

**Statement**  
**By**  
**Peseta Noumea Simi**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**  
**for the**  
**Pacific Regional Consultation on Internal Displacement**  
**11 February 2021**

[Thank you Chair]

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Pacific Island leaders have consistently reaffirmed that climate change represents the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific due to the continuous exposure of our countries to extreme weather events that are occurring with greater frequency and intensity.

While we have not been affected directly by the recent cyclones in our region, the associated flooding did significant damage and led to temporary displacement for some and certainly serious choice reflections for many about moving away from floodplains and riverbanks. Thus this dialogue is timely and crucial, and we welcome the opportunity to exchange and share lessons learnt on this critical issue.

We do recognise that there needs to be better understanding of the climate change and migration nexus and more dialogue is required to increase consideration of climate mobility issues across policy domains, and at different levels of governance. However for Samoa, we believe the focus of the dialogue needs to be at the national and community level. The regional and international support is welcomed, but to successfully address the issues of internal displacement, the key national

stakeholders and affected communities need to be the lead on any solutions on the matter.

(Best practices)

Past climate related disasters have definitely led to either temporary displacement and in some cases relocation from coastal areas to higher ground and retaining land ownership. After the Tropical Cyclones Val and Ofa in the early 1990's, numerous villages were badly affected, leading the government to begin constructing infrastructure inland to allow for migration away from the coast. After the 2009 tsunami, some communities in the southern part of Upolu were relocated away from hazard zones. Families with beach tourist businesses were allowed to remain provided they complied with the provision of escape routes.

Cyclones and flooding around the main river catchment areas will result in displacement of populations. Homes were destroyed and lives lost as a result of flooding.

While Samoa does not have standalone **legislation or policy** to address internal displacement, several legislation and policies are key to our coordinated response to the issue of internal displacement. For example, the **Disaster and Emergency Management Act** provides for the management of disasters and emergencies in Samoa through effective planning and risk reduction, putting in place response and recovery procedures and promoting close coordination amongst the response agencies. Our **National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP)** adopts a multisectoral approach to disaster risk management and is the bridge between the legal framework and operational plans. Temporary shelter for evacuees during disasters are also a key part of the Plans. Our Disaster Advisory Council is

chaired by the Prime Minister, and our Disaster Management Office has recently moved from our Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to our Prime Ministers Office, highlighting the importance of the work of this office. The Council and the Office were recently involved in assisting those temporarily displaced due to the recent flooding. Other important policies are our Climate Change Policy and National Security Policy.

**Community involvement is crucial.** The Community Disaster & Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) Programme established **village Disaster and Climate Committees** who are key to the success of any disaster response but also in coordinating disaster mitigation and preparedness programmes. Samoa as highlighted in our Second Voluntary national Review report on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; there are 94 community disaster & climate management response plans AND 41 Community Integrated Management Plans, also known as CIM Plans. Extensive consultations were undertaken with communities to develop these CIM Plans which focused on interventions to enhance community and environment response to impacts of climate change. These consultations included identification of hazard zones and relocation plans/guidelines for the more vulnerable villages.

**Infrastructure is key** to responding to internal displacement. For some of the communities that were relocated following the 2009 tsunami, all utility services including roads, electricity and freshwater supply were put in place before these families were relocated. Government has been engaged in an extensive access roads program throughout Samoa which facilitated the opening up of new lands for agricultural development as well as develop a network of safe evacuation routes

(SUPPORT REQUIRED)

In terms of the support required, having the relevant data available to inform policy interventions and discussions on the issue is crucial. While we may have data on internal migration they are not always directly linked to climate change and natural disasters.

**Data and Statistics as well as the development of Disaster Risk Management tools** are crucial to distinguishing between forced and voluntary movements, given the multiple drivers of movement involved.

**Scientific evidence** to help long term planning especially looking at slow onset events would be crucial to addressing the high displacement risks our people face due to climate change.

These are some of the highlights of our experiences we would like to share with you. But I reiterate that any solution on internal displacement require careful dialogue and close consideration at the community level. Because a one size fits all approach even at the national level is not always appropriate.

Thank you