

DISASTER-PRONE PACIFIC TO ADDRESS THE FUTURE OF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

(Auckland, 30 June 2015): More than 140 delegates from across the Pacific have gathered in Auckland to discuss the future of humanitarian action in the region.

Co-chaired by Australia, New Zealand and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the Pacific is the seventh of eight regional consultations being held ahead of the first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016.

“Humanitarian needs are on the rise around the world and across the Pacific. It is critical that we find more efficient and effective ways of meeting people’s needs, building their resilience, and reducing disaster risk,” said Stephen O’Brien, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General of Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

“More people are affected by disasters, more frequently, and for longer than in previous decades. At the same time, humanity is dealing with new challenges, such as climate change – an urgent concern for many low-lying and coastal communities in the Pacific.”

Ahead of the meeting, extensive consultations were held across the region to identify the priority humanitarian issues to be discussed. More than 1,400 people were consulted in 17 Pacific countries. Attendees at the meeting in Auckland include representatives of disaster-affected communities, civil society, governments, international aid agencies, the United Nations, Red Cross, academia and the private sector in the Pacific.

Two major disasters impacted the region during the consultation process – Tropical Cyclone Pam and Typhoon Maysak – which caused extensive damage and destruction in many small island nations, including Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

“Recent disasters have underscored the importance of using the lessons learned from community resilience and preparedness in the Pacific to shape a new way forward,” Mr O’Brien said.

“Pacific Island countries and territories suffer average disaster damages of more than US\$280 million every year, making this an important economic issue, as well as a humanitarian one for the region.”

The meeting will conclude on 2 July with a set of recommendations to feed into the global process and carry forward in the region. Other attendees include, Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu, President Anote Tong of Kiribati, Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Ertharin Cousin, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, and Murray McCully, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand.

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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