

Rt. Hon Helen Clark
14 January 2005

Strong NZ presence at UN disaster reduction conference

Prime Minister Helen Clark announced today that the government is sending a strong delegation to the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

"The New Zealand delegation leaves this Sunday for the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, where there will be discussion of how best to provide tsunami warnings for the Indian Ocean," Helen Clark said.

"These talks will also provide opportunities to look at improving tsunami protection for New Zealand and the South West Pacific.

"The conference has taken on new significance in light of the tsunami affecting the Indian Ocean region. At a meeting convened by ASEAN in Jakarta on January 6, it was agreed that the Kobe conference would address specific concerns about gaps in tsunami warning systems.

"The conference, which also marks the tenth anniversary of the devastating Kobe earthquake, will identify ways to increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies, and increase the reliability and availability of disaster-related information to the public and to disaster-management agencies.

The eight-strong New Zealand delegation comprises:

- § Dr Helen Anderson, Chief Executive, Ministry of Research, Science and Technology;
- § John Norton, Director, Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM);
- § Linda Angus, Capability Manager, MCDEM;
- § Pat Helm, Policy Advisor, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- § Chris Day, Development Programme Manager, NZAID;
- § Dr Hugh Cowan, Manager of GeoNet and GeoHazards Monitoring, Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS);
- § Dr Andrew Matthews, Pacific Manager, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research; and
- § Dr Noel Trustrum, Manager of International Services, Hazards, GNS.

Helen Clark said that New Zealand is also participating in the United Nations conference being held this week in Mauritius for small island developing states.

"Our Minister responsible for development assistance, Marian Hobbs, is representing New Zealand at the UN-convened international meeting to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

"Marian Hobbs has been involved in discussions at the Mauritius conference on how to build resilience in small island developing states and deal with issues such as their environmental vulnerability, " Helen Clark said.

More information about the Kobe conference can be found at:

<http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/>