we boasted improving our national institutional arrangements for coordination, response and recovery, formalised in legislation under the auspice of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Since 2015, we have built on previous efforts, and in our current National Sustainable Development Plan, 2016-2017, mainstreamed resilience in our 16 goals, as well as having a designated goal to “Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters”.

In 2015, we shared how we established in 2011, the Disaster Response Trust Fund, designated for immediate response in times of disaster. To compliment this, we participated in the Pacific Catastrophe Insurance Programme with the World Bank. We are pleased to inform that the Cook Islands, because of its robust systems and laws, will now host the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance, for our region, which will be operational this year.

Furthermore in Sendai, we outlined how we have integrated disaster risk reduction and climate change, including prioritisation of these elements as key criteria for ensuring that ‘we build better’.

Chair,

In Sendai, we admitted our shortcomings, such as reflecting on our current and anticipated disaster risk reduction needs, strengthening coordination, having greater transparency and dissemination of information to our communities and most importantly, incorporating

the human side of disasters far more adequately, with particular attention on gender relations, the young and the aged, and persons with disabilities.

We are pleased that we are addressing these issues through establishing a new building code, strengthening our coordination and planning, improving our early warning systems on all islands scattered over our 2 million square kilometres of ocean, and making information more accessible through our Emergency Management Cook Islands Geo-Portal.

Despite our gains, we acknowledge that we cannot do this alone, and call for the fulfilment of the intent of the Sendai Framework to strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships, as also promoted by the SAMOA Pathway and the Paris Agreement.

Chair,

We have taken advantage of the opportunity presented in 2015. The opportunity to change the way we do business in disaster risk reduction, and to practice disaster risk reduction the way that it should be - as an integral part of sustainable development with linkages to all aspects of development, including climate change.

It is our hope that we as a global family will continue to work on action to minimise fragmentation; enhance cohesion; streamline modalities of delivery of disaster risk reduction; simplify access to international finance; consolidate monitoring, evaluation and reporting to ensure that our peoples all over the world, and particularly those, like ourselves, who are most vulnerable, can have the confidence that their resilience is guaranteed.

I thank you Chair.