



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Speech by Honorable Samuel Manetoali (MP) on the occasion of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Cancun Mexico

Your Excellences', Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and People of the Solomon Islands, I wish to extend my delegation's sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government and People of Mexico for hosting us here in this beautiful city. I also extend our appreciation to UNSIDR and your partners for the arrangements put in place for this meeting.

The Solomon Islands is an island country of more than 600,000 people located in the south-west Pacific with a total land area of 28,900 km² spread over 1.32 million square kilometer of ocean, and encircled by the Pacific ring of fire. Our economy is narrowly based on forestry, agriculture and a modest service sector. Consequently, we have an elevated baseline disposition to disasters arising from hydro-meteorological hazards, geo-hazards as well as man-made driven disasters, and climate change.

Today I shall focus on what we have done so far since the coming into operation of the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction in 2015.

A major step towards the implementation of the Sendai framework is the clear stipulation of disaster risk reduction in the 4th objective of our National Development Strategy (NDS: 2016-2035): ***“Resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery”*** - targeting enablers of economic development, and building capacity to assess and understand risks, and respond to and recover from disasters, and address climate change. The NDS compliments our National Disaster Council Act (1989).

In keeping with our NDS and our strive to turn our commitment to risk reduction to action, we reached a conclusion that whilst disaster management and disaster risk reduction are intricately connected, the challenges confronting the implementation of disaster risk reduction lie in its association with the former (disaster management). Whereas disaster management is episodic and

dramatic, disaster risk reduction is developmental and therefore has to be approached in its implementation differently. In addition, we also reached a conclusion that disaster risk reduction has to be aligned with climate change adaptation as they are both developmental in their outlook for implementation.

Consequently, our new draft Disaster Management Plan (2017) was developed mainly to address disaster management. Therefore, it addresses disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Risk reduction and climate change adaptation will be addressed in a framework for risk resilient development, although in their roll out at the provincial and community levels, risk resilient development will be aligned with disaster management. The above differentiation and realignment also fall comfortably within the ambit of the recently approved regional Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2017 – 2030).

Although, the new national framework for resilient development is yet to be developed, we have begun the “in-streaming” of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by “working within” government ministries/sectors that are amenable and open to promoting risk reduction and climate change adaptation in their programmes. The above actions are part of an overall goal to promote and apply risk governance: streamlining planning, decision-making and implementing of decisions with proper level of resources and accountability mechanisms to address risk reduction, climate change and disaster management in ways that contribute to, and are embedded in resilient development.

One of the tools we have used is the incubation of line positions within selected ministries starting with the ministries responsible for agriculture, health and more recently tourism. Our efforts have been supported by partners including UNDP, Australia and the World Bank. The incubation of positions also serve as an instrument to create an internal demand within the sectors for risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Both disaster management and disaster risk reduction in the Solomon Islands have benefited from the involvement and support by development partners and non-government organizations (national and international). In terms of our draft disaster management plan, their

roles have been clearly expressed in it. The same is envisaged for the framework for risk resilient development. This is also indicative of our intention to promote partnerships and cooperation for disaster management and risk resilient development.

We have also started work towards revising the National Disaster Council Act (1989) with intention of bringing it to par with international disaster management laws, address areas where it is deficient in, and support the alignment of risk reduction with climate change adaptation with due consideration to our national context. Additionally, we also are developing a new climate change legislation which will among other key objectives address the alignment of climate change adaptation and risk reduction.

My ministry has a mandate covering environment and conservation, climate change, disaster management and meteorology. In my view this is an important step taken by the Solomon Islands more than 10 years ago that is line with the objectives of the Sendai Framework because, our mandate can be distilled to that of providing safeguard services to the Government and people of Solomon Islands. Over the past two years, we have also promoted collaboration amongst the divisions of the ministry in the implementation of our mandate. This is also a vehicle to put into operation, risk reduction in our own ministry, and to serve as an example of collaboration for risk reduction to other line ministries and stakeholders.

Although the above narrations speak favorably of the steps we took to operationalize the Sendai Framework, we are also confronted with a variety of challenges ranging from limited and the lack thereof of technical and institutional capacities and financial resources, to competing national priorities. We have sought to address some of these challenges by drawing on our partnerships with stakeholders within and outside of the Solomon Islands. Nevertheless, there is still a lot more to be done, and therefore the means of implementation of the Sendai Framework must be looked into seriously at the international level to support national level activities especially in highly vulnerable countries such as the Solomon Islands.

Distinguished delegates, the Solomon Islands is very prone to natural hazards. We have taken steps to strengthen our institutional arrangements for disaster management and to align risk

reduction and climate change adaption, and internalize them across sectors within government, the private sector and communities throughout the country. We are faced with challenges as well, and this is where collaboration and cooperation across jurisdictions have proven useful in addressing some of our national challenges in furthering the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Tagio Tumas!