

**New Zealand Statement  
Pacific Regional Consultation on Internal Displacement  
11 February 2021**

Honourable chair, esteemed colleagues. Bula vinaka, tena kotou katoa, and warm greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand.

Climate change is affecting all of us in the Pacific, and we are all grappling with the challenges facing our communities.

In New Zealand, sea level has risen 20 cm since the early 20th century, and average sea level is forecast to rise even quicker over the coming decades. We know that as our planet gets warmer, drought, severe storms and flood events will strike more often and will be more extreme.

In December 2020 the New Zealand Government declared a climate emergency. This is more than symbolic. It acknowledges the gravity of the problem and the need for concrete and urgent action.

Just as in the Pacific, some of our communities are already grappling with the reality that they'll need to shift to reduce their risk from flooding and coastal inundation. About half of our local government planning documents refer to "managed retreat" in one form or other, and just yesterday our government announced its intention to pass a new Climate Change Adaptation Act to address complex issues associated with managed retreat, and support for adaptation.

The challenges from extreme weather, flooding, and sea-level rise are felt even more acutely in Pacific Island countries. Climate change is undermining conditions necessary for some Pacific communities to remain where they are, so displacement is already happening.

New Zealand welcomes this regional consultation, and firmly supports the work of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel, and the Pacific Resilience Partnership's Technical Working Group on Human Mobility, to help ensure a more coordinated and integrated response to address displacement in our region.

We are already active in this space. In 2018 the New Zealand Government called for early, calibrated and transparent action on addressing Pacific climate mobility. That action is underpinned by core values. We honour Pacific Leaders' recognition of the importance of retaining social and cultural identity, and the desire of Pacific peoples to continue to live in their own countries where possible. We respect and uphold Pacific Island countries' sovereignty and the right to self-determination. And we are committed to contributing to these conversations and listening to other perspectives, in the Pacific, at home and further afield.

We are using Official Development Assistance to help Pacific communities avert and delay climate-related displacement. But also to prepare, if it becomes necessary.

We are supporting the International Organisation for Migration in the Pacific to facilitate the development of a regional framework on climate-related human mobility. We're working with the German Development Agency (GIZ) and the Government of Fiji to operationalise the Planned Relocation Guidelines for communities affected by climate change. And we're supporting the international peace-building NGO Conciliation Resources - to work with Pacific partners and communities to develop knowledge, skills and tools for preventing or managing conflict in communities affected by climate change.

We know we need better research and inclusive, transparent dialogue to inform evidence-based policy around displacement and other forms of mobility. We'll be working with researchers and practitioners in the region to better understand current and future patterns of climate-related human mobility in the Pacific region, and the impact this will have for New Zealand and for Pacific communities.

New Zealand stands with our Pacific neighbours in recognising displacement as a threat to livelihoods, well-being, and regional security. We look forward to continued multilateral cooperation to bring attention and concrete action to addressing displacement in the Pacific region and globally.

END

(578 words)