



PRESS RELEASE

Partner Roundtable: Strengthening Cooperation Towards Building a Resilient Tonga



23 October 2023 (Nuku'alofa, Tonga) – The Australian High Commission hosted the Partner Roundtable at the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel in Tonga. The forum brought together significant bilateral and development partners to engage in meaningful discussions concerning climate and disaster risk reduction, as well as challenges to build a resilient Tonga.

In her opening remarks, the Australian High Commissioner, HR Rachael Moore, extended a warm welcome to all the participants at the Development Partner roundtable meeting with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Mami Mizutori, and her delegation. She expressed delight in hosting the event, emphasizing the importance of addressing disaster risk reduction in Tonga, a country highly vulnerable to various hazards. With the approaching cyclone season, she underlined the urgency of discussions to mitigate future risks.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Mami Mizutori, underscored the progress made in Tonga towards enhancing disaster and climate resilience, stating “There have been many positive developments in Tonga to advance disaster and climate resilience. But the scale of the country’s risk exposure means there is always more to be done. This includes scaling up comprehensive climate and disaster risk management at the national and local levels.” Ms. Mizutori emphasized the critical need for increased financial support in disaster risk reduction, emphasizing, “What is urgently needed is more financing for disaster risk reduction. Investing in prevention saves lives, and we need to bolster investment now.”

During the roundtable, the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) identified key areas that require urgent attention in order to enhance Tonga’s resilience to climate and disaster risks. The

priorities include to familiarize the community with the new DRM Act of 2021, securing financing for its implementation, developing regulations and a national plan for DRM and to implement DRM policies at various levels, reviewing disaster management plans for islands and villages, updating standard operating procedures (SOPs) for emergency operations and evacuation management to name a few. Furthermore, NDRMO had also called upon support on areas related to tsunami readiness, data management, cluster coordination, early warning, and infrastructure development.

The Partners Roundtable also presented a significant opportunity for Tonga's development partners to discuss challenges and opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, including by expanding and strengthening partnerships.

The Partner's Roundtable was attended by the representatives from National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) Tonga, Australian High Commission, Embassy of China, European Union, Embassy of Japan, New Zealand High Commission, United Kingdom High Commission, Embassy of United States, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNDRR delegation, The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, The Pacific Community (SPC).

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