

INTERVENTION BY PIFS SECRETARY GENERAL MEG TAYLOR

Special Session on Regional Action for Global Challenges

Special Session: Monday 23 May, from 17:15 to 18:15, Beyazit Room, ICC.

Intervention Focus

Question: “The fourth commitment recognizes the need to invest in shared data and risk analysis, to collect, monitor and analyze data and risks before, during and after crises. What tools will ROHAN members use to share data and analysis, and how will shared knowledge be harnessed to improve early warning and crisis response?”

1. I am honoured to be here today and thank the organisers for their invitation to this *Special Session*.
2. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is based in Suva, Fiji. Our membership is the 14 Independent and self-governing island states of the Pacific and Australia and New Zealand. The Secretariat’s mandate is delivered through the annual Leaders’ Communiqués and high level ministerial decisions.
3. In 2014, the Leaders agreed to **The Framework for Pacific Regionalism** that represents a high-level commitment to pursue deeper regionalism and to establish a process for developing and prioritising regional public policy. It articulates the vision, values and objectives for enhanced Pacific regionalism. Therefore it is our priority to ensure that cooperation complements the actions of our member countries.
4. The Forum Secretariat sees there are benefits to more than just sharing lessons from our challenges. Exchanging lessons between regions would enable our future paths toward resilience to be further strengthened resilience. For example, the lessons from Cyclone Winston that hit Fiji and Tonga, the ongoing drought situation in the Western Pacific this year, and Cyclone Pam which destroyed around 60 percent of Vanuatu’s GDP within a few hours, reinforces the value of investing in preparedness and disaster risk reduction.
5. The means of spreading this information is important. Our sea of islands are spread over an area greater than all the land mass on earth, and as a consequence we are faced with great challenges in bringing our Pacific family together. But where there are challenges there are also great innovations. Our technical regional agencies such as SPC, SPREP and USP work together on climate and disaster risk, and brought collective experience and capacity to support the development of the Pacific Climate Change Portal and the Pacific Disaster Net. These initiatives have demonstrated that we can achieve considerable economies of scale and greater efficiency in the use of limited resources by pooling capabilities and establishing regional mechanisms to provide timely data and information to the Public.

6. Similarly, through our own **Forum Compact** we have an active and growing programme of South-South cooperation to strengthen national finance and economic planning systems, promote private sector and infrastructure development, and improve aid coordination and effectiveness. Embracing a similar approach could improve understanding and awareness of experiences between countries in strengthening Early Warning Systems. Such arrangements are a high priority for our region and particularly in reaching the “last mile” and communicating with often very remote, distant communities. In addition, for baseline data and information there is a significant need for scientific and technical assessments to be expanded and shared, including risk assessments, modelling and mapping, post-disaster physical, socio-economic, and environmental damage and loss assessments. These are necessary for all sectors of development, to inform decision making to build long term resilience.

7. To conclude, as regional organisations we have been deliberately integrating variable capacities, needs and risks but there is always more to do and to improve upon. The Forum Secretariat has a long history of working with partners and would like to ensure the ROHAN allows open access and readily available knowledge and expertise to be exchanged. We welcome and support this initiative.