

PACIFIC VOICES HEARD ON HUMANITARIAN ACTION

(Auckland, 2 July 2015): Talks about the future of humanitarian action in the Pacific have wrapped up with calls for stronger partnerships with vulnerable and crisis affected communities.

“Pacific Islanders live with the threat of disaster and climate change every day. These communities have a great deal to teach us about effective emergency response and the humanitarian community is keen to learn what it can do better,” said Stephen O’Brien, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General of Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

More than 140 delegates from across the Pacific have been in Auckland this week for the seventh of eight regional consultations ahead of the first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.

“For this region, the stakes could not be higher with Pacific Island Nations making up four of the top 10 countries on the 2014 World Risk Index,” Mr O’Brien said.

“We are open to new approaches, partnerships and technologies that could reduce the suffering caused by emergencies in the Pacific and beyond.”

The meeting was co-chaired by New Zealand, Australia and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and brought together representatives of disaster-affected communities, civil society, governments, international aid agencies, the United Nations, Red Cross, academia and the private sector in the Pacific.

“The strong message from people in the Pacific has been that affected and vulnerable communities, especially women, girls, the elderly and people with disabilities, need to be at the centre of humanitarian action,” Mr O’Brien said.

“We need to continue to build strong, trusting partnerships between responders and those impacted by emergencies so that communities get the right help, from the right people, at the right time.

“You have challenged us to ensure that outside assistance is tailored to the needs of affected communities and does not overwhelm existing local systems and skills.

“I welcome this region’s commitment to building resilience and preparing for the challenges of the future and I want to assure people in the Pacific that their voice is being heard loud and clear.”

The outcomes from the Pacific consultations will feed into a global stakeholder consultation meeting in Geneva in October and then the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.

“I’d like to thank everyone across the Pacific who has been part of this process which is setting an ambitious forward agenda for humanitarian action,” Mr O’Brien said.

“We are seizing this opportunity with enthusiasm to create more coherent humanitarian action that embraces sustainable development, new technologies and investment in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, as well as response.”

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Further information about the World Humanitarian Summit is available at www.worldhumanitariansummit.org
OCHA Regional Office for the Pacific press releases are available at www.unocha.org/rop or www.reliefweb.int