

Press release

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UNISDR chief: integrated action will help billions and save trillions

8 July 2013, Nadi FIJI – The Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Margareta Wahlström, today hailed the Pacific as it committed to a world first of integrating action in disaster risk management and climate change in one strategy to secure a sustainable future for this increasingly threatened region.

“I urge the world to follow the example of the Pacific and abandon the current norm of running separate and parallel strategies for disaster risk management and climate change. By committing to integrate the two approaches, the Pacific will benefit millions of people and avoid billions of dollars in economic losses,” Ms Wahlström said.

“If the rest of the world follows suit then the equation is transformed further: then billions of people will benefit and trillions of dollars of losses will be avoided. It is difficult to imagine a bigger sustainable development opportunity that is within our grasp if we have the courage and vision to seize it.”

Ms Wahlström was speaking at the 2013 Joint Meeting of the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable which opened in Nadi, Fiji, today.

The forum is the first time that the two principal Pacific regional conferences on disaster risk management and climate change have been combined. The meeting’s outcomes will contribute to one over-arching regional strategy and framework for climate and disaster-resilient development.

Ms Wahlström told leaders and representatives from governments, business and civil society that the future of disaster risk reduction work was fairly and squarely within a holistic approach to sustainable development.

“We can’t miss this opportunity. Very important and necessary work has been done – and continues to be done – on response, preparedness and early warning systems but now we need to rapidly strengthen integration across sectors such as water management, agriculture, health, education and other areas. Without this, progress will be weak,” Ms Wahlström said.

She noted that the conference host Fiji was already experiencing the ‘new normal’ of more intense and frequent disasters with two major floods and a severe cyclone in 2012 that devastated livelihoods and infrastructure, and was a significant blow to local development.

Ms Wahlström said that as countries, organisations and international partners consider what is required from a successor to the Hyogo Framework of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction post-2015 the world needs to extend its ambition and horizon.

“We need to set ourselves a 25-30 year vision for this plan. Only a long term vision and agenda can assist in achieving sustainable results,” she said.

The Joint Meeting is co-convened by UNISDR, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and is hosted and chaired by the Government of Fiji.

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About UNISDR: UNISDR is the UN office dedicated to disaster risk reduction. It is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction and supports implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which seeks “the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.”

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