UNISDR
The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
OCHA
SPC
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MEDIA RELEASE



Suva, Fiji, 26 October 2015

Hundreds of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response partners from across the Pacific are gathering in Suva this week for a joint program of events around emergency management

and regional resilience to disasters.

The week starts with the two-day Pacific Regional Disaster Resilience Meeting which brings together disaster management agencies and others to discuss the challenges of improving disaster management across the region with a view to saving lives and reducing disaster losses.

“The Pacific is a challenging environment for disaster risk management. It is very exposed to extreme weather events such as Cyclone Pam which hit Vanuatu hard earlier this year. Parts of the region are now suffering drought and water shortages because of El Niño while others are preparing for the strong likelihood that they will be hit by high winds, storm surges and heavy rainfall in the months ahead," Timothy Wilcox, Head of the Pacific office of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction said.

"This week will be a first opportunity for the region to examine how to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction which was adopted as a global blueprint for reducing disaster losses earlier this year. The Pacific region is well-placed to take a lead on showing the importance of being able to manage disaster risk as opposed to simply focusing on disaster response. A lot of good solutions will be shared this week.”

On Wednesday and Thursday, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) hosts the annual Pacific Humanitarian Partnership Meeting which aims to strengthen relationships between actors working in disaster response, resilience and recovery, as well as make preparations for the season ahead.

“Humanitarian needs are on the rise across the world and in the Pacific where countries are acutely vulnerable to a range of frequent natural hazards and the emerging impacts of climate change. It has never been more important for those working across development, humanitarian

response and risk reduction to be synchronized. That's what this joint program of events is all about," Sune Gudnitz, Head of the UNOCHA, Regional Office for the Pacific said.

"With El Niño posing a risk to 4.6 million people across 11 countries in the region, this meeting will be a critical opportunity to plan for what is shaping as an intense period ahead. The meeting is also a forum for humanitarian and development actors in the Pacific to commit to actioning some of the outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit regional consultations earlier this year, particularly around placing affected communities at the heart of our work and bridging the humanitarian-development divide."

In the lead up to the joint program of events, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies last week held a two-day workshop bringing together Pacific Red Cross leadership and Pacific national disaster management representatives to explore how to strengthen legal frameworks for disasters in the Pacific.

"Pacific Island countries are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, while there are many initiatives in resilience and preparedness what is often overlooked is the area of legal preparedness. Not only can strong laws help to save lives in a disaster, but they can also contribute to building stronger, safer, more resilient communities," Aurelia Balpe, Head of Pacific Regional Office, IFRC said.

On Friday, the European Union and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) will host a meeting of the Regional Steering Committee for the EUR 20 million EU-ACP Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP) project.

"I'm honoured to participate in this very important event with our partners to help Pacific Island countries build their resilience against disaster and climate change impacts. The EU has stood side-by-side with our Pacific friends and we are here to share and learn the lessons from disasters such as cyclone Pam and how we can do more and better," the European Union Ambassador for the Pacific, His Excellency Andrew Jacobs said.

Media Contacts

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

Pacific Humanitarian Partnership Meeting

UNOCHA – Danielle Parry, Public Information Officer

Phone: +679 7771433 Email: parryd@un.org

Website: http://pacifichumanitarian.info/

Pacific Regional Disaster Resilience Meeting

UNISDR – Andrew McElroy, Public Information Officer
Phone: +679 3100370 Email: mcelroy@un.org

Website: http://www.preventionweb.net/go/44175

ACP-EU/SPC Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP) Project's 2nd Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting

SPC – Lisa Kingberry

Phone: 9252849 Email: lisak@spc.int