

Report on the Featured Event on Small Island Developing States
during the
Fourth Session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction
19-23 May 2013, Geneva - Switzerland

Background

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) co-organised a Featured Event entitled **Strengthening Partnerships Towards Disaster Risk Reduction for Small Island Developing States** at the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. The Global Platform took place from 19-23 May, 2013 at the Geneva International Conference Center with the Featured Event on SIDS taking place on the 21st May (15:00 – 18:00).

- See programme under: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/32569_en.pdf
- See video under: http://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLBDwPnveHho-jeZRMdDgHKnVtLWk0bL8p&v=n2xbNquU5-Y&feature=player_embedded

In light of the interrelated and complex reality SIDS face, vis-à-vis disaster risk, the Featured Event aimed to draw upon national and regional experiences through the perspectives of political leaders, experts and stakeholders in various aspects pertaining to the disaster risk reduction agenda for SIDS.

The event pursued multiple objectives including the need to highlight the vulnerability and exposure of SIDS to hazards leading to escalating losses and the corresponding impacts on development. Also, a call for immediate action and support to reduce risks associated with disasters and to enhance SIDS' resilience was sought. As the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013 was launched by the Secretary-General prior to the event, it was also made an objective to discuss the findings as pertaining to SIDS given new risk data and the need to highlight the role of the private sector in contributing to risk mitigation. In view of the upcoming Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014, the event also sought to identify work to be done on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development to contribute towards the preparatory process leading up to the SIDS International Conference. Similarly, with the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) being prepared for 2015, views were sought as to how the resilience building for SIDS would be incorporated into HFA2. Recognizing the importance of the grassroots and traditional levels of society in SIDS, the event moreover, aimed to bring this sector to the fore with regards to strengthening and building capacity to prepare and respond proactively to disaster events.

Event Structure

The event was structured in two parts. The first session (15:00-16:00) was a high level segment chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya who provided opening remarks followed by statements of the nine high level representatives including a presentation on relevant SIDS findings from the 2013 Global Assessment Report by Mr. Andrew Maskrey (Lead Author, Global Assessment Report).

The second session (16:00 - 18:00), moderated by BBC Chief International Correspondent Ms. Lyse Doucet, was structured as an interactive dialogue with panelists providing 3 minute opening remarks followed by a moderated dialogue allowing for questions from the floor.

List of Speakers

Session I: High-Level Opening (3-4pm)

[Chair] **Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya**, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

1. **Mr. Jan Eliasson**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
2. **H.E. Mr. David Basile**, Minister of the Interior, Republic of Haiti
3. **H.E. Mr. James Fletcher**, Minister of the Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, Saint Lucia
4. **H.E. Ms. Nikki Kaye**, Minister of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, New Zealand
5. **H.E. Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais**, Minister of Internal Affairs, Republic of Cape Verde
6. **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nazim**, Minister of Defence, Republic of Maldives
7. **Ms. Kristalina Georgieva**, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response
8. **Mr. Rajendra K Pachauri**, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
9. **Mr. Andrew Maskrey**, Coordinator, United Nations Global Assessment Report (GAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction

Session II: Interactive Dialogue (4-6pm)

[Moderator] **Ms. Lyse Doucet**, Chief International Correspondent, BBC

1. **H.E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Republic of Maldives
2. **Mr. José Rubiera**, Director, Instituto de Meteorología (National Forecasting Centre), Republic of Cuba
3. **Ms. Annes Athy Simon**, community worker, Republic of Vanuatu
4. **Mr. Ronald Jackson**, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
5. **Mr. Gary Philoctete**, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization
6. **Mr. Christophe Legrand**, Sustainable Development Expert, Indian Ocean Commission

Summary of Statements by Panelists

High Level Session – Chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya

Mr. Gyan Acharya, UN High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, stated that this was a timely event for small island developing States as preparations are made towards the 2014 SIDS Conference, the second review of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2015 and as the discourse is intensified towards the post 2015 development agenda. The High Representative emphasised that the means of livelihoods is precarious for SIDS and that disaster risk had to be thought of in a holistic manner including from the fundamental perspective of survival and sustainability of livelihoods and development efforts. Mr. Acharya stressed that an opportunity existed to build resilience through a multi-stakeholder approach and a need for stronger global partnerships including through innovative business partnerships and full engagement of communities and civil society. He also stated that natural disasters were a fact of life in SIDS, but their impact should not be.

Mr. Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, said that when it came to the environment and climate, there was no “Planet B”. Mr. Eliasson stressed the urgency of the issue of disaster risk reduction for SIDS and given that this group of countries contributes less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions, SIDS are on the frontlines of climate change and suffer disproportionately. The DSG also stressed that the effects of climate change on SIDS was of serious concern which could affect their economies, territories, and at times their very existence. He emphasised that SIDS relied on the business community to help strengthen their economies and are riddled with debt by recurring disasters. Looking toward the 2014 SIDS Conference, Mr. Eliasson stated that the issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction would be top of the agenda at the Conference in Samoa.

Mr. David Basile, Minister of the Interior of Haiti, praised efforts and partnerships by the international community in responding to the 2010 earthquake which devastated his country. He highlighted that Caribbean nations were becoming more cohesive through regional integration including through political and economic means. Integration included for instance increasing exchanges on climate change, and on controlling and managing land and sea phenomena.

Mr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, stressed that the key economic sectors in SIDS were all susceptible to the impacts of climate change including fisheries, tourism and agriculture with resultant implications for food security. He also outlined the vast differences in economic losses experienced by SIDS compared to other groups of countries when considering disaster related losses. He stated that rising sea levels were responsible for extreme coastal flooding and substantially higher risks for small island developing States; low-lying islands were especially vulnerable to erosion, inundation and saline intrusion. Disasters entailed the possible loss of development opportunities and a setback in development gains, with sharp economic repercussions for SIDS. The need for improved infrastructure and enhanced institutional measures was highlighted as crucial for SIDS. He also stressed that when considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the global community had an obligation to support SIDS – given that

they suffered the greatest as a result of climate change yet contribute less than 1% to global emissions.

Mr. James Fletcher, Minister of Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia, said the Caribbean, where many countries were already confronting high levels of debt and anaemic economic growth, faced an increased risk of climate change. Given that many countries in the Caribbean shared similar concerns as pertaining to climate change and hazards, Minister Fletcher emphasised a regional approach to risk mitigation and likewise minimizing the severe impacts of climate change. It was stressed that SIDS should institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. The Minister elaborated on the need to balance socio-economic priorities and disaster resilience. There is also the need for SIDS to expand data acquisition, spatial planning and improve infrastructure in order to bolster capacity building efforts for better resilience to disasters. Minister Fletcher informed that when it came to mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and the need for an integrated approach, SIDS continue to struggle in this field. The Minister welcomed the idea of learning lessons from others including amongst SIDS and that Saint Lucia was happy to share its community group actions with others. The issue of technical assistance was also highlighted as a crucial issue that continues to be of concern for SIDS.

Ms. Nikki Kaye, Minister of Civil Defence of New Zealand, said the country had a lot in common with small island developing States as it was also highly prone to hazards. New Zealand felt a strong responsibility to assist Pacific nations in strengthening their capabilities with supporting their national management plans and procedures and also their National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) training, awareness-raising and practical assistance in emergencies. New Zealand is also extending support to local communities for disaster awareness and preparedness in the Pacific. Given New Zealand's strong investments in science, Minister Kaye informed of assistance being given to Samoa with a tsunami-mapping exercise following the 2009 Samoa tsunami but also a 5 year volcano mapping exercise in Vanuatu. Furthermore, New Zealand was assisting – through its aid programme – Kiribati, Fiji and Cook Islands with disaster risk reduction initiatives. Minister Kaye expressed New Zealand's strong commitment to support Samoa towards hosting of the 2014 SIDS Conference.

Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais, Minister of Home Affairs of Cape Verde, said that disaster risk reduction could not be dealt with in isolation but should be a part of the national development policy. Minister Morais outlined the various difficulties Cape Verde faces including volcanic activity, prolonged drought, coastal erosion, sea-level rise, torrential rain, flooding and implications for food security. Given that tourism and fisheries are the two mainstays of the Cape Verdean economy, disasters hamper activities in these sectors. The Minister stated that limitations in infrastructure meant difficulties with dealing with disasters and that a serious disaster would seriously threaten the development of the country. The costs of recovery and limited budgetary capacity meant that even “small” disasters were considerable, and so Cape Verde was working to update its development agenda to incorporate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. The Minister expressed that Cape Verde does not have the capacity to build resilience on its own,

and that partnerships at the regional, sub-regional and multi-lateral levels – including through technical assistance - were needed.

Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Minister of Defence of Maldives, said that all efforts towards disaster reduction in small island developing States should go hand in hand with climate change adaptation. The Minister stressed that to be effective, SIDS needed to present a common front to the world including through sharing of lessons and perspectives. Raising awareness and preparedness amongst the population is a key focus for the Maldives. With tourism being the mainstay of the economy, mitigation and adaptation were being integrated into the policies of the industry to increase resilience. For the past few years it had focused on creating resilient island communities in the face of storm surges, flooding and other hazards, and the tourism industry was also looking at how to increase resilience including through adopting finance risk insurance. Minister Nazim stated that building strong cross-sectoral partnerships was the key to successful disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Aside from international partnerships, partnerships amongst SIDS was also emphasised as crucial to overcoming common challenges.

Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, said the European Union had been at the forefront of the battle against climate change. Ms. Georgieva described how despite the economic crisis in Europe, their remained a commitment to promises made including through fast-track financing; delivering €7.5 billion. She emphasised that SIDS needed to have a large voice to amplify the message of priorities by the international community. She spoke of bottom-up solutions including through simple but effective community based initiatives that the EU supported with special focus on reducing loss of life, reducing damage and building capacity. With reference to funding, she stated that Europe had an obligation to assist developing countries. She outlined assistance programmes by the EU including a €20 million facility for the Pacific and likewise for the Caribbean. EU programmes are also focussing on countries exposed to recurrent shocks with an emphasis on building capacity in withstanding shocks as a priority for EU cooperation. She also stressed the importance of countries being able to have capacity to absorb assistance being received during disasters.

Mr. Andrew Maskrey, Coordinator and Lead Author, United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013, said that reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for small island developing States to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. Mr. Maskrey stressed that SIDS are widely accepted as being highly prone to the hazards of natural and man-made disasters. SIDS possessed the highest risk to capital from disasters than any group of countries in the world. Furthermore, SIDS have a high proportion of their assets exposed to risk as indicated in Figures 1-3. As illustrated in Figure 1, in the case of a 1-in-250 year earthquake, 7 of the 10 countries that would lose the largest proportion of the value of their urban produced capital are SIDS. In the Solomon Islands, Dominica and Vanuatu, between 30% and 50% of the value of their urban produced capital would be lost. Looking at the amount of investments that is at risk is equally important as this determines the ability to bounce back after a disaster strikes; see Figure 4. He emphasised that disasters for SIDS could mean sluggish growth not only in the short-term but over many years with the potential of entering a vicious cycle where poor

growth leads to a lack of resources to build resilience and recovery from future disasters.

Figure 1 Top 10 countries in terms of Average Annual Losses (AAL) (left) and probable maximum loss (PML) (right) from earthquakes as a percentage of urban produced capital

