



Fifth Global Biennial Conference on Small States: *Building Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction*

TATTE Convention Centre, Apia, Samoa, 25 - 29 March 2019

OUTCOMES STATEMENT

1. The Commonwealth in collaboration with the Government of Samoa, and with support from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, convened its Fifth Global Biennial Conference on Small States (GBCSS) on 25 - 29 March 2019 in Apia, Samoa. Participants included senior policy-makers from 23 Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries, as well as officials from 20 national, regional and international organisations.
2. The theme for this Conference - *Building Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction* - reflected ongoing efforts to help countries respond to an increased frequency and severity of disasters. The Conference focused on exposing small states to the myriad of domestic, regional and international solutions for aiding their preparation and recovery, and for controlling disaster risks. Of particular relevance to conference discussions were ongoing challenges precipitated by recent cyclones in the Pacific (2015), Caribbean (2017), and in Southern Africa (March 2019).
3. As per paragraphs 51 and 52 of the Samoa Pathway, which speaks to the international community's commitment to supporting efforts of SIDs in managing and reducing disaster risk, the Global Biennial Conference marked a large step forward for the Commonwealth. In this regard, there are three major outcomes to be highlighted:
 - **SMALL STATES' DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE CAPACITY STRENGTHENED**
4. Small states deepened their knowledge of disaster risk financing by way of a two-day training course jointly facilitated by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank. Case studies, group activities, and moderated discussions, were the mediums used to help participants better understand the importance of political, social, and economic factors affecting small states' ability to prepare for and respond to disasters. Participants benefited primarily from increased knowledge of financial protection instruments and support mechanisms for pre-disaster and post-disaster planning and relief, respectively. Small states representatives also took away key tips on communicating disaster risk, developing disaster risk management strategies, and data analytics for disaster risk reduction.
5. To set-off the Biennial Conference participants exchanged views on financing disaster recovery and on the adequacy of their countries' disaster risk management policies. They also shared experiences on finding the right mix of disaster finance tools appropriate for their countries' needs and risks. In tandem, the Commonwealth Secretariat shared initiatives designed to help small states understand and access disaster finance, including its disaster risk finance portal, which is soon to come on-stream; the Secretariat's debt management department's financial resilience framework; and the Commonwealth's renowned Climate Finance Access Hub. Moreover, participants learnt

how the Secretariat and its partners¹ through the Commonsensing initiative are using technology to advance disaster risk reduction efforts in small states.

6. Several regional and international development partners further showcased their own capacity strengthening and resilience building programmes for disaster risk reduction, and for mobilising disaster risk finance, insurance - via blockchain and parametric products, and resources to help rebuild resilient infrastructure in small states.

- THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTED AND EMBRACED

7. The Conference emphasised the importance of effective systems for successful implementation and delivery of disaster risk reduction plans. In this regard, participants reflected on progress with implementing the Sendai Framework, including the challenges countries face in achieving Sendai targets. The Commonwealth Secretariat discussed its approach to performance management as a key tool for government delivery generally, and its applicability to advancing disaster risk management strategy. This included simple but effective methods for assisting with the integration of disaster risk management and disaster risk finance planning into national plans. Participants noted the various failings across governments and regions in implementation, endorsing the need to halt the proliferation of new initiatives and to concentrate more efforts on completing implementation of existing strategies.

- COMMITMENT FOR STRONGER COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOSTERED

8. A number of regional initiatives to reduce disaster risk, including the Pacific Resilience Partnership Platform were highlighted. These discussions underscored the importance of partnerships in developing and implementing effective disaster risk management and disaster risk finance. There was broad agreement among participants that working together and coordinating efforts were crucial to building resilience through disaster risk reduction.

9. Countries deliberated on the role of the private sector and non-governmental organisations in supporting disaster risk reduction, and expressed support for policies, rules and regulations that incentivise long-term private sector investments in disaster risk reduction, as well as for governance frameworks that better enable collaboration between the public sector, non-governmental organisations, and youth in building resilient communities.

¹ UNITAR-UNOSAT; University of Portsmouth; Catapult; U.K Meterology Office; and Sensonomic.