



## OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF POLICE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Distinguished guests of our Asia-Pacific Ministerial family, warm greetings. I express my gratitude to the government of Australia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for hosting this conference.

It is my pleasure to share the Government of Niue's achievements and challenges against the Sendai Framework. If the Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world, then Niue must have been at its front end. We are in a unique position to share how we faced natural disasters head on being the smallest Pacific Island state with a population of less than 2000, yet inhabiting the largest coral raised atoll in the world. We are a standalone island in the Polynesian triangle of the Pacific Ocean and vulnerable to extreme cyclone events. We acknowledge the covid-19 global pandemic and its impact on all of us in our movements and activities.

Niue faced extreme cyclone events in 1959, 1960, 1990 and 2004 with multiple smaller cyclones in between. The 2004 cyclone Heta wiped out critical infrastructure on the west coast– the hospital, museum and cultural centre, access roads, and the Aliluki residential area. It caused significant damage to the Niue Primary School, Niue Legislative Building, private homes and businesses. Fortunately, we have been able to prevent and or keep the loss of life to a minimum during those events.

I acknowledge that our hardest battles with extreme cyclones were pre- Hyogo Framework and pre-Sendai Framework. Most of our efforts for recovery were internal and with the help of a few. At the time, our needs were difficult to justify with our development partners and the journey was sometimes lonely. Therefore, we welcome the Sendai Framework and the opportunity to discuss common issues, share wisdom on how we can protect ourselves, prevent loss or recover from trauma.

I am pleased to report that we are on track and making progress towards achieving Priority 4 to enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “build back better” in

recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. With the help of our external development partners, government agencies, local government and communities, we achieved–

- (i) 100% conversion of the power and communications cables underground and aims to generate 80% of our power by renewable sources of energy by 2025;
- (ii) relocated the legislative assembly building, primary school, hospital and affected homeowners from the lower terrace to the upper terrace; and
- (iii) Built a Joint Emergency Operational Centre in 2019.

Concurrently, we are on track to achieving Target D towards substantially reducing disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption to basic services. Our road to recovery has been a very long and difficult one. It was made against the background of lacking in the economies of scale, pressure to build back in time, competing priorities, adapting to new information and ongoing maintenance.

We are pleased to share our achievement in respect of Target G – “substantially increasing the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to everyone by 2030”. The National Disaster Management Office is the headquarter for the command, control and coordination of all incoming and outgoing communications in respect of disaster warnings. We have a Disaster Council that can be called upon to coordinate and disseminate information quickly. Public tsunami warning systems have been installed along the West Coast.

To further advance our achievement of the Sendai Framework, our priority for the next remaining 7 years is to expand critical infrastructure in the upper terrace with a focus to enabling the relocation of the vulnerable residents from the lower to the upper terrace in the whole of the west coast. In the near to medium term, we are looking at relocating just under 500 vulnerable homes. Secondly, we will prevent abandonment of the lower west coast by finding other purposes for its use because of its waterfront and scenic appeal.

We aim to not only help those who are seen to be most vulnerable, physically, but also help to manage the mental health, cultural and identity shifts during recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

We are making progress under Priority 1 and Target E by increasing understanding of disaster risk and preparing risk reduction strategies. Niue’s Strategic Roadmap in Emergency Management 2015-2019 was our masterplan. It was made in line with the

integrated national strategic plan for a prosperous Niue. The goals aspired to in that roadmap included-

- (i) A shared responsibility and a 'whole of nation' approach to emergency management;
- (ii) Strengthening national resilience to any adverse event; and
- (iii) Increasing the value of the emergency management sector to Niue.

We are pleased to share that all government agencies and the 14 villages of Niue have each customized and adopted their own disaster and emergency plan. There is ongoing prevention work such as tree cutting, clearing of access roads, declaration of emergency evacuation roads and the preparation of evacuation centres for each village.

Our Climate Change Office gathers and publishes scientific climate data and information relevant to increasing our understanding of disasters. Niue recognizes our customs and traditional knowledge for its contribution to our resilience. Efforts towards the gathering and recording of traditional knowledge are in progress for some communities. We hope this work will expand to include the remaining communities.

To accelerate progress in achieving the priorities and targets under the Framework, we are in the process of developing Niue Ko Kaina (Niue Our Home) – a national physical spaces implementation plan. This plan focuses on Priority 4 on enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Looking ahead, we aim to establish and update all our governance mechanisms to manage our disaster risk reduction strategies. We recognize there is work to be done to update our law and policy as well as its subsequent monitoring and evaluation. Significant work is required for –

- (i) Priority 2 (27) (c) the assessment of technical, financial, and administration disaster management capacity to deal with identified risks at local and national level; and
- (ii) Priority 2 (27) (d) to encourage the establishment of necessary mechanisms and incentives to ensure high levels of compliance with the existing safety enhancing provisions in law and policy and in particular the rules in relation to land use and urban planning, building codes, environmental and resource management, health and safety standards.

We recognize the need to unlock the opportunities that can be afforded through our management and access to use of land.

To ensure inclusivity and close the gap of inequality we ensure women leaders, representatives for youth and children, leaders representing persons with disability are consulted and catered for in our work at national level. There is ongoing work for raising awareness in both the public and private sector. Niue aims to achieve disaster risk governance at national level and contribute to regional and global levels.

Niue aims to become an example country by sharing our spirit of survival, resilience strategies, flexibility to consider all factors early, adaptable to accept new information and meet new challenges, perspective to see obstacles as opportunities for growth and the humour to keep life light and enjoyable. In the last two years of the global pandemic, we were able to prolong our covid-free country status from 2020 to June 2022. Our population continues to adapt to the change of lifestyle brought by the pandemic. In this light we hope the region and global community can learn from us.

In summary our key priority moving forward is to establish the governance, finance and trade systems to assist with the relocation, reconstruction and recovery of the whole of the west coast residents so that they can reduce disaster risk and increase their ability to bounce back quickly.

Friends, our progress has not been made in isolation. As much as we desire to achieve all of the priorities and targets under the framework, we accept that much of it is still a work in progress.

To conclude, we acknowledge your governments, our development partners, the international and regional organizations for your valuable support, communities, businesses and individuals who have helped us on this journey. Let's continue to unite in our efforts to build systems where our sustainable development can no longer be impeded by disasters.

We are here to learn from you, we hope you will learn from us.

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