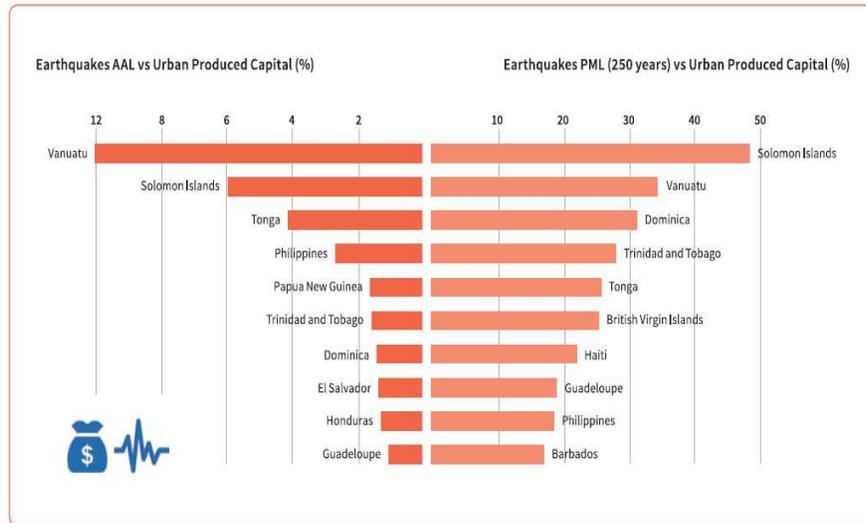
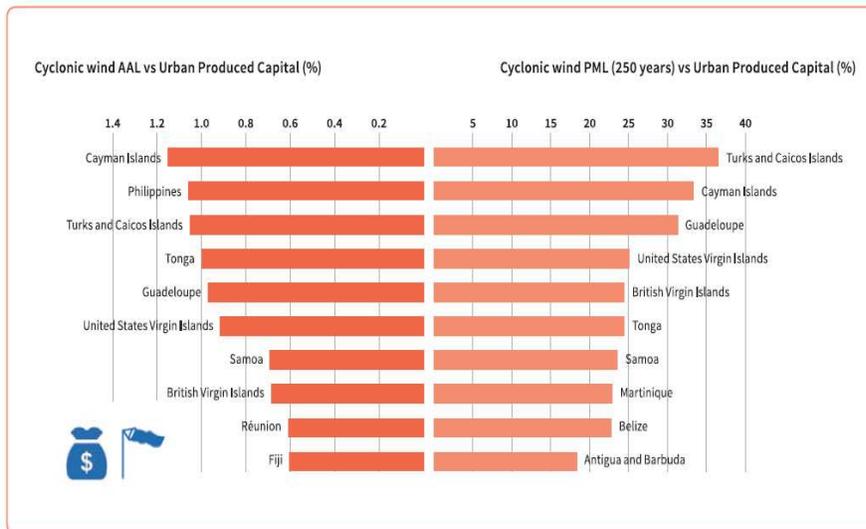
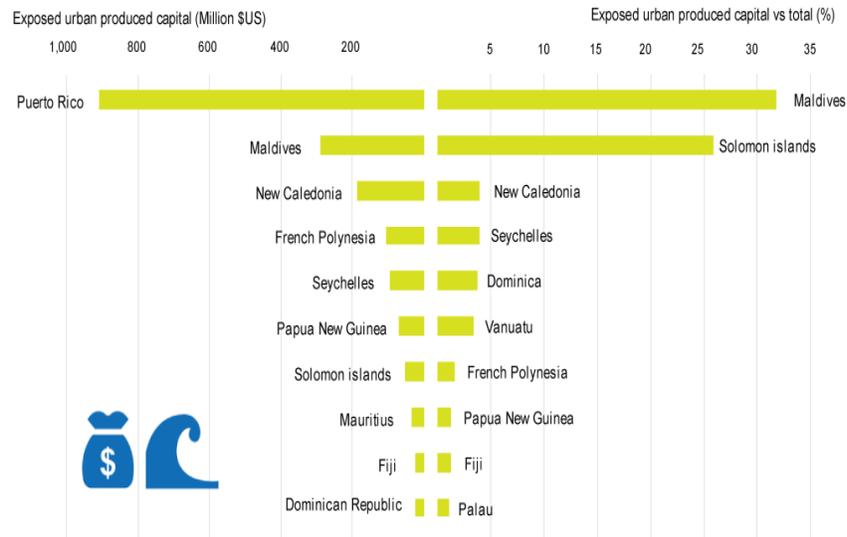
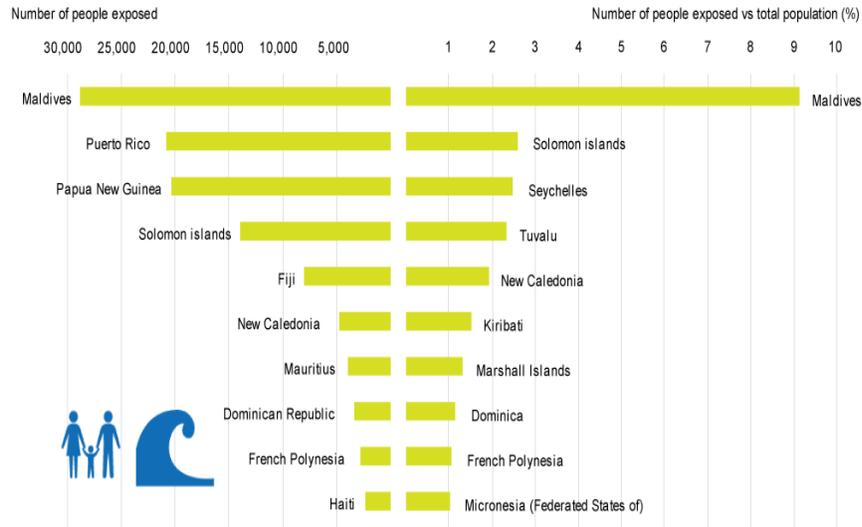


Figure 2: Top 10 countries with highest AAL (left) and PML (right) from cyclonic winds



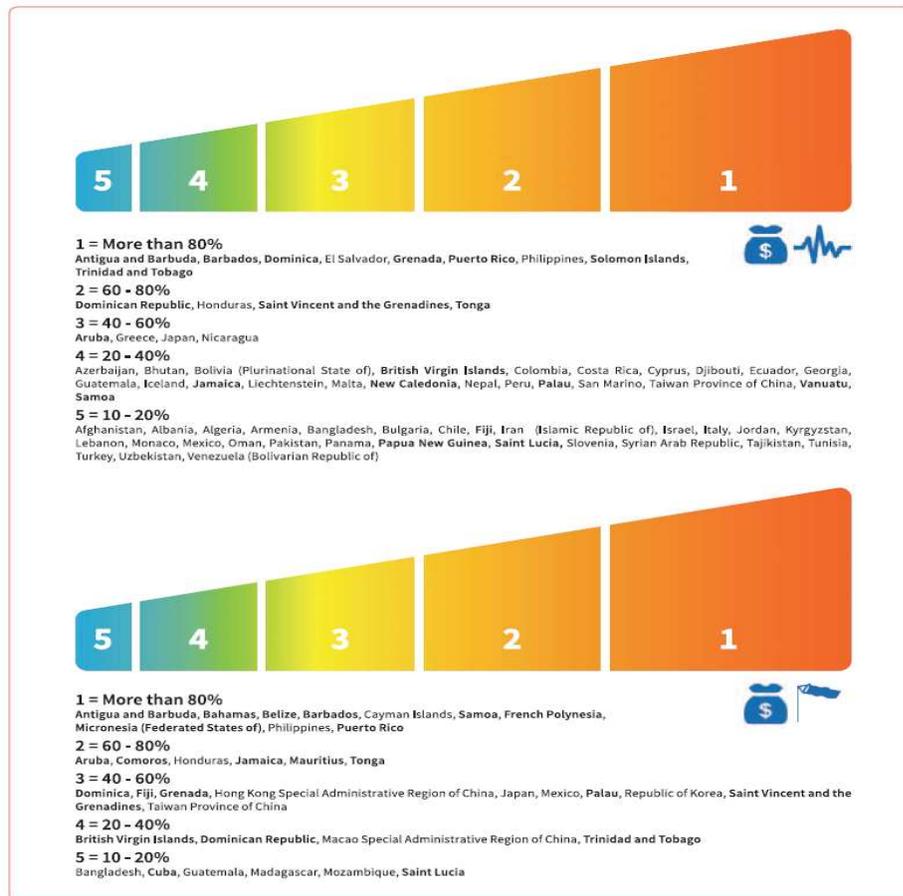
(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 3: Urban produced capital and population (absolute and relative) exposed to tsunamis in SIDS



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 4 : Probable maximum losses from one-in-250 year earthquakes (top) and cyclonic wind damage (bottom) as a percentage of gross capital formation (SIDS highlighted in bold)



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Second Session, Interactive Dialogue Moderated by Ms. Lyse Doucet

Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN in Geneva, said that natural disasters had increased considerably in small island developing States, many of which relied on their environment and ecosystems for income generation. She referred to the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation which outlined important proposals for tackling climate change including through capacity building and human resource development. She also outlined the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) proposal under the UNFCCC to address disaster management for climate change under an international mechanism to address loss and damage. Given that many SIDS rely on ecosystems for income, disasters pose a threat to this source of income. Referring to the HFA synthesis report, she stated that the progress being made by SIDS was below expectations. The Ambassador stated that disaster risk reduction measures were a good investment in building resilience which can lead to economic opportunities. Maldives was already committed to

becoming carbon-neutral by 2020. Ms. Adam stressed that more information was needed on how to actually manage disasters and that inadequate data presented constraints. Furthermore, she pointed to institutional capacity constraints as barriers to disaster risk reduction efforts. Ms. Adam emphasised that daily work at the grass-roots level was needed to build resilience.

Mr. Jose Rubiera, Director of Cuba's National Forecasting Centre, said the planet climate was changing including through increases in sea-surface temperatures presenting an increased hurricane risk in the Caribbean, but Cuba had faced many previous such disasters successfully. He outlined that scientific institutions were an active part of the disaster management system in Cuba. Its meteorologists used simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and their messages were translated into guidelines and recommendations by civil defence authorities and broadcast as early warning messages through various mediums. Mr. Rubiera also referred to a strong culture of prevention in the country. Student competitions including at the primary school level were held to test knowledge of disaster issues, and little by little the population was developing an awareness of risk. He stressed that lessons learned from Cuba could be shared with other SIDS especially that of the culture of preparedness.

Ms. Annies Simon, Civil Society Representative from Vanuatu, stressed that the greatest challenges faced by small Pacific island countries in confronting natural hazards were internal capacities and geographical location. What they relied on the most was their traditional knowledge - including observation of cloud movements and seabirds - which for generations had been a powerful tool for coping with hardship. Furthermore, traditional knowledge was highlighted as an early warning system of importance to local communities. Small community committees took preventive and responsive action in the face of natural hazards. They valued becoming self-reliant before seeking donor support. It was also pointed out that rural communities in SIDS were hard to reach and often left last in terms of relief following a disaster event. Given that rural communities were heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture, the case was made for building resilience in this sector. In Ms. Simon's work with rural communities in her native Vanuatu, she pointed to a booklet (*Yumi redy long wan Disasta – Let's be ready for a Disaster*) which she had written which explains in simple everyday language how rural communities can build resilience and be prepared when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Ronald Jackson, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, said that disaster risk reduction was an economic and developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. He emphasised the importance of a wide stakeholder buy-in not just with the 18 Member States of CDEMA but also with private sector and donor partners. There is also a focus of harmonizing DRR investments in the region. While the DRR issue had advanced considerably in the region including through the Caribbean Community Strategic Programming Framework, more targeted investment was required along with strengthening funding frameworks. Partners and funding should be further harmonized around the issue of climate change and DRR, language should be repackaged and the value of investing in risk reduction should be better illustrated. Mr. Jackson stressed that investments in disaster risk reduction provided economic benefits. The example of Information and

Communication Technologies (ICTs) was presented as being of importance in issuing early warning to affected communities. He also stressed that any intervention by donor countries in the region should involve capacity-building. Some countries were excluded from donor envelopes, making them even more vulnerable. However, parallel mechanisms were emerging to deal with climate change adaptation financing.

Mr. Gary Philoctete, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization, said that a cash-forward approach had been useful after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to involve families in all stages of the relocation process. Both formal and on-the-job training had been provided to masons. Unfortunately, Government involvement had been limited, as most of its institutions had collapsed following the earthquake. Poverty and instability only impeded disaster risk reduction, which required major infrastructure development that was often beyond the Government's capacity. The private sector, which was also important, was unfortunately lacking in Haiti. Despite efforts at reconstruction, the country remained very vulnerable, and ran more or less the same risk in the event of another earthquake or hurricane.

Mr. Christophe Legrand, from the Indian Ocean Commission, said that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement, where many small island developing States lacked individual capacity. He also pointed out that there was a greater capacity constraint in the Indian Ocean region than compared to the Pacific and Caribbean. In this light, he highlighted the importance of partnerships amongst the three SIDS regions with collective action amongst regional institutions. He emphasised that SIDS shouldn't go into the 2014 SIDS conference with a common position as they are leaders in DRR and should lead by example. Of importance is the pooling of resources through regional institutions when considering risk financing and insurance but also as a cost effective measure. In reference to data management, Mr. Legrand stated this was key and a precondition to DRR policies.

In summary, Mr. Acharya reflected that the presentations had provided a holistic view of both challenges and opportunities for SIDS. It was not only small islands that were being looked at, but also the large oceans of which SIDS are custodians of, which had an impact on the health of the islands and their inhabitants but also the global public goods found in the oceans. While disasters occur in all countries, it is the disproportionality of the impacts that must be stressed and taken into account when it comes to SIDS. Early warning, institutions and resourcing were extremely important in any discussions of disaster risk reduction, which required mainstreaming into national development plans to build resilience. Mr. Acharya also stressed the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources – particularly coastal - through which communities acquired their livelihoods. SIDS issues must also be at the forefront of the post-2015 development agenda, the DRR agenda, the 2014 SIDS Conference and likewise the climate change agenda.

Highlights and Recommendations; stemming from the Featured Event

The Featured Event highlighted the need for SIDS to institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. It is important that disaster risk reduction and resilience building be mainstreamed into national development programmes. It was made clear that investments in reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for SIDS to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. It was recognized that the private sector in SIDS was an important stakeholder with an important role to play in terms of building resilience and sustaining livelihoods. Poverty reduction was touched upon as an important avenue towards resilience building. The importance of preparedness was stressed as being vital including the use by authorities of simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and these messages being translated into guidelines and recommendations and broadcast as early warning messages through various media. Integrating disaster risk reduction into education and awareness curricula from primary school level upwards and including at the grassroots/community level was also stressed as an important avenue for improving preparedness and building capacity for resilience. It was demonstrated that disaster risk reduction was a developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. It was stressed that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement; where many SIDS lacked individual capacity. Emphasis was placed on the need for heightened cooperation amongst SIDS. Given that these countries have experienced various levels of natural and man-made disasters, they are best placed to institute best practice and disseminate lessons learned amongst themselves. Speakers concurred that Caribbean nations were coming together to address climate change, sustainable development and trade. One of the challenges however, was to ensure that the strategies were mutually reinforcing. Efforts were also presently focused on tourism and community-level risk reduction, rather than spread out into broader sectors, such as health, agriculture, education, finance, environment, water, sanitation, rural communities etc.; a cross-sectoral approach would be advisable. Despite agreement on the need for cross-sectoral programmes, it was recognized that lack of resources meant priority being given to important sectors – such as tourism – at the expense of others. In this light, there was emphasis on the need for greater regional solidarity to bolster disaster risk reduction in those sectors that were lacking. There was also a feeling that there should not be a singular focus on disasters but also on shocks, as not all shocks cause disasters but that there were shocks which had cumulative effects such as the international financial crisis which compounds recovery from disasters in SIDS. The importance of building resilience to transboundary shocks was also highlighted in that there were examples of shocks being experienced by larger countries that had direct impacts on SIDS; such as rising food and fuel prices. It was stressed that there is ample expertise present in the SIDS regions and that international assistance needed to take into account building the capacity of that expertise as part of development aid. Also of importance is the need for SIDS governments to invest in disaster risk reduction as opposed to investments being made by donor governments only.

