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19 October 2016, Suva

Reducing the negative impacts of disasters on the people of the Pacific is at the core of this year's Pacific Resilience Week beginning in Suva, Fiji, today.

Disaster managers from 15 Pacific Island countries, disaster risk reduction experts and humanitarian response partners are coming together to help create a more disaster-resilient Pacific. They aim to strengthen national and regional collaboration on disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery from disaster.

The first three days (19-21 October) will focus on humanitarian preparedness and response. The Pacific Humanitarian Partnership meeting, convened by the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is focusing on lessons learnt and way forward from previous disasters, as well as how to make the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit count in the Pacific.

“The region has witnessed some of the largest recorded cyclones in history in the last 18 months with many in Fiji still reeling from the impact of Cyclone Winston. The increased frequency of disasters and impact of climate change makes the need for effective long-term partnerships that work from disaster mitigation to preparedness, response and recovery critical and this joint event helps ensure we do that meaningfully,” Sune Gudnitz, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Regional Office for the Pacific (UNOCHA ROP)

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said.

The three-day Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (24-26 October) will follow. Dr. Robert Glasser, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction, will attend. The annual Platform represents a unique opportunity for governments and partners to reaffirm their commitment to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, agreed last year by the governments of the world.

“The focus of the Platform this year will be to understand the real community impact of both disaster and climate change. We need to support the region to become more resilient through the use of real world experiences. Focusing on implementing both the Sendai Framework and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) will help guide effective support to build safer communities,” Timothy Wilcox, Pacific Sub Regional Coordinator for the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) said.

Pacific Resilience Week will end with the Pacific Community (SPC) hosting its annual Regional Steering Committee for the ACP-EU Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific (BSRP) project, one of the largest disaster resilience projects working with 15 countries across the region. This year the RSC will focus on the strategic direction and critical needs of disaster management into the future whilst reviewing the work of the BSRP project and the final phase of implementation for the project.

“The people of the Pacific know what being vulnerable to disaster and climate change feels like because they face these hazards regularly. It is critical that the scientific and technical support offered to create a safer Pacific is led by these countries with the support of agencies like SPC. Bringing the key partners in the disaster risk management environment together to agree on a joint way forward ensures we are working with and supporting countries in the most effective way,” SPC Deputy Director-General, Dr Audrey Aumua said.

Participants attending the week of events includes National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) Directors from 15 Pacific Island countries, senior government representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, UN agencies, Red Cross movement, humanitarian organizations including civil society, faith based groups, the private sector and community groups.

The event will run for a total of 10 days (19-27 October) at the Holiday Inn, Suva.

Media Contacts:

UNOCHA Pacific Humanitarian Partnership Meeting

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