

SPC and French Polynesia sign agreements to reduce natural disaster risk

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Thursday, 17 March 2011 10:04 - Last Updated Thursday, 17 March 2011 10:46



Thursday 16 March 2011, Papeete, French Polynesia – French Polynesia will receive technical expertise and funding from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to mitigate the risks of natural disasters facing the country.

In a ceremony bringing together the Government of French Polynesia, the French High Commission, the European Union and SPC, President Gaston Tong Sang praised “the perfect symbiosis” between all parties. He remarked that “when we all pull in the same direction, we can achieve high results to the benefit of our people, particularly the most vulnerable.”

In welcoming this partnership, SPC Deputy Director-General Richard Mann noted the “importance of these agreements for the safety of populations exposed to natural disaster risk” and their focus on “addressing priorities set by French Polynesia.” French High Commissioner Richard Didier emphasized the “concrete, tangible and on-the-ground” results to be achieved by the partnership.

The agreements worth € 1.085 million in total will support French Polynesia to reduce two types of risks faced by the country. The Marqueses archipelago is highly exposed to tsunamis, yet its alert system is deficient with half of its sirens not working. In the Tuamotu archipelago, cyclonic waves threaten the safety of the population and the destruction of infrastructure.

Both initiatives will seek to reinforce the safety of populations: in the Marqueses by repairing sirens and developing local capacity to maintain them in the future; in the Tuamotu by identifying precise zones at risk and refining building codes.

These initiatives fall under a larger regional project aimed at reducing disaster risk in Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories thereby benefiting New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna and Pitcairn Islands. The project is managed by SPC’s Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) and funded by European Development funds.

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