One important priority of this Featured Event was to highlight recommendations

pertaining to SIDS with regards to the second phase of the Hyogo Framework for Action - also known as HFA2 - commencing in 2015. In this regard, the Featured Event recommended that:

- HFA2 needs to reflect the disproportionate effects of climate change on SIDS and that this is a group of countries which contributes the least – less than 1% - to global greenhouse gas emissions, yet bear the greatest burden to the multiple impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Global Assessment Report 2013 chapter on SIDS clearly makes the case – given the latest risk data – of the high exposure of SIDS to natural hazards. In this light, SIDS is the group of countries which stands to gain the most if investments in disaster risk reduction can be leveraged.
- HFA2 should recognize that by virtue of SIDS’ geographic features, they are more often than not situated in areas highly prone to natural hazards. Importantly, communities in SIDS are often located in highly prone areas as these are access points to livelihoods. This includes for instance fishing communities exposed to coastal phenomena and farming communities located on steep slopes – some of which are volcanically active, geologically unstable or prone to flooding.
- HFA2 will need to stress that SIDS continue to require support and partnerships in establishing and maintaining effective early warning systems. Such systems need to be well coordinated, simple to understand and provide guidelines for action by communities in responding and mitigating the effects of hazards. Improved data acquisition and data management resources would enhance the ability of SIDS to predict and respond effectively to hazards.
- National development plans need to effectively integrate and mainstream disaster risk reduction through a holistic cross-sectoral approach involving all relevant stakeholders including private sector and civil society. However, it must be realized that given capacity and resource constraints faced by SIDS, it is often the case that resources are directed and prioritized to select sectors at the expense of others. While this is understandable, it often means that gaps are present in maintaining resilience. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on pooling limited resources through better coordination by government authorities and relevant stakeholders.
- HFA2 needs to reflect on the transboundary effects of shocks which are often felt disproportionately by SIDS including for instance price rises in food, fuel and other commodities.
- Education regarding disaster risk reduction from primary school level upwards needs to be emphasized as vital to building resilience in SIDS. Rural communities will need support in this regard. It is also vital that expertise already present in SIDS be supported and enhanced with the support of development partners.
- Private sector engagement and partnerships needs further commitment and expansion. As many SIDS economies rely on a handful of industries –

notably tourism – it is crucial that private sector be recognized as important stakeholders in the resilience building agenda.

- HFA2 must encourage South-South cooperation and especially amongst SIDS themselves. As a group of countries that is often exposed to similar hazards, SIDS are best placed to share lessons learned. This cooperation needs to be supported by not only SIDS themselves but their development partners.

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High Level Session – Chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya

Mr. Gyan Acharya, UN High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, stated that this was a timely event for small island developing States as preparations are made towards the 2014 SIDS Conference, the second review of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2015 and as the discourse is intensified towards the post 2015 development agenda. The High Representative emphasised that the means of livelihoods is precarious for SIDS and that disaster risk had to be thought of in a holistic manner including from the fundamental perspective of survival and sustainability of livelihoods and development efforts. Mr. Acharya stressed that an opportunity existed to build resilience through a multi-stakeholder approach and a need for stronger global partnerships including through innovative business partnerships and full engagement of communities and civil society. He also stated that natural disasters were a fact of life in SIDS, but their impact should not be.

Mr. Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, said that when it came to the environment and climate, there was no “Planet B”. Mr. Eliasson stressed the urgency of the issue of disaster risk reduction for SIDS and given that this group of countries contributes less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions, SIDS are on the frontlines of climate change and suffer disproportionately. The DSG also stressed that the effects of climate change on SIDS was of serious concern which could affect their economies, territories, and at times their very existence. He emphasised that SIDS relied on the business community to help strengthen their economies and are riddled with debt by recurring disasters. Looking toward the 2014 SIDS Conference, Mr. Eliasson stated that the issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction would be top of the agenda at the Conference in Samoa.

Mr. David Basile, Minister of the Interior of Haiti, praised efforts and partnerships by the international community in responding to the 2010 earthquake which devastated his country. He highlighted that Caribbean nations were becoming more cohesive through regional integration including through political and economic means. Integration included for instance increasing exchanges on climate change, and on controlling and managing land and sea phenomena.

Mr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, stressed that the key economic sectors in SIDS were all susceptible to the impacts of climate change including fisheries, tourism and agriculture with resultant implications for food security. He also outlined the vast differences in economic losses experienced by SIDS compared to other groups of countries when considering disaster related losses. He stated that rising sea levels were responsible for extreme coastal flooding and substantially higher risks for small island developing States; low-lying islands were especially vulnerable to erosion, inundation and saline intrusion. Disasters entailed the possible loss of development opportunities and a setback in development gains, with sharp economic repercussions for SIDS. The need for improved infrastructure and enhanced institutional measures was highlighted as crucial for SIDS. He also stressed that when considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the global community had an obligation to support SIDS – given that

they suffered the greatest as a result of climate change yet contribute less than 1% to global emissions.

Mr. James Fletcher, Minister of Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia, said the Caribbean, where many countries were already confronting high levels of debt and anaemic economic growth, faced an increased risk of climate change. Given that many countries in the Caribbean shared similar concerns as pertaining to climate change and hazards, Minister Fletcher emphasised a regional approach to risk mitigation and likewise minimizing the severe impacts of climate change. It was stressed that SIDS should institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. The Minister elaborated on the need to balance socio-economic priorities and disaster resilience. There is also the need for SIDS to expand data acquisition, spatial planning and improve infrastructure in order to bolster capacity building efforts for better resilience to disasters. Minister Fletcher informed that when it came to mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and the need for an integrated approach, SIDS continue to struggle in this field. The Minister welcomed the idea of learning lessons from others including amongst SIDS and that Saint Lucia was happy to share its community group actions with others. The issue of technical assistance was also highlighted as a crucial issue that continues to be of concern for SIDS.

Ms. Nikki Kaye, Minister of Civil Defence of New Zealand, said the country had a lot in common with small island developing States as it was also highly prone to hazards. New Zealand felt a strong responsibility to assist Pacific nations in strengthening their capabilities with supporting their national management plans and procedures and also their National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) training, awareness-raising and practical assistance in emergencies. New Zealand is also extending support to local communities for disaster awareness and preparedness in the Pacific. Given New Zealand's strong investments in science, Minister Kaye informed of assistance being given to Samoa with a tsunami-mapping exercise following the 2009 Samoa tsunami but also a 5 year volcano mapping exercise in Vanuatu. Furthermore, New Zealand was assisting – through its aid programme – Kiribati, Fiji and Cook Islands with disaster risk reduction initiatives. Minister Kaye expressed New Zealand's strong commitment to support Samoa towards hosting of the 2014 SIDS Conference.

Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais, Minister of Home Affairs of Cape Verde, said that disaster risk reduction could not be dealt with in isolation but should be a part of the national development policy. Minister Morais outlined the various difficulties Cape Verde faces including volcanic activity, prolonged drought, coastal erosion, sea-level rise, torrential rain, flooding and implications for food security. Given that tourism and fisheries are the two mainstays of the Cape Verdean economy, disasters hamper activities in these sectors. The Minister stated that limitations in infrastructure meant difficulties with dealing with disasters and that a serious disaster would seriously threaten the development of the country. The costs of recovery and limited budgetary capacity meant that even “small” disasters were considerable, and so Cape Verde was working to update its development agenda to incorporate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. The Minister expressed that Cape Verde does not have the capacity to build resilience on its own,

and that partnerships at the regional, sub-regional and multi-lateral levels – including through technical assistance - were needed.

Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Minister of Defence of Maldives, said that all efforts towards disaster reduction in small island developing States should go hand in hand with climate change adaptation. The Minister stressed that to be effective, SIDS needed to present a common front to the world including through sharing of lessons and perspectives. Raising awareness and preparedness amongst the population is a key focus for the Maldives. With tourism being the mainstay of the economy, mitigation and adaptation were being integrated into the policies of the industry to increase resilience. For the past few years it had focused on creating resilient island communities in the face of storm surges, flooding and other hazards, and the tourism industry was also looking at how to increase resilience including through adopting finance risk insurance. Minister Nazim stated that building strong cross-sectoral partnerships was the key to successful disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Aside from international partnerships, partnerships amongst SIDS was also emphasised as crucial to overcoming common challenges.

Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, said the European Union had been at the forefront of the battle against climate change. Ms. Georgieva described how despite the economic crisis in Europe, their remained a commitment to promises made including through fast-track financing; delivering €7.5 billion. She emphasised that SIDS needed to have a large voice to amplify the message of priorities by the international community. She spoke of bottom-up solutions including through simple but effective community based initiatives that the EU supported with special focus on reducing loss of life, reducing damage and building capacity. With reference to funding, she stated that Europe had an obligation to assist developing countries. She outlined assistance programmes by the EU including a €20 million facility for the Pacific and likewise for the Caribbean. EU programmes are also focussing on countries exposed to recurrent shocks with an emphasis on building capacity in withstanding shocks as a priority for EU cooperation. She also stressed the importance of countries being able to have capacity to absorb assistance being received during disasters.

Mr. Andrew Maskrey, Coordinator and Lead Author, United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013, said that reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for small island developing States to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. Mr. Maskrey stressed that SIDS are widely accepted as being highly prone to the hazards of natural and man-made disasters. SIDS possessed the highest risk to capital from disasters than any group of countries in the world. Furthermore, SIDS have a high proportion of their assets exposed to risk as indicated in Figures 1-3. As illustrated in Figure 1, in the case of a 1-in-250 year earthquake, 7 of the 10 countries that would lose the largest proportion of the value of their urban produced capital are SIDS. In the Solomon Islands, Dominica and Vanuatu, between 30% and 50% of the value of their urban produced capital would be lost. Looking at the amount of investments that is at risk is equally important as this determines the ability to bounce back after a disaster strikes; see Figure 4. He emphasised that disasters for SIDS could mean sluggish growth not only in the short-term but over many years with the potential of entering a vicious cycle where poor

growth leads to a lack of resources to build resilience and recovery from future disasters.

Figure 1 Top 10 countries in terms of Average Annual Losses (AAL) (left) and probable maximum loss (PML) (right) from earthquakes as a percentage of urban produced capital

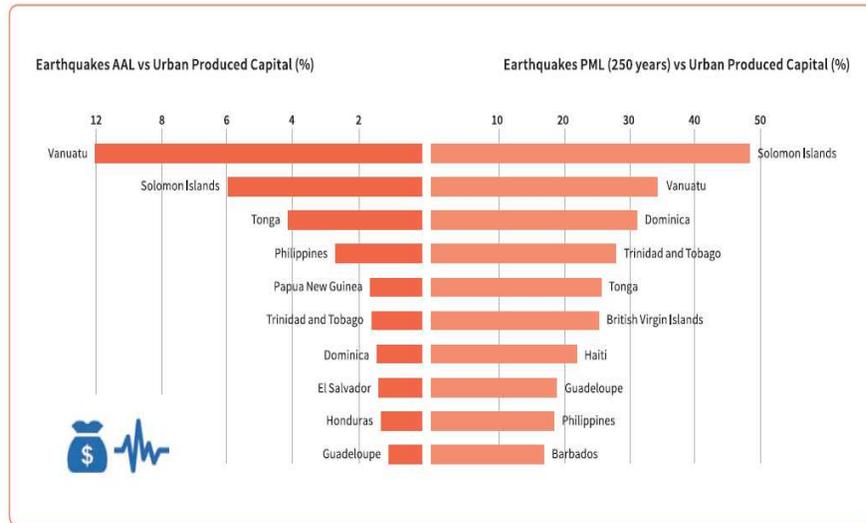
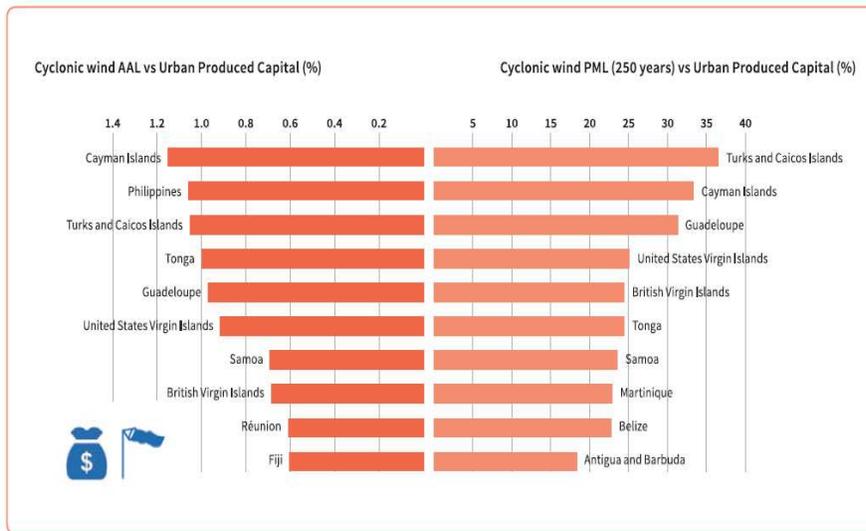
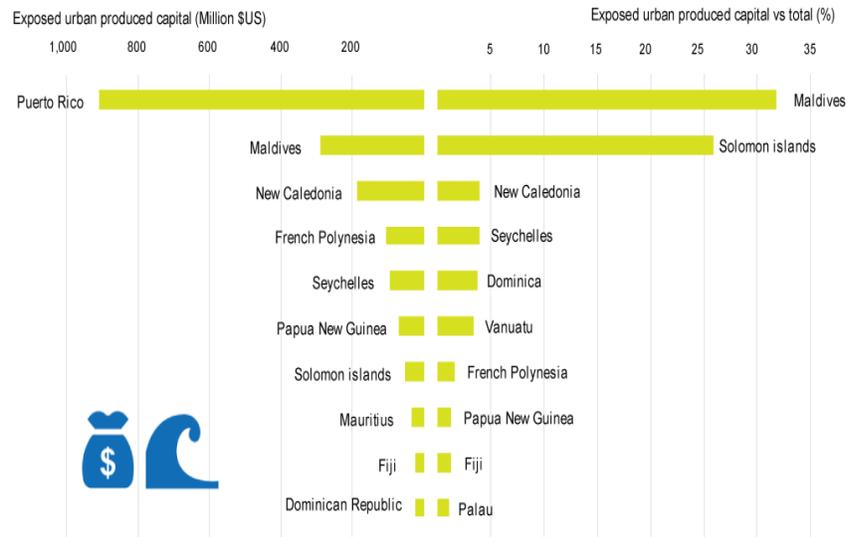
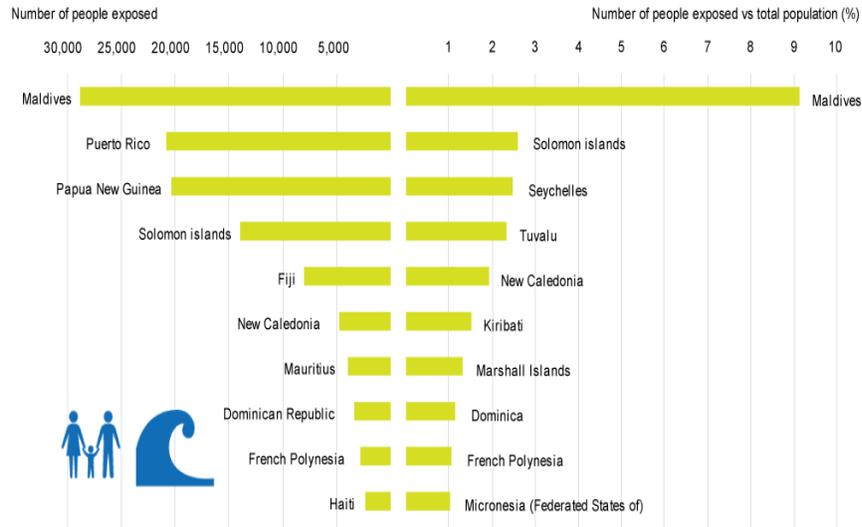


