

## Regional Consultation on Climate Services

Rarotonga, 31 March 2014

Opening Address by Prime Minister, Hon. Henry Puna

Kia Orana

Representatives of the Office of the Global Framework for Climate Services of  
WMO

SPREP

Representatives of international organisations

Representatives from National Met and Hydro Services

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thanks for joining us in the Cook Islands on the occasion of this regional consultation – we’ve tried our best to provide the best possible climate and surroundings for this meeting but as we always say: we’re in God’s Hands. Whether it’s a case of rain or shine, it’s always considered a blessing.

Climate Services and the multiple threads that are woven into our weather-related functions and activities have a deep and meaningful role in our lives.

There’s no doubt that the Global Framework for Climate Services reflects just how challenging it is to bring those threads together in a coordinated and constructive way, particularly for Small Islands Developing States.

In the nearly five years since we endorsed the establishment of GFCS, the Cook Islands – like many SIDS – has undergone tremendous development change, alongside significant shifts in population movements and investment patterns – both public and private.

The vulnerabilities and constraints however, have remained constant.

Risk management, adaptation, and preparedness have grown more important than ever, as has the need for our cooperative frameworks to be strengthened.

So our thanks go to the WMO and SPREP for leading this joint effort to bring our key meteorological and hydro services together in the context of sustainable economic planning and development in the Pacific.

Your discussions over the coming days will better inform the ways in which the GFCS can serve our collective and national interests, and contribute to the Pacific's environment and development campaign at the forthcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> SIDS Conference in Apia, later this year.

In welcoming you all here today, and opening your meeting, I add my voice in support of the Pacific building stronger, active linkages between climate change and variability and our long term sustainable development.

During this term as Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, I was fortunate to have hosted the Pacific Islands Forum and help drive and strengthen our collective thinking on global issues and how we can better approach those concerns as island states.

The sustained management of our oceans' resources and the transformation of our energy use to renewables have been key components of my support for sustainable development initiatives.

And cutting across these efforts is the stark and perpetual reminder of the impacts of climate change and variability, and the services we depend on to safeguard the investments in our future.

A clear example demonstrating this challenge is our current programme of energy conversion in our Northern Group – an area of the Pacific prone to the formation of cyclones and the adversity of extreme and unstable weather.

Early warning systems, smarter communication, and preparedness, are key support factors in the reduction of risks to this major development.

The Global Framework for Climate Services should therefore continue to enhance our ability to manage and share vital information, and promote the necessary mechanisms to protect our vulnerable communities at the grassroots.

National capacity-building and support remains critical, as does the timely application of adequate resources to address Climate services' priorities and needs.

It gives me pleasure to join you all in opening this meeting, and to wish you success, as we look forward to enhancing our network of cooperation with WMO, SPREP, and other stakeholder organisations in the region and beyond.

Kia Manuia