



## **Vulnerable countries must be at the forefront of disaster risk reduction efforts**

25 May 2017, Cancun - The costly effects of disasters on vulnerable countries around the world are being highlighted in Cancun this week at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Newly appointed High-Representative and Under-Secretary-General for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu is attending the event to stress the special needs of vulnerable countries. Throughout several high-level events she will emphasize that losses from disasters are depriving vulnerable countries of scarce resources which could be spent in areas such as quality education, health and infrastructure which are vital to eradicating extreme poverty and ensuring more resilient, productive and peaceful societies.

“The glaring disproportionality of the disaster losses experienced by these countries is a major concern. A single extreme weather event can erase years of development gains in a matter of hours and the costs and repercussions reach far beyond national borders,” said Ms. 'Utoikamanu

“The challenges these countries face are further magnified by the growing impacts of climate change. Weather and climate related disasters have more than doubled over the last forty years. For those that are small islands, future disaster losses are not just disproportionately high, they represent an existential threat.”

Throughout the forum the Under-Secretary-General will stress that tools are at hand to assist vulnerable countries. From the Sendai Framework to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the respective programmes of action for vulnerable countries, the blueprint exists to tackle global development challenges.

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is the first forum since the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015. Among the countries where the successful implementation of the Sendai Framework is critical are the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States.

At the event UN-OHRLLS will place an emphasis on forging stronger partnerships including with the private sector in support of both poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction. Efforts must be redoubled to address the issue of access to finance including the difficulties in accessing concessional loans for those vulnerable countries that are also middle income countries. The burdensome procedures for accessing climate finance and the fragmented nature of financial mechanisms continues to present a major hurdle in making effective headway in achieving resilience.

About the vulnerable country groups - **Least Developed Countries** represent the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the international community. Due to over reliance on limited primary commodities as a major source of earnings, they are typically highly vulnerable to external trade shocks. **Landlocked Developing Countries** face challenges due to their remoteness, lack of territorial access to the sea and significant distance from world markets. Complex trade routes and high transit costs continue to impose serious constraints on socio-economic development in this group of countries. **Small Island Developing States** have narrow resource bases and many are remote from world markets. They also suffer from major challenges related to climate change and fragile natural environments. Small Island Developing States are recognised as a special case for sustainable development.

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