Figure 2: Top 10 countries with highest AAL (left) and PML (right) from cyclonic winds



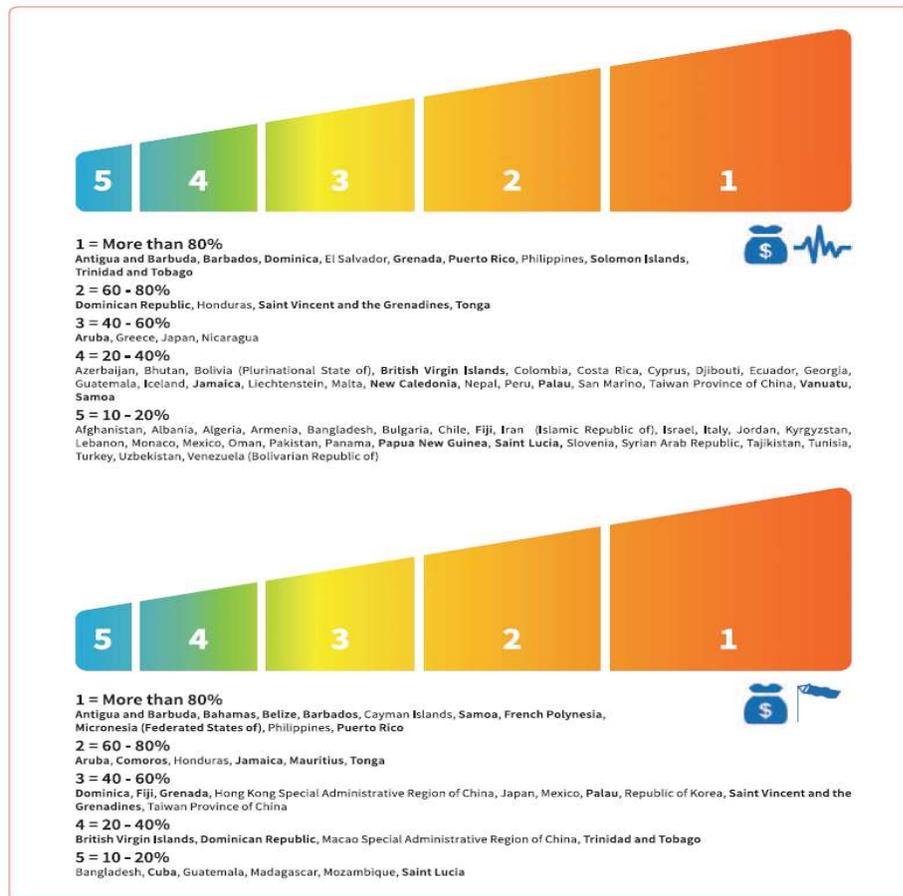
(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 3: Urban produced capital and population (absolute and relative) exposed to tsunamis in SIDS



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 4 : Probable maximum losses from one-in-250 year earthquakes (top) and cyclonic wind damage (bottom) as a percentage of gross capital formation (SIDS highlighted in bold)



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Second Session, Interactive Dialogue Moderated by Ms. Lyse Doucet

Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN in Geneva, said that natural disasters had increased considerably in small island developing States, many of which relied on their environment and ecosystems for income generation. She referred to the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation which outlined important proposals for tackling climate change including through capacity building and human resource development. She also outlined the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) proposal under the UNFCCC to address disaster management for climate change under an international mechanism to address loss and damage. Given that many SIDS rely on ecosystems for income, disasters pose a threat to this source of income. Referring to the HFA synthesis report, she stated that the progress being made by SIDS was below expectations. The Ambassador stated that disaster risk reduction measures were a good investment in building resilience which can lead to economic opportunities. Maldives was already committed to

becoming carbon-neutral by 2020. Ms. Adam stressed that more information was needed on how to actually manage disasters and that inadequate data presented constraints. Furthermore, she pointed to institutional capacity constraints as barriers to disaster risk reduction efforts. Ms. Adam emphasised that daily work at the grass-roots level was needed to build resilience.

Mr. Jose Rubiera, Director of Cuba's National Forecasting Centre, said the planet climate was changing including through increases in sea-surface temperatures presenting an increased hurricane risk in the Caribbean, but Cuba had faced many previous such disasters successfully. He outlined that scientific institutions were an active part of the disaster management system in Cuba. Its meteorologists used simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and their messages were translated into guidelines and recommendations by civil defence authorities and broadcast as early warning messages through various mediums. Mr. Rubiera also referred to a strong culture of prevention in the country. Student competitions including at the primary school level were held to test knowledge of disaster issues, and little by little the population was developing an awareness of risk. He stressed that lessons learned from Cuba could be shared with other SIDS especially that of the culture of preparedness.

Ms. Annies Simon, Civil Society Representative from Vanuatu, stressed that the greatest challenges faced by small Pacific island countries in confronting natural hazards were internal capacities and geographical location. What they relied on the most was their traditional knowledge - including observation of cloud movements and seabirds - which for generations had been a powerful tool for coping with hardship. Furthermore, traditional knowledge was highlighted as an early warning system of importance to local communities. Small community committees took preventive and responsive action in the face of natural hazards. They valued becoming self-reliant before seeking donor support. It was also pointed out that rural communities in SIDS were hard to reach and often left last in terms of relief following a disaster event. Given that rural communities were heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture, the case was made for building resilience in this sector. In Ms. Simon's work with rural communities in her native Vanuatu, she pointed to a booklet (*Yumi redy long wan Disasta – Let's be ready for a Disaster*) which she had written which explains in simple everyday language how rural communities can build resilience and be prepared when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Ronald Jackson, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, said that disaster risk reduction was an economic and developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. He emphasised the importance of a wide stakeholder buy-in not just with the 18 Member States of CDEMA but also with private sector and donor partners. There is also a focus of harmonizing DRR investments in the region. While the DRR issue had advanced considerably in the region including through the Caribbean Community Strategic Programming Framework, more targeted investment was required along with strengthening funding frameworks. Partners and funding should be further harmonized around the issue of climate change and DRR, language should be repackaged and the value of investing in risk reduction should be better illustrated. Mr. Jackson stressed that investments in disaster risk reduction provided economic benefits. The example of Information and

Communication Technologies (ICTs) was presented as being of importance in issuing early warning to affected communities. He also stressed that any intervention by donor countries in the region should involve capacity-building. Some countries were excluded from donor envelopes, making them even more vulnerable. However, parallel mechanisms were emerging to deal with climate change adaptation financing.

Mr. Gary Philoctete, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization, said that a cash-forward approach had been useful after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to involve families in all stages of the relocation process. Both formal and on-the-job training had been provided to masons. Unfortunately, Government involvement had been limited, as most of its institutions had collapsed following the earthquake. Poverty and instability only impeded disaster risk reduction, which required major infrastructure development that was often beyond the Government's capacity. The private sector, which was also important, was unfortunately lacking in Haiti. Despite efforts at reconstruction, the country remained very vulnerable, and ran more or less the same risk in the event of another earthquake or hurricane.

Mr. Christophe Legrand, from the Indian Ocean Commission, said that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement, where many small island developing States lacked individual capacity. He also pointed out that there was a greater capacity constraint in the Indian Ocean region than compared to the Pacific and Caribbean. In this light, he highlighted the importance of partnerships amongst the three SIDS regions with collective action amongst regional institutions. He emphasised that SIDS shouldn't go into the 2014 SIDS conference with a common position as they are leaders in DRR and should lead by example. Of importance is the pooling of resources through regional institutions when considering risk financing and insurance but also as a cost effective measure. In reference to data management, Mr. Legrand stated this was key and a precondition to DRR policies.

In summary, Mr. Acharya reflected that the presentations had provided a holistic view of both challenges and opportunities for SIDS. It was not only small islands that were being looked at, but also the large oceans of which SIDS are custodians of, which had an impact on the health of the islands and their inhabitants but also the global public goods found in the oceans. While disasters occur in all countries, it is the disproportionality of the impacts that must be stressed and taken into account when it comes to SIDS. Early warning, institutions and resourcing were extremely important in any discussions of disaster risk reduction, which required mainstreaming into national development plans to build resilience. Mr. Acharya also stressed the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources – particularly coastal - through which communities acquired their livelihoods. SIDS issues must also be at the forefront of the post-2015 development agenda, the DRR agenda, the 2014 SIDS Conference and likewise the climate change agenda.

Highlights and Recommendations; stemming from the Featured Event

The Featured Event highlighted the need for SIDS to institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. It is important that disaster risk reduction and resilience building be mainstreamed into national development programmes. It was made clear that investments in reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for SIDS to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. It was recognized that the private sector in SIDS was an important stakeholder with an important role to play in terms of building resilience and sustaining livelihoods. Poverty reduction was touched upon as an important avenue towards resilience building. The importance of preparedness was stressed as being vital including the use by authorities of simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and these messages being translated into guidelines and recommendations and broadcast as early warning messages through various media. Integrating disaster risk reduction into education and awareness curricula from primary school level upwards and including at the grassroots/community level was also stressed as an important avenue for improving preparedness and building capacity for resilience. It was demonstrated that disaster risk reduction was a developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. It was stressed that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement; where many SIDS lacked individual capacity. Emphasis was placed on the need for heightened cooperation amongst SIDS. Given that these countries have experienced various levels of natural and man-made disasters, they are best placed to institute best practice and disseminate lessons learned amongst themselves. Speakers concurred that Caribbean nations were coming together to address climate change, sustainable development and trade. One of the challenges however, was to ensure that the strategies were mutually reinforcing. Efforts were also presently focused on tourism and community-level risk reduction, rather than spread out into broader sectors, such as health, agriculture, education, finance, environment, water, sanitation, rural communities etc.; a cross-sectoral approach would be advisable. Despite agreement on the need for cross-sectoral programmes, it was recognized that lack of resources meant priority being given to important sectors – such as tourism – at the expense of others. In this light, there was emphasis on the need for greater regional solidarity to bolster disaster risk reduction in those sectors that were lacking. There was also a feeling that there should not be a singular focus on disasters but also on shocks, as not all shocks cause disasters but that there were shocks which had cumulative effects such as the international financial crisis which compounds recovery from disasters in SIDS. The importance of building resilience to transboundary shocks was also highlighted in that there were examples of shocks being experienced by larger countries that had direct impacts on SIDS; such as rising food and fuel prices. It was stressed that there is ample expertise present in the SIDS regions and that international assistance needed to take into account building the capacity of that expertise as part of development aid. Also of importance is the need for SIDS governments to invest in disaster risk reduction as opposed to investments being made by donor governments only.

One important priority of this Featured Event was to highlight recommendations

pertaining to SIDS with regards to the second phase of the Hyogo Framework for Action - also known as HFA2 - commencing in 2015. In this regard, the Featured Event recommended that:

- HFA2 needs to reflect the disproportionate effects of climate change on SIDS and that this is a group of countries which contributes the least – less than 1% - to global greenhouse gas emissions, yet bear the greatest burden to the multiple impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Global Assessment Report 2013 chapter on SIDS clearly makes the case – given the latest risk data – of the high exposure of SIDS to natural hazards. In this light, SIDS is the group of countries which stands to gain the most if investments in disaster risk reduction can be leveraged.
- HFA2 should recognize that by virtue of SIDS’ geographic features, they are more often than not situated in areas highly prone to natural hazards. Importantly, communities in SIDS are often located in highly prone areas as these are access points to livelihoods. This includes for instance fishing communities exposed to coastal phenomena and farming communities located on steep slopes – some of which are volcanically active, geologically unstable or prone to flooding.
- HFA2 will need to stress that SIDS continue to require support and partnerships in establishing and maintaining effective early warning systems. Such systems need to be well coordinated, simple to understand and provide guidelines for action by communities in responding and mitigating the effects of hazards. Improved data acquisition and data management resources would enhance the ability of SIDS to predict and respond effectively to hazards.
- National development plans need to effectively integrate and mainstream disaster risk reduction through a holistic cross-sectoral approach involving all relevant stakeholders including private sector and civil society. However, it must be realized that given capacity and resource constraints faced by SIDS, it is often the case that resources are directed and prioritized to select sectors at the expense of others. While this is understandable, it often means that gaps are present in maintaining resilience. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on pooling limited resources through better coordination by government authorities and relevant stakeholders.
- HFA2 needs to reflect on the transboundary effects of shocks which are often felt disproportionately by SIDS including for instance price rises in food, fuel and other commodities.
- Education regarding disaster risk reduction from primary school level upwards needs to be emphasized as vital to building resilience in SIDS. Rural communities will need support in this regard. It is also vital that expertise already present in SIDS be supported and enhanced with the support of development partners.
- Private sector engagement and partnerships needs further commitment and expansion. As many SIDS economies rely on a handful of industries –

notably tourism – it is crucial that private sector be recognized as important stakeholders in the resilience building agenda.

