

Written by Administrator

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*Tuesday 15 October 2013, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Rarotonga, Cook Islands* - The Office of the Prime Minister in Cook Islands called a special meeting of the National Platform for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management on Friday 4 October, 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate stakeholder input in Cook Islands for the proposed new regional strategy for disaster and climate resilient development in the Pacific (SRDP).

The development of the SRDP, referred to as 'the roadmap process', is led by Pacific Island countries and territories. Stakeholder engagement is being sought throughout the Pacific region in a variety of forums. During the Cook Islands meeting participants had the opportunity to learn about the roadmap process and provide their suggestions concerning its development.

Teina Mackenzie is an Executive Board Member for the Te Ipukarea Society, an environmental NGO in Cook Islands. She says, 'The most encouraging aspect of the recent meeting is that it seeks true engagement of stakeholders and the community at the outset of the proposed strategy.'

The meeting took place at the New Hope Church in Rarotonga and was attended by representatives from government, NGOs and the private sector. It was chaired by William Mocevakaca Tuivaga from Climate Change Cook Islands in the Office of the Prime and facilitated by Cristina Casella, Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy Adviser with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Professor John E. Hay, a consultant advising the development of the SRDP.

'The meeting increased awareness about the development of the SRDP,' says Ana Tiraa, the

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Director of Climate Change Cook Islands in the Office of the Prime Minister. She says that continued dialogue on the SRDP will be encouraged in Cook Islands and will enable further contribution to the development of the strategy.

The Cook Islands has taken steps to incorporate climate change and disaster risk management in key planning and policy documents including the Joint National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation 2011-2015, and the Climate & Disaster Compatible Development Policy 2013 – 2016.

The SRDP is next step in addressing climate change and disaster risk management in the Pacific from 2016 onward. It will supersede the two current frameworks, the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005–2015 and the Pacific Islands Framework on Climate Change 2006–2015, after they expire in 2015.

Further consultative meetings in other countries will be held in the coming months. These will include representatives from non-governmental and faith-based organisations, the private sector and development partners.

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*Photo caption and credit:* Participants at the Cook Islands special meeting of the National Platform for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management. Photo Celine Dyer / Climate Change Cook Islands