- HFA2 must encourage South-South cooperation and especially amongst SIDS themselves. As a group of countries that is often exposed to similar hazards, SIDS are best placed to share lessons learned. This cooperation needs to be supported by not only SIDS themselves but their development partners.

Report on the Featured Event on Small Island Developing States
during the
Fourth Session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction
19-23 May 2013, Geneva - Switzerland

Background

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) co-organised a Featured Event entitled **Strengthening Partnerships Towards Disaster Risk Reduction for Small Island Developing States** at the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. The Global Platform took place from 19-23 May, 2013 at the Geneva International Conference Center with the Featured Event on SIDS taking place on the 21st May (15:00 – 18:00).

- See programme under: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/32569_en.pdf
- See video under: http://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLBDwPnveHho-jeZRMdDgHKnVtLWk0bL8p&v=n2xbNquU5-Y&feature=player_embedded

In light of the interrelated and complex reality SIDS face, vis-à-vis disaster risk, the Featured Event aimed to draw upon national and regional experiences through the perspectives of political leaders, experts and stakeholders in various aspects pertaining to the disaster risk reduction agenda for SIDS.

The event pursued multiple objectives including the need to highlight the vulnerability and exposure of SIDS to hazards leading to escalating losses and the corresponding impacts on development. Also, a call for immediate action and support to reduce risks associated with disasters and to enhance SIDS' resilience was sought. As the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013 was launched by the Secretary-General prior to the event, it was also made an objective to discuss the findings as pertaining to SIDS given new risk data and the need to highlight the role of the private sector in contributing to risk mitigation. In view of the upcoming Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014, the event also sought to identify work to be done on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development to contribute towards the preparatory process leading up to the SIDS International Conference. Similarly, with the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) being prepared for 2015, views were sought as to how the resilience building for SIDS would be incorporated into HFA2. Recognizing the importance of the grassroots and traditional levels of society in SIDS, the event moreover, aimed to bring this sector to the fore with regards to strengthening and building capacity to prepare and respond proactively to disaster events.

Event Structure

The event was structured in two parts. The first session (15:00-16:00) was a high level segment chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya who provided opening remarks followed by statements of the nine high level representatives including a presentation on relevant SIDS findings from the 2013 Global Assessment Report by Mr. Andrew Maskrey (Lead Author, Global Assessment Report).

The second session (16:00 - 18:00), moderated by BBC Chief International Correspondent Ms. Lyse Doucet, was structured as an interactive dialogue with panelists providing 3 minute opening remarks followed by a moderated dialogue allowing for questions from the floor.

List of Speakers

Session I: High-Level Opening (3-4pm)

[Chair] **Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya**, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

1. **Mr. Jan Eliasson**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
2. **H.E. Mr. David Basile**, Minister of the Interior, Republic of Haiti
3. **H.E. Mr. James Fletcher**, Minister of the Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, Saint Lucia
4. **H.E. Ms. Nikki Kaye**, Minister of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, New Zealand
5. **H.E. Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais**, Minister of Internal Affairs, Republic of Cape Verde
6. **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nazim**, Minister of Defence, Republic of Maldives
7. **Ms. Kristalina Georgieva**, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response
8. **Mr. Rajendra K Pachauri**, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
9. **Mr. Andrew Maskrey**, Coordinator, United Nations Global Assessment Report (GAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction

Session II: Interactive Dialogue (4-6pm)

[Moderator] **Ms. Lyse Doucet**, Chief International Correspondent, BBC

1. **H.E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Republic of Maldives
2. **Mr. José Rubiera**, Director, Instituto de Meteorología (National Forecasting Centre), Republic of Cuba
3. **Ms. Annes Athy Simon**, community worker, Republic of Vanuatu
4. **Mr. Ronald Jackson**, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
5. **Mr. Gary Philoctete**, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization
6. **Mr. Christophe Legrand**, Sustainable Development Expert, Indian Ocean Commission

Summary of Statements by Panelists

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Mr. James Fletcher, Minister of Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia, said the Caribbean, where many countries were already confronting high levels of debt and anaemic economic growth, faced an increased risk of climate change. Given that many countries in the Caribbean shared similar concerns as pertaining to climate change and hazards, Minister Fletcher emphasised a regional approach to risk mitigation and likewise minimizing the severe impacts of climate change. It was stressed that SIDS should institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. The Minister elaborated on the need to balance socio-economic priorities and disaster resilience. There is also the need for SIDS to expand data acquisition, spatial planning and improve infrastructure in order to bolster capacity building efforts for better resilience to disasters. Minister Fletcher informed that when it came to mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and the need for an integrated approach, SIDS continue to struggle in this field. The Minister welcomed the idea of learning lessons from others including amongst SIDS and that Saint Lucia was happy to share its community group actions with others. The issue of technical assistance was also highlighted as a crucial issue that continues to be of concern for SIDS.

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Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais, Minister of Home Affairs of Cape Verde, said that disaster risk reduction could not be dealt with in isolation but should be a part of the national development policy. Minister Morais outlined the various difficulties Cape Verde faces including volcanic activity, prolonged drought, coastal erosion, sea-level rise, torrential rain, flooding and implications for food security. Given that tourism and fisheries are the two mainstays of the Cape Verdean economy, disasters hamper activities in these sectors. The Minister stated that limitations in infrastructure meant difficulties with dealing with disasters and that a serious disaster would seriously threaten the development of the country. The costs of recovery and limited budgetary capacity meant that even “small” disasters were considerable, and so Cape Verde was working to update its development agenda to incorporate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. The Minister expressed that Cape Verde does not have the capacity to build resilience on its own,

and that partnerships at the regional, sub-regional and multi-lateral levels – including through technical assistance - were needed.

Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Minister of Defence of Maldives, said that all efforts towards disaster reduction in small island developing States should go hand in hand with climate change adaptation. The Minister stressed that to be effective, SIDS needed to present a common front to the world including through sharing of lessons and perspectives. Raising awareness and preparedness amongst the population is a key focus for the Maldives. With tourism being the mainstay of the economy, mitigation and adaptation were being integrated into the policies of the industry to increase resilience. For the past few years it had focused on creating resilient island communities in the face of storm surges, flooding and other hazards, and the tourism industry was also looking at how to increase resilience including through adopting finance risk insurance. Minister Nazim stated that building strong cross-sectoral partnerships was the key to successful disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Aside from international partnerships, partnerships amongst SIDS was also emphasised as crucial to overcoming common challenges.

Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, said the European Union had been at the forefront of the battle against climate change. Ms. Georgieva described how despite the economic crisis in Europe, they remained a commitment to promises made including through fast-track financing; delivering €7.5 billion. She emphasised that SIDS needed to have a large voice to amplify the message of priorities by the international community. She spoke of bottom-up solutions including through simple but effective community based initiatives that the EU supported with special focus on reducing loss of life, reducing damage and building capacity. With reference to funding, she stated that Europe had an obligation to assist developing countries. She outlined assistance programmes by the EU including a €20 million facility for the Pacific and likewise for the Caribbean. EU programmes are also focussing on countries exposed to recurrent shocks with an emphasis on building capacity in withstanding shocks as a priority for EU cooperation. She also stressed the importance of countries being able to have capacity to absorb assistance being received during disasters.

Mr. Andrew Maskrey, Coordinator and Lead Author, United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013, said that reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for small island developing States to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. Mr. Maskrey stressed that SIDS are widely accepted as being highly prone to the hazards of natural and man-made disasters. SIDS possessed the highest risk to capital from disasters than any group of countries in the world. Furthermore, SIDS have a high proportion of their assets exposed to risk as indicated in Figures 1-3. As illustrated in Figure 1, in the case of a 1-in-250 year earthquake, 7 of the 10 countries that would lose the largest proportion of the value of their urban produced capital are SIDS. In the Solomon Islands, Dominica and Vanuatu, between 30% and 50% of the value of their urban produced capital would be lost. Looking at the amount of investments that is at risk is equally important as this determines the ability to bounce back after a disaster strikes; see Figure 4. He emphasised that disasters for SIDS could mean sluggish growth not only in the short-term but over many years with the potential of entering a vicious cycle where poor

growth leads to a lack of resources to build resilience and recovery from future disasters.

Figure 1 Top 10 countries in terms of Average Annual Losses (AAL) (left) and probable maximum loss (PML) (right) from earthquakes as a percentage of urban produced capital

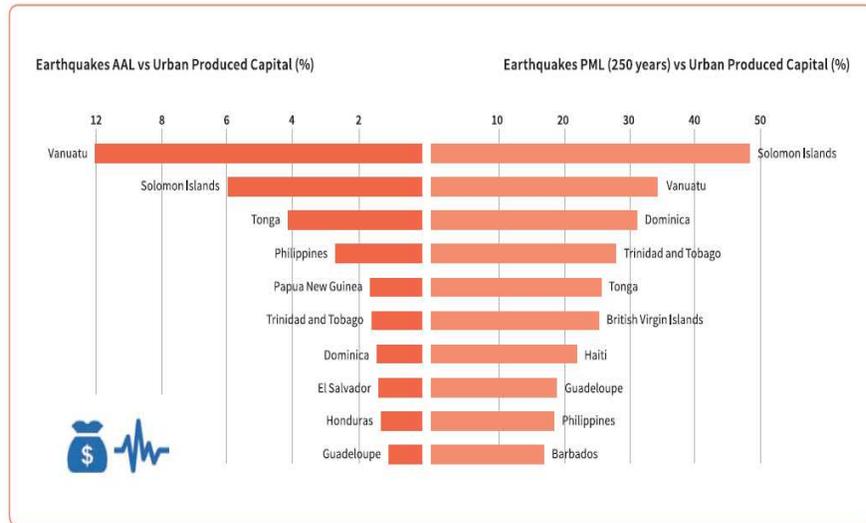
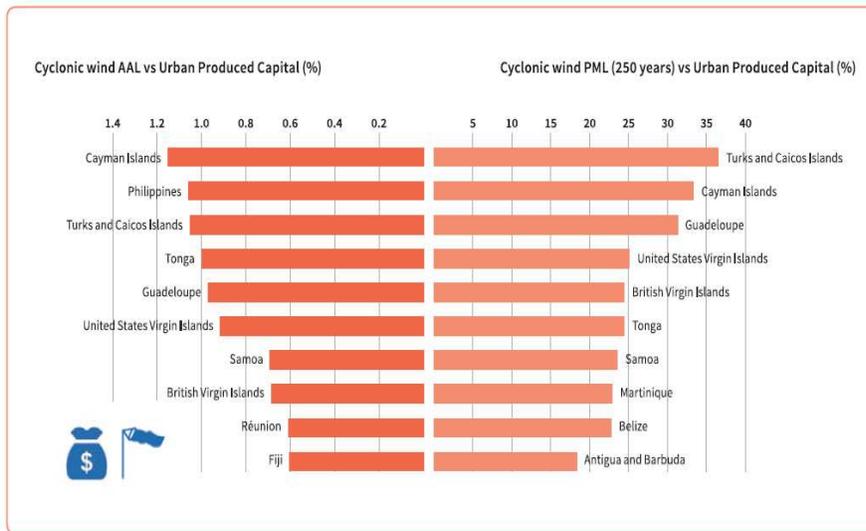
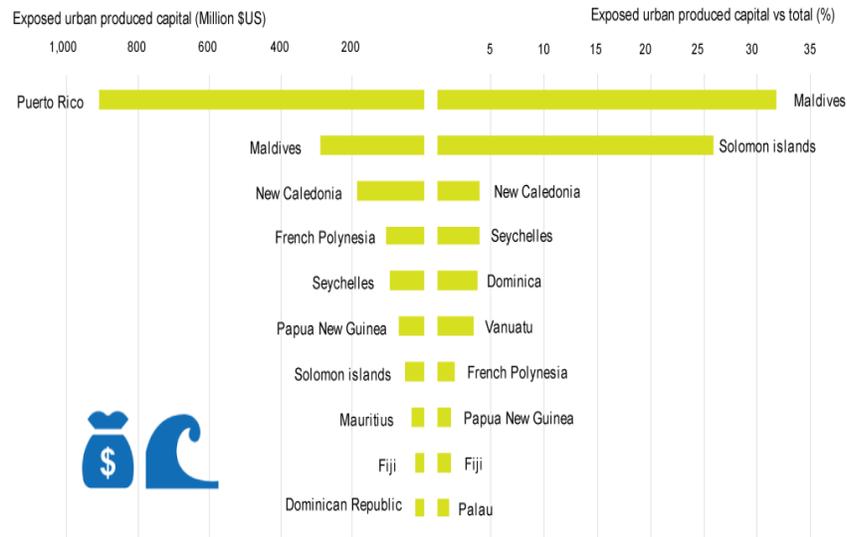
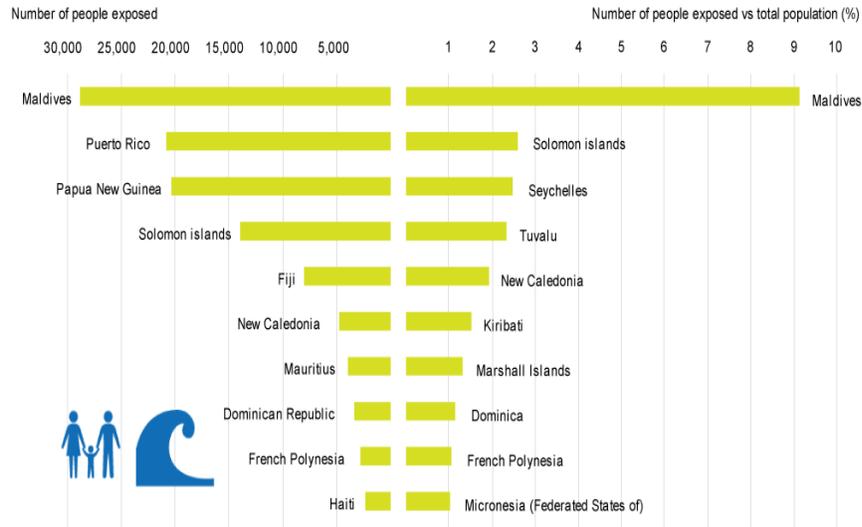


Figure 2: Top 10 countries with highest AAL (left) and PML (right) from cyclonic winds



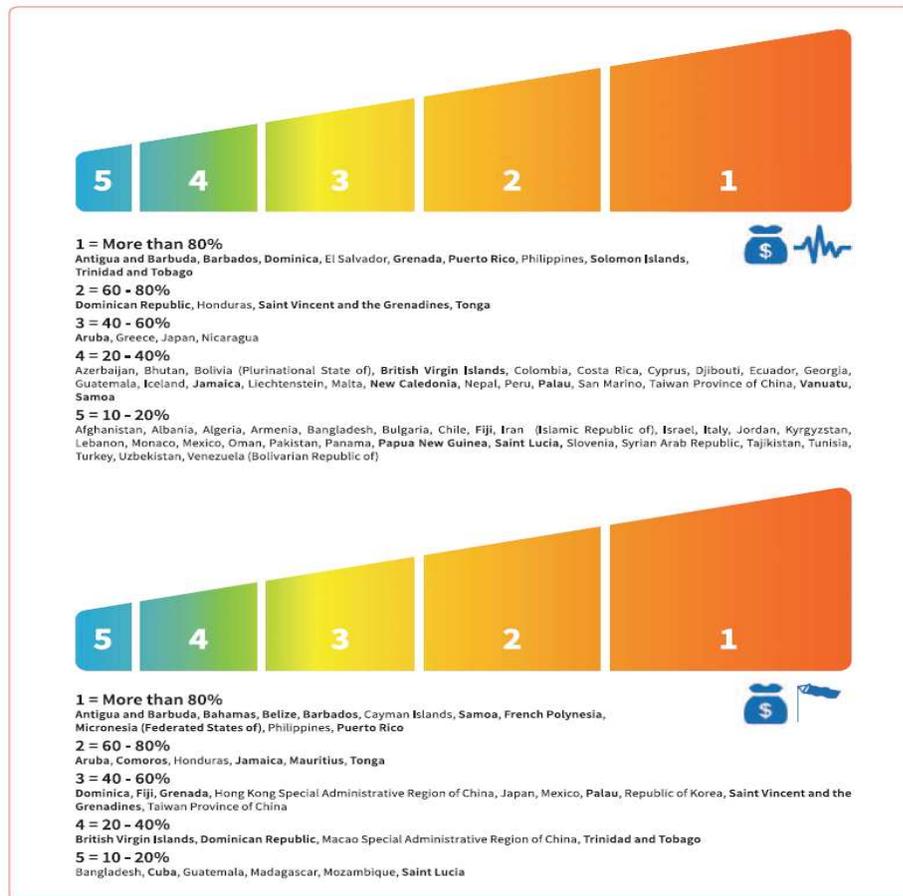
(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 3: Urban produced capital and population (absolute and relative) exposed to tsunamis in SIDS



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 4 : Probable maximum losses from one-in-250 year earthquakes (top) and cyclonic wind damage (bottom) as a percentage of gross capital formation (SIDS highlighted in bold)



(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Second Session, Interactive Dialogue Moderated by Ms. Lyse Doucet

Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN in Geneva, said that natural disasters had increased considerably in small island developing States, many of which relied on their environment and ecosystems for income generation. She referred to the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation which outlined important proposals for tackling climate change including through capacity building and human resource development. She also outlined the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) proposal under the UNFCCC to address disaster management for climate change under an international mechanism to address loss and damage. Given that many SIDS rely on ecosystems for income, disasters pose a threat to this source of income. Referring to the HFA synthesis report, she stated that the progress being made by SIDS was below expectations. The Ambassador stated that disaster risk reduction measures were a good investment in building resilience which can lead to economic opportunities. Maldives was already committed to

becoming carbon-neutral by 2020. Ms. Adam stressed that more information was needed on how to actually manage disasters and that inadequate data presented constraints. Furthermore, she pointed to institutional capacity constraints as barriers to disaster risk reduction efforts. Ms. Adam emphasised that daily work at the grass-roots level was needed to build resilience.

Mr. Jose Rubiera, Director of Cuba's National Forecasting Centre, said the planet climate was changing including through increases in sea-surface temperatures presenting an increased hurricane risk in the Caribbean, but Cuba had faced many previous such disasters successfully. He outlined that scientific institutions were an active part of the disaster management system in Cuba. Its meteorologists used simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and their messages were translated into guidelines and recommendations by civil defence authorities and broadcast as early warning messages through various mediums. Mr. Rubiera also referred to a strong culture of prevention in the country. Student competitions including at the primary school level were held to test knowledge of disaster issues, and little by little the population was developing an awareness of risk. He stressed that lessons learned from Cuba could be shared with other SIDS especially that of the culture of preparedness.

Ms. Annies Simon, Civil Society Representative from Vanuatu, stressed that the greatest challenges faced by small Pacific island countries in confronting natural hazards were internal capacities and geographical location. What they relied on the most was their traditional knowledge - including observation of cloud movements and seabirds - which for generations had been a powerful tool for coping with hardship. Furthermore, traditional knowledge was highlighted as an early warning system of importance to local communities. Small community committees took preventive and responsive action in the face of natural hazards. They valued becoming self-reliant before seeking donor support. It was also pointed out that rural communities in SIDS were hard to reach and often left last in terms of relief following a disaster event. Given that rural communities were heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture, the case was made for building resilience in this sector. In Ms. Simon's work with rural communities in her native Vanuatu, she pointed to a booklet (*Yumi redy long wan Disasta – Let's be ready for a Disaster*) which she had written which explains in simple everyday language how rural communities can build resilience and be prepared when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Ronald Jackson, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, said that disaster risk reduction was an economic and developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. He emphasised the importance of a wide stakeholder buy-in not just with the 18 Member States of CDEMA but also with private sector and donor partners. There is also a focus of harmonizing DRR investments in the region. While the DRR issue had advanced considerably in the region including through the Caribbean Community Strategic Programming Framework, more targeted investment was required along with strengthening funding frameworks. Partners and funding should be further harmonized around the issue of climate change and DRR, language should be repackaged and the value of investing in risk reduction should be better illustrated. Mr. Jackson stressed that investments in disaster risk reduction provided economic benefits. The example of Information and

Communication Technologies (ICTs) was presented as being of importance in issuing early warning to affected communities. He also stressed that any intervention by donor countries in the region should involve capacity-building. Some countries were excluded from donor envelopes, making them even more vulnerable. However, parallel mechanisms were emerging to deal with climate change adaptation financing.

Mr. Gary Philoctete, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization, said that a cash-forward approach had been useful after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to involve families in all stages of the relocation process. Both formal and on-the-job training had been provided to masons. Unfortunately, Government involvement had been limited, as most of its institutions had collapsed following the earthquake. Poverty and instability only impeded disaster risk reduction, which required major infrastructure development that was often beyond the Government's capacity. The private sector, which was also important, was unfortunately lacking in Haiti. Despite efforts at reconstruction, the country remained very vulnerable, and ran more or less the same risk in the event of another earthquake or hurricane.

Mr. Christophe Legrand, from the Indian Ocean Commission, said that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement, where many small island developing States lacked individual capacity. He also pointed out that there was a greater capacity constraint in the Indian Ocean region than compared to the Pacific and Caribbean. In this light, he highlighted the importance of partnerships amongst the three SIDS regions with collective action amongst regional institutions. He emphasised that SIDS shouldn't go into the 2014 SIDS conference with a common position as they are leaders in DRR and should lead by example. Of importance is the pooling of resources through regional institutions when considering risk financing and insurance but also as a cost effective measure. In reference to data management, Mr. Legrand stated this was key and a precondition to DRR policies.

In summary, Mr. Acharya reflected that the presentations had provided a holistic view of both challenges and opportunities for SIDS. It was not only small islands that were being looked at, but also the large oceans of which SIDS are custodians of, which had an impact on the health of the islands and their inhabitants but also the global public goods found in the oceans. While disasters occur in all countries, it is the disproportionality of the impacts that must be stressed and taken into account when it comes to SIDS. Early warning, institutions and resourcing were extremely important in any discussions of disaster risk reduction, which required mainstreaming into national development plans to build resilience. Mr. Acharya also stressed the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources – particularly coastal - through which communities acquired their livelihoods. SIDS issues must also be at the forefront of the post-2015 development agenda, the DRR agenda, the 2014 SIDS Conference and likewise the climate change agenda.

Highlights and Recommendations; stemming from the Featured Event

The Featured Event highlighted the need for SIDS to institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. It is important that disaster risk reduction and resilience building be mainstreamed into national development programmes. It was made clear that investments in reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for SIDS to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. It was recognized that the private sector in SIDS was an important stakeholder with an important role to play in terms of building resilience and sustaining livelihoods. Poverty reduction was touched upon as an important avenue towards resilience building. The importance of preparedness was stressed as being vital including the use by authorities of simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and these messages being translated into guidelines and recommendations and broadcast as early warning messages through various media. Integrating disaster risk reduction into education and awareness curricula from primary school level upwards and including at the grassroots/community level was also stressed as an important avenue for improving preparedness and building capacity for resilience. It was demonstrated that disaster risk reduction was a developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. It was stressed that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement; where many SIDS lacked individual capacity. Emphasis was placed on the need for heightened cooperation amongst SIDS. Given that these countries have experienced various levels of natural and man-made disasters, they are best placed to institute best practice and disseminate lessons learned amongst themselves. Speakers concurred that Caribbean nations were coming together to address climate change, sustainable development and trade. One of the challenges however, was to ensure that the strategies were mutually reinforcing. Efforts were also presently focused on tourism and community-level risk reduction, rather than spread out into broader sectors, such as health, agriculture, education, finance, environment, water, sanitation, rural communities etc.; a cross-sectoral approach would be advisable. Despite agreement on the need for cross-sectoral programmes, it was recognized that lack of resources meant priority being given to important sectors – such as tourism – at the expense of others. In this light, there was emphasis on the need for greater regional solidarity to bolster disaster risk reduction in those sectors that were lacking. There was also a feeling that there should not be a singular focus on disasters but also on shocks, as not all shocks cause disasters but that there were shocks which had cumulative effects such as the international financial crisis which compounds recovery from disasters in SIDS. The importance of building resilience to transboundary shocks was also highlighted in that there were examples of shocks being experienced by larger countries that had direct impacts on SIDS; such as rising food and fuel prices. It was stressed that there is ample expertise present in the SIDS regions and that international assistance needed to take into account building the capacity of that expertise as part of development aid. Also of importance is the need for SIDS governments to invest in disaster risk reduction as opposed to investments being made by donor governments only.

One important priority of this Featured Event was to highlight recommendations

pertaining to SIDS with regards to the second phase of the Hyogo Framework for Action - also known as HFA2 - commencing in 2015. In this regard, the Featured Event recommended that:

- HFA2 needs to reflect the disproportionate effects of climate change on SIDS and that this is a group of countries which contributes the least – less than 1% - to global greenhouse gas emissions, yet bear the greatest burden to the multiple impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Global Assessment Report 2013 chapter on SIDS clearly makes the case – given the latest risk data – of the high exposure of SIDS to natural hazards. In this light, SIDS is the group of countries which stands to gain the most if investments in disaster risk reduction can be leveraged.
- HFA2 should recognize that by virtue of SIDS’ geographic features, they are more often than not situated in areas highly prone to natural hazards. Importantly, communities in SIDS are often located in highly prone areas as these are access points to livelihoods. This includes for instance fishing communities exposed to coastal phenomena and farming communities located on steep slopes – some of which are volcanically active, geologically unstable or prone to flooding.
- HFA2 will need to stress that SIDS continue to require support and partnerships in establishing and maintaining effective early warning systems. Such systems need to be well coordinated, simple to understand and provide guidelines for action by communities in responding and mitigating the effects of hazards. Improved data acquisition and data management resources would enhance the ability of SIDS to predict and respond effectively to hazards.
- National development plans need to effectively integrate and mainstream disaster risk reduction through a holistic cross-sectoral approach involving all relevant stakeholders including private sector and civil society. However, it must be realized that given capacity and resource constraints faced by SIDS, it is often the case that resources are directed and prioritized to select sectors at the expense of others. While this is understandable, it often means that gaps are present in maintaining resilience. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on pooling limited resources through better coordination by government authorities and relevant stakeholders.
- HFA2 needs to reflect on the transboundary effects of shocks which are often felt disproportionately by SIDS including for instance price rises in food, fuel and other commodities.
- Education regarding disaster risk reduction from primary school level upwards needs to be emphasized as vital to building resilience in SIDS. Rural communities will need support in this regard. It is also vital that expertise already present in SIDS be supported and enhanced with the support of development partners.
- Private sector engagement and partnerships needs further commitment and expansion. As many SIDS economies rely on a handful of industries –

notably tourism – it is crucial that private sector be recognized as important stakeholders in the resilience building agenda.

- HFA2 must encourage South-South cooperation and especially amongst SIDS themselves. As a group of countries that is often exposed to similar hazards, SIDS are best placed to share lessons learned. This cooperation needs to be supported by not only SIDS themselves but their development partners.

Report on the Featured Event on Small Island Developing States
during the
Fourth Session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction
19-23 May 2013, Geneva - Switzerland

Background

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) co-organised a Featured Event entitled **Strengthening Partnerships Towards Disaster Risk Reduction for Small Island Developing States** at the Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. The Global Platform took place from 19-23 May, 2013 at the Geneva International Conference Center with the Featured Event on SIDS taking place on the 21st May (15:00 – 18:00).

- See programme under: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/32569_en.pdf
- See video under: http://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLBDwPnveHho-jeZRMdDgHKnVtLWk0bL8p&v=n2xbNquU5-Y&feature=player_embedded

In light of the interrelated and complex reality SIDS face, vis-à-vis disaster risk, the Featured Event aimed to draw upon national and regional experiences through the perspectives of political leaders, experts and stakeholders in various aspects pertaining to the disaster risk reduction agenda for SIDS.

The event pursued multiple objectives including the need to highlight the vulnerability and exposure of SIDS to hazards leading to escalating losses and the corresponding impacts on development. Also, a call for immediate action and support to reduce risks associated with disasters and to enhance SIDS' resilience was sought. As the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013 was launched by the Secretary-General prior to the event, it was also made an objective to discuss the findings as pertaining to SIDS given new risk data and the need to highlight the role of the private sector in contributing to risk mitigation. In view of the upcoming Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014, the event also sought to identify work to be done on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development to contribute towards the preparatory process leading up to the SIDS International Conference. Similarly, with the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) being prepared for 2015, views were sought as to how the resilience building for SIDS would be incorporated into HFA2. Recognizing the importance of the grassroots and traditional levels of society in SIDS, the event moreover, aimed to bring this sector to the fore with regards to strengthening and building capacity to prepare and respond proactively to disaster events.

Event Structure

The event was structured in two parts. The first session (15:00-16:00) was a high level segment chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya who provided opening remarks followed by statements of the nine high level representatives including a presentation on relevant SIDS findings from the 2013 Global Assessment Report by Mr. Andrew Maskrey (Lead Author, Global Assessment Report).

The second session (16:00 - 18:00), moderated by BBC Chief International Correspondent Ms. Lyse Doucet, was structured as an interactive dialogue with panelists providing 3 minute opening remarks followed by a moderated dialogue allowing for questions from the floor.

List of Speakers

Session I: High-Level Opening (3-4pm)

[Chair] **Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya**, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

1. **Mr. Jan Eliasson**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
2. **H.E. Mr. David Basile**, Minister of the Interior, Republic of Haiti
3. **H.E. Mr. James Fletcher**, Minister of the Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology, Saint Lucia
4. **H.E. Ms. Nikki Kaye**, Minister of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, New Zealand
5. **H.E. Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais**, Minister of Internal Affairs, Republic of Cape Verde
6. **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nazim**, Minister of Defence, Republic of Maldives
7. **Ms. Kristalina Georgieva**, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response
8. **Mr. Rajendra K Pachauri**, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
9. **Mr. Andrew Maskrey**, Coordinator, United Nations Global Assessment Report (GAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction

Session II: Interactive Dialogue (4-6pm)

[Moderator] **Ms. Lyse Doucet**, Chief International Correspondent, BBC

1. **H.E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Republic of Maldives
2. **Mr. José Rubiera**, Director, Instituto de Meteorología (National Forecasting Centre), Republic of Cuba
3. **Ms. Annes Athy Simon**, community worker, Republic of Vanuatu
4. **Mr. Ronald Jackson**, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
5. **Mr. Gary Philoctete**, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization
6. **Mr. Christophe Legrand**, Sustainable Development Expert, Indian Ocean Commission

Summary of Statements by Panelists

High Level Session – Chaired by the High Representative Mr. Gyan Acharya

Mr. Gyan Acharya, UN High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, stated that this was a timely event for small island developing States as preparations are made towards the 2014 SIDS Conference, the second review of the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2015 and as the discourse is intensified towards the post 2015 development agenda. The High Representative emphasised that the means of livelihoods is precarious for SIDS and that disaster risk had to be thought of in a holistic manner including from the fundamental perspective of survival and sustainability of livelihoods and development efforts. Mr. Acharya stressed that an opportunity existed to build resilience through a multi-stakeholder approach and a need for stronger global partnerships including through innovative business partnerships and full engagement of communities and civil society. He also stated that natural disasters were a fact of life in SIDS, but their impact should not be.

Mr. Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, said that when it came to the environment and climate, there was no “Planet B”. Mr. Eliasson stressed the urgency of the issue of disaster risk reduction for SIDS and given that this group of countries contributes less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions, SIDS are on the frontlines of climate change and suffer disproportionately. The DSG also stressed that the effects of climate change on SIDS was of serious concern which could affect their economies, territories, and at times their very existence. He emphasised that SIDS relied on the business community to help strengthen their economies and are riddled with debt by recurring disasters. Looking toward the 2014 SIDS Conference, Mr. Eliasson stated that the issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction would be top of the agenda at the Conference in Samoa.

Mr. David Basile, Minister of the Interior of Haiti, praised efforts and partnerships by the international community in responding to the 2010 earthquake which devastated his country. He highlighted that Caribbean nations were becoming more cohesive through regional integration including through political and economic means. Integration included for instance increasing exchanges on climate change, and on controlling and managing land and sea phenomena.

Mr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, stressed that the key economic sectors in SIDS were all susceptible to the impacts of climate change including fisheries, tourism and agriculture with resultant implications for food security. He also outlined the vast differences in economic losses experienced by SIDS compared to other groups of countries when considering disaster related losses. He stated that rising sea levels were responsible for extreme coastal flooding and substantially higher risks for small island developing States; low-lying islands were especially vulnerable to erosion, inundation and saline intrusion. Disasters entailed the possible loss of development opportunities and a setback in development gains, with sharp economic repercussions for SIDS. The need for improved infrastructure and enhanced institutional measures was highlighted as crucial for SIDS. He also stressed that when considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the global community had an obligation to support SIDS – given that

they suffered the greatest as a result of climate change yet contribute less than 1% to global emissions.

Mr. James Fletcher, Minister of Public Service, Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology of Saint Lucia, said the Caribbean, where many countries were already confronting high levels of debt and anaemic economic growth, faced an increased risk of climate change. Given that many countries in the Caribbean shared similar concerns as pertaining to climate change and hazards, Minister Fletcher emphasised a regional approach to risk mitigation and likewise minimizing the severe impacts of climate change. It was stressed that SIDS should institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. The Minister elaborated on the need to balance socio-economic priorities and disaster resilience. There is also the need for SIDS to expand data acquisition, spatial planning and improve infrastructure in order to bolster capacity building efforts for better resilience to disasters. Minister Fletcher informed that when it came to mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and the need for an integrated approach, SIDS continue to struggle in this field. The Minister welcomed the idea of learning lessons from others including amongst SIDS and that Saint Lucia was happy to share its community group actions with others. The issue of technical assistance was also highlighted as a crucial issue that continues to be of concern for SIDS.

Ms. Nikki Kaye, Minister of Civil Defence of New Zealand, said the country had a lot in common with small island developing States as it was also highly prone to hazards. New Zealand felt a strong responsibility to assist Pacific nations in strengthening their capabilities with supporting their national management plans and procedures and also their National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) training, awareness-raising and practical assistance in emergencies. New Zealand is also extending support to local communities for disaster awareness and preparedness in the Pacific. Given New Zealand's strong investments in science, Minister Kaye informed of assistance being given to Samoa with a tsunami-mapping exercise following the 2009 Samoa tsunami but also a 5 year volcano mapping exercise in Vanuatu. Furthermore, New Zealand was assisting – through its aid programme – Kiribati, Fiji and Cook Islands with disaster risk reduction initiatives. Minister Kaye expressed New Zealand's strong commitment to support Samoa towards hosting of the 2014 SIDS Conference.

Ms. Marisa Helena do Nascimento Morais, Minister of Home Affairs of Cape Verde, said that disaster risk reduction could not be dealt with in isolation but should be a part of the national development policy. Minister Morais outlined the various difficulties Cape Verde faces including volcanic activity, prolonged drought, coastal erosion, sea-level rise, torrential rain, flooding and implications for food security. Given that tourism and fisheries are the two mainstays of the Cape Verdean economy, disasters hamper activities in these sectors. The Minister stated that limitations in infrastructure meant difficulties with dealing with disasters and that a serious disaster would seriously threaten the development of the country. The costs of recovery and limited budgetary capacity meant that even “small” disasters were considerable, and so Cape Verde was working to update its development agenda to incorporate disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change. The Minister expressed that Cape Verde does not have the capacity to build resilience on its own,

and that partnerships at the regional, sub-regional and multi-lateral levels – including through technical assistance - were needed.

Mr. Mohamed Nazim, Minister of Defence of Maldives, said that all efforts towards disaster reduction in small island developing States should go hand in hand with climate change adaptation. The Minister stressed that to be effective, SIDS needed to present a common front to the world including through sharing of lessons and perspectives. Raising awareness and preparedness amongst the population is a key focus for the Maldives. With tourism being the mainstay of the economy, mitigation and adaptation were being integrated into the policies of the industry to increase resilience. For the past few years it had focused on creating resilient island communities in the face of storm surges, flooding and other hazards, and the tourism industry was also looking at how to increase resilience including through adopting finance risk insurance. Minister Nazim stated that building strong cross-sectoral partnerships was the key to successful disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Aside from international partnerships, partnerships amongst SIDS was also emphasised as crucial to overcoming common challenges.

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growth leads to a lack of resources to build resilience and recovery from future disasters.

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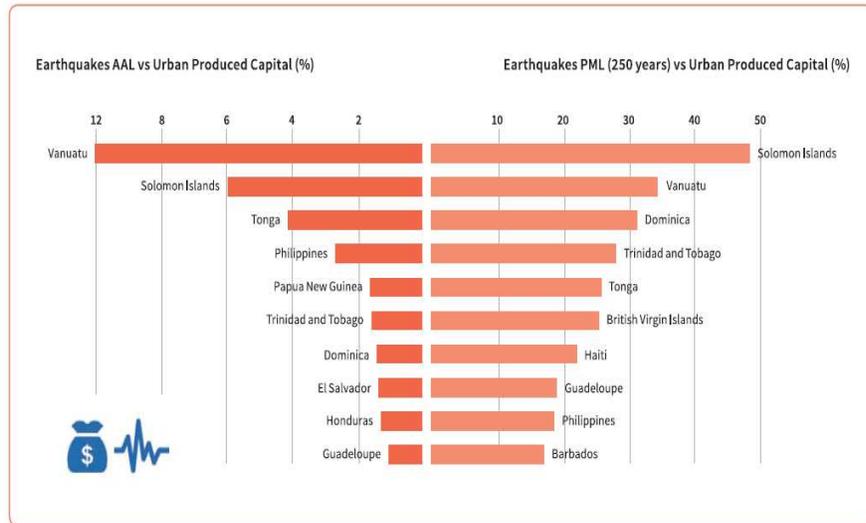
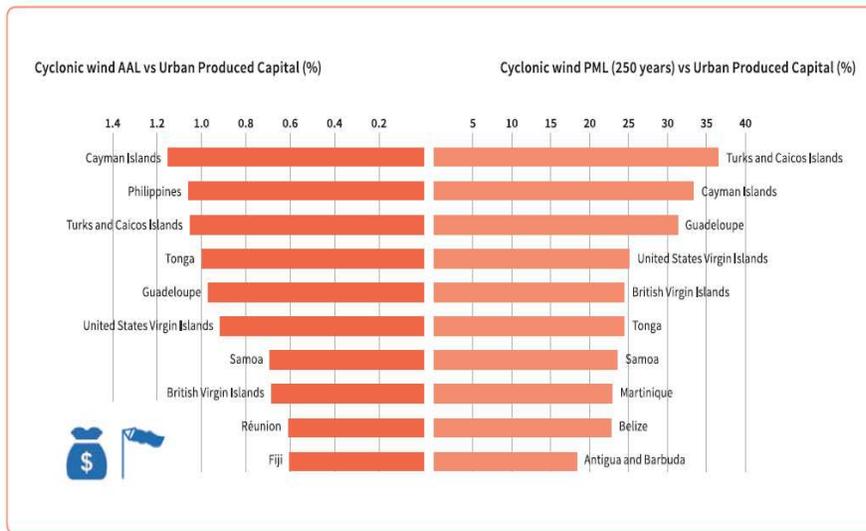
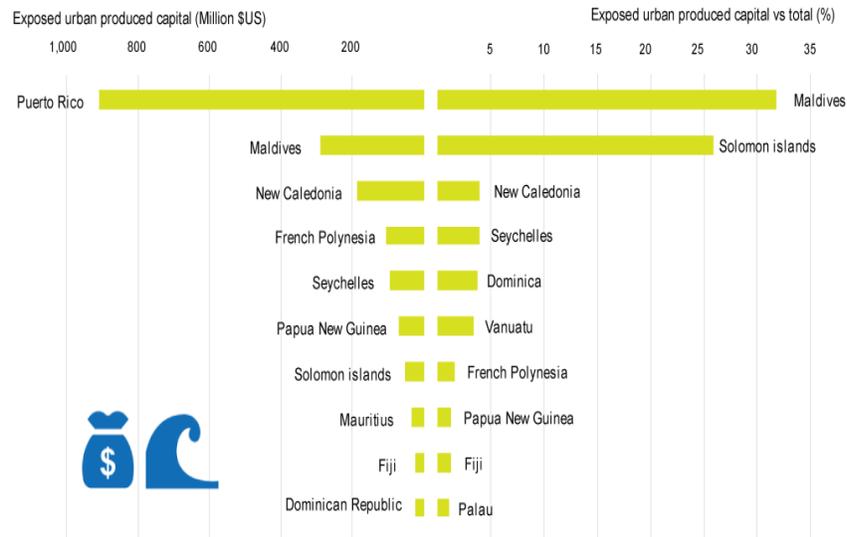
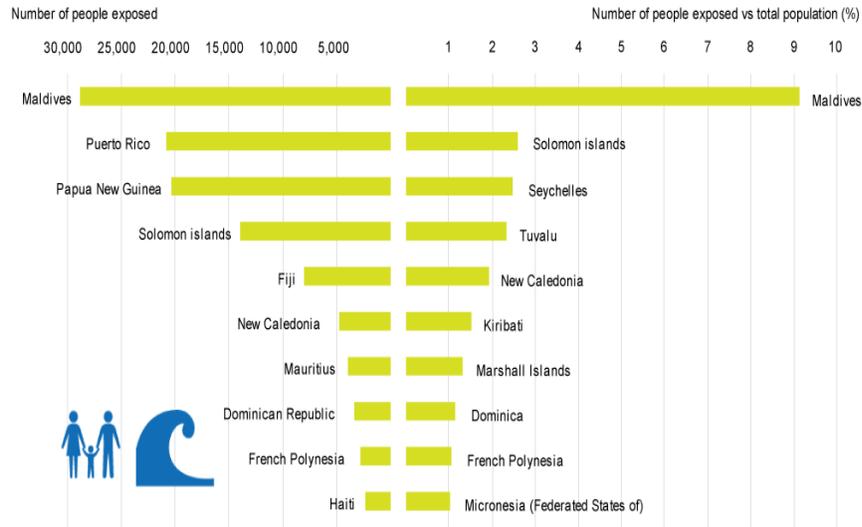


Figure 2: Top 10 countries with highest AAL (left) and PML (right) from cyclonic winds



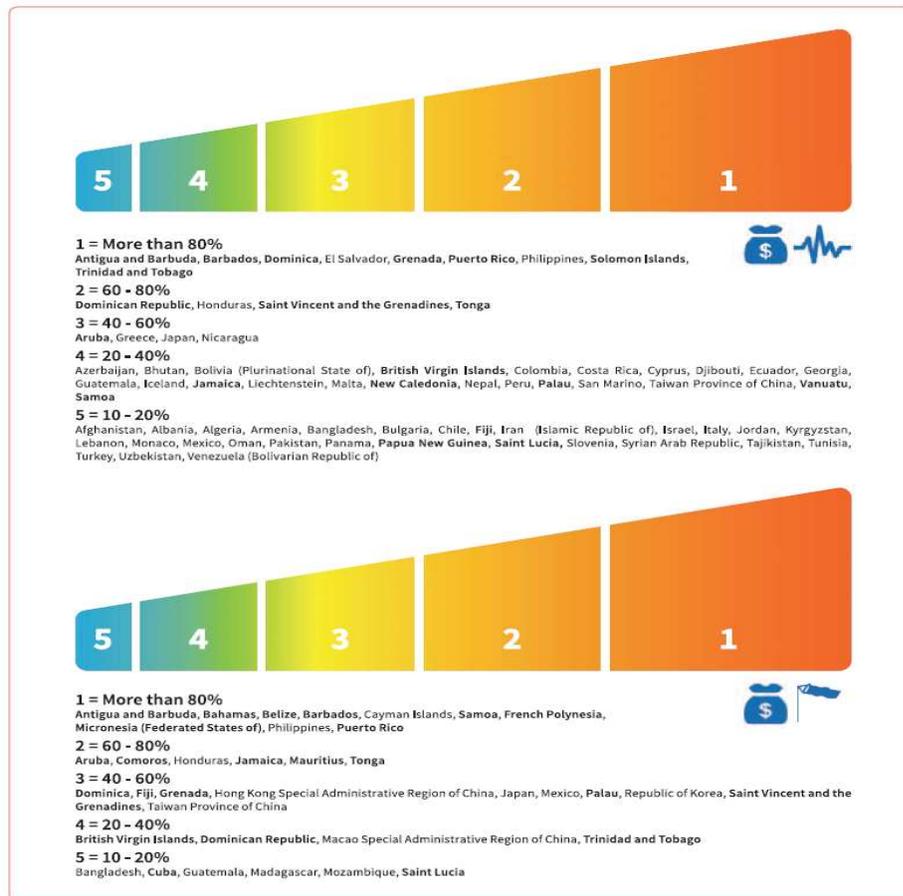
(Source: UNISDR, based on GAR global risk model)

Figure 3: Urban produced capital and population (absolute and relative) exposed to tsunamis in SIDS



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Figure 4 : Probable maximum losses from one-in-250 year earthquakes (top) and cyclonic wind damage (bottom) as a percentage of gross capital formation (SIDS highlighted in bold)



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Second Session, Interactive Dialogue Moderated by Ms. Lyse Doucet

Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN in Geneva, said that natural disasters had increased considerably in small island developing States, many of which relied on their environment and ecosystems for income generation. She referred to the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation which outlined important proposals for tackling climate change including through capacity building and human resource development. She also outlined the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) proposal under the UNFCCC to address disaster management for climate change under an international mechanism to address loss and damage. Given that many SIDS rely on ecosystems for income, disasters pose a threat to this source of income. Referring to the HFA synthesis report, she stated that the progress being made by SIDS was below expectations. The Ambassador stated that disaster risk reduction measures were a good investment in building resilience which can lead to economic opportunities. Maldives was already committed to

becoming carbon-neutral by 2020. Ms. Adam stressed that more information was needed on how to actually manage disasters and that inadequate data presented constraints. Furthermore, she pointed to institutional capacity constraints as barriers to disaster risk reduction efforts. Ms. Adam emphasised that daily work at the grass-roots level was needed to build resilience.

Mr. Jose Rubiera, Director of Cuba's National Forecasting Centre, said the planet climate was changing including through increases in sea-surface temperatures presenting an increased hurricane risk in the Caribbean, but Cuba had faced many previous such disasters successfully. He outlined that scientific institutions were an active part of the disaster management system in Cuba. Its meteorologists used simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and their messages were translated into guidelines and recommendations by civil defence authorities and broadcast as early warning messages through various mediums. Mr. Rubiera also referred to a strong culture of prevention in the country. Student competitions including at the primary school level were held to test knowledge of disaster issues, and little by little the population was developing an awareness of risk. He stressed that lessons learned from Cuba could be shared with other SIDS especially that of the culture of preparedness.

Ms. Annies Simon, Civil Society Representative from Vanuatu, stressed that the greatest challenges faced by small Pacific island countries in confronting natural hazards were internal capacities and geographical location. What they relied on the most was their traditional knowledge - including observation of cloud movements and seabirds - which for generations had been a powerful tool for coping with hardship. Furthermore, traditional knowledge was highlighted as an early warning system of importance to local communities. Small community committees took preventive and responsive action in the face of natural hazards. They valued becoming self-reliant before seeking donor support. It was also pointed out that rural communities in SIDS were hard to reach and often left last in terms of relief following a disaster event. Given that rural communities were heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture, the case was made for building resilience in this sector. In Ms. Simon's work with rural communities in her native Vanuatu, she pointed to a booklet (*Yumi redy long wan Disasta – Let's be ready for a Disaster*) which she had written which explains in simple everyday language how rural communities can build resilience and be prepared when natural disasters strike.

Mr. Ronald Jackson, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, said that disaster risk reduction was an economic and developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. He emphasised the importance of a wide stakeholder buy-in not just with the 18 Member States of CDEMA but also with private sector and donor partners. There is also a focus of harmonizing DRR investments in the region. While the DRR issue had advanced considerably in the region including through the Caribbean Community Strategic Programming Framework, more targeted investment was required along with strengthening funding frameworks. Partners and funding should be further harmonized around the issue of climate change and DRR, language should be repackaged and the value of investing in risk reduction should be better illustrated. Mr. Jackson stressed that investments in disaster risk reduction provided economic benefits. The example of Information and

Communication Technologies (ICTs) was presented as being of importance in issuing early warning to affected communities. He also stressed that any intervention by donor countries in the region should involve capacity-building. Some countries were excluded from donor envelopes, making them even more vulnerable. However, parallel mechanisms were emerging to deal with climate change adaptation financing.

Mr. Gary Philoctete, Country Director, J/P Haitian Relief Organization, said that a cash-forward approach had been useful after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti to involve families in all stages of the relocation process. Both formal and on-the-job training had been provided to masons. Unfortunately, Government involvement had been limited, as most of its institutions had collapsed following the earthquake. Poverty and instability only impeded disaster risk reduction, which required major infrastructure development that was often beyond the Government's capacity. The private sector, which was also important, was unfortunately lacking in Haiti. Despite efforts at reconstruction, the country remained very vulnerable, and ran more or less the same risk in the event of another earthquake or hurricane.

Mr. Christophe Legrand, from the Indian Ocean Commission, said that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement, where many small island developing States lacked individual capacity. He also pointed out that there was a greater capacity constraint in the Indian Ocean region than compared to the Pacific and Caribbean. In this light, he highlighted the importance of partnerships amongst the three SIDS regions with collective action amongst regional institutions. He emphasised that SIDS shouldn't go into the 2014 SIDS conference with a common position as they are leaders in DRR and should lead by example. Of importance is the pooling of resources through regional institutions when considering risk financing and insurance but also as a cost effective measure. In reference to data management, Mr. Legrand stated this was key and a precondition to DRR policies.

In summary, Mr. Acharya reflected that the presentations had provided a holistic view of both challenges and opportunities for SIDS. It was not only small islands that were being looked at, but also the large oceans of which SIDS are custodians of, which had an impact on the health of the islands and their inhabitants but also the global public goods found in the oceans. While disasters occur in all countries, it is the disproportionality of the impacts that must be stressed and taken into account when it comes to SIDS. Early warning, institutions and resourcing were extremely important in any discussions of disaster risk reduction, which required mainstreaming into national development plans to build resilience. Mr. Acharya also stressed the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources – particularly coastal - through which communities acquired their livelihoods. SIDS issues must also be at the forefront of the post-2015 development agenda, the DRR agenda, the 2014 SIDS Conference and likewise the climate change agenda.

Highlights and Recommendations; stemming from the Featured Event

The Featured Event highlighted the need for SIDS to institute effective early warning systems, strengthen planning and building guidelines, and share best practices. It is important that disaster risk reduction and resilience building be mainstreamed into national development programmes. It was made clear that investments in reducing disaster risks was one of the best ways for SIDS to gain traction and increase their competitiveness. It was recognized that the private sector in SIDS was an important stakeholder with an important role to play in terms of building resilience and sustaining livelihoods. Poverty reduction was touched upon as an important avenue towards resilience building. The importance of preparedness was stressed as being vital including the use by authorities of simple language and graphics to explain hurricanes, and these messages being translated into guidelines and recommendations and broadcast as early warning messages through various media. Integrating disaster risk reduction into education and awareness curricula from primary school level upwards and including at the grassroots/community level was also stressed as an important avenue for improving preparedness and building capacity for resilience. It was demonstrated that disaster risk reduction was a developmental issue, involving governance, partnerships for sustainable financing, and emerging partnerships. It was stressed that climate change adaptation should be strongly aligned with disaster risk reduction, and more resources should be made available through regional cooperation in such areas as data procurement; where many SIDS lacked individual capacity. Emphasis was placed on the need for heightened cooperation amongst SIDS. Given that these countries have experienced various levels of natural and man-made disasters, they are best placed to institute best practice and disseminate lessons learned amongst themselves. Speakers concurred that Caribbean nations were coming together to address climate change, sustainable development and trade. One of the challenges however, was to ensure that the strategies were mutually reinforcing. Efforts were also presently focused on tourism and community-level risk reduction, rather than spread out into broader sectors, such as health, agriculture, education, finance, environment, water, sanitation, rural communities etc.; a cross-sectoral approach would be advisable. Despite agreement on the need for cross-sectoral programmes, it was recognized that lack of resources meant priority being given to important sectors – such as tourism – at the expense of others. In this light, there was emphasis on the need for greater regional solidarity to bolster disaster risk reduction in those sectors that were lacking. There was also a feeling that there should not be a singular focus on disasters but also on shocks, as not all shocks cause disasters but that there were shocks which had cumulative effects such as the international financial crisis which compounds recovery from disasters in SIDS. The importance of building resilience to transboundary shocks was also highlighted in that there were examples of shocks being experienced by larger countries that had direct impacts on SIDS; such as rising food and fuel prices. It was stressed that there is ample expertise present in the SIDS regions and that international assistance needed to take into account building the capacity of that expertise as part of development aid. Also of importance is the need for SIDS governments to invest in disaster risk reduction as opposed to investments being made by donor governments only.

One important priority of this Featured Event was to highlight recommendations

pertaining to SIDS with regards to the second phase of the Hyogo Framework for Action - also known as HFA2 - commencing in 2015. In this regard, the Featured Event recommended that:

- HFA2 needs to reflect the disproportionate effects of climate change on SIDS and that this is a group of countries which contributes the least – less than 1% - to global greenhouse gas emissions, yet bear the greatest burden to the multiple impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Global Assessment Report 2013 chapter on SIDS clearly makes the case – given the latest risk data – of the high exposure of SIDS to natural hazards. In this light, SIDS is the group of countries which stands to gain the most if investments in disaster risk reduction can be leveraged.
- HFA2 should recognize that by virtue of SIDS’ geographic features, they are more often than not situated in areas highly prone to natural hazards. Importantly, communities in SIDS are often located in highly prone areas as these are access points to livelihoods. This includes for instance fishing communities exposed to coastal phenomena and farming communities located on steep slopes – some of which are volcanically active, geologically unstable or prone to flooding.
- HFA2 will need to stress that SIDS continue to require support and partnerships in establishing and maintaining effective early warning systems. Such systems need to be well coordinated, simple to understand and provide guidelines for action by communities in responding and mitigating the effects of hazards. Improved data acquisition and data management resources would enhance the ability of SIDS to predict and respond effectively to hazards.
- National development plans need to effectively integrate and mainstream disaster risk reduction through a holistic cross-sectoral approach involving all relevant stakeholders including private sector and civil society. However, it must be realized that given capacity and resource constraints faced by SIDS, it is often the case that resources are directed and prioritized to select sectors at the expense of others. While this is understandable, it often means that gaps are present in maintaining resilience. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on pooling limited resources through better coordination by government authorities and relevant stakeholders.
- HFA2 needs to reflect on the transboundary effects of shocks which are often felt disproportionately by SIDS including for instance price rises in food, fuel and other commodities.
- Education regarding disaster risk reduction from primary school level upwards needs to be emphasized as vital to building resilience in SIDS. Rural communities will need support in this regard. It is also vital that expertise already present in SIDS be supported and enhanced with the support of development partners.
- Private sector engagement and partnerships needs further commitment and expansion. As many SIDS economies rely on a handful of industries –

notably tourism – it is crucial that private sector be recognized as important stakeholders in the resilience building agenda.

- HFA2 must encourage South-South cooperation and especially amongst SIDS themselves. As a group of countries that is often exposed to similar hazards, SIDS are best placed to share lessons learned. This cooperation needs to be supported by not only SIDS themselves but their development partners.