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**Towards a Climatic and Disaster Risk
Reduction Programme**

Statement by

Indian Ocean Commission

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INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION TOWARDS A CLIMATIC AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMME

PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION

There has been a major shift in thinking over the last decade concerning Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which is now widely accepted as central to sustainable development efforts. Over the same period, the need for adaptation to climate change has also come to be viewed as an essential element for environmental and economic policies.

On the international level, there is wide agreement that DRR needs to be closely integrated with Adaptation to Climate Change (ACC), while preserving the separate identity of each constituency. The focus needs to be on the operational and concrete activities of these two disciplines, which must be carried out in close synergy in order to ensure optimum effectiveness.

The Climatic and Disaster Risk Reduction Programme that the IOC intends to put in place is designed to promote and facilitate the integration of DRR and Adaptation to Climate Change. The Programme will be part of IOC's current ISLANDS project, which has been funded since 2012 by the European Union and other donors, including the World Bank and UNISDR. The South West Indian Ocean islands are very vulnerable both to climate and natural disasters; for these islands, action to reduce risks and catastrophic events is a high priority.

The experience gathered by IOC over the past two years, during which several projects have been undertaken with several major donors, shows that it is important have a more coordinated approach at the regional level, even if there is ample scope for independent activities and the need to take into account differing visions of how best to reach a global objective. Islands in the region are different in size and in their level of economic development.

The IOC has now drawn on the lessons from the past in order to build a strong base on which to anchor future developments. This base includes the recent acquisition of modern technology tools to identify risks and reduce their likely impact on the population and the economy. The training of local participants in the skills necessary to use these tools has also been an essential part of these projects.

Features of the Programme

1. **Work has started on strengthening the existing base for the future action-oriented Programme** of climate and disaster risk management for the region. This is being done by ensuring that DRR's acquired expertise is institutionalized, i.e. that lessons learned from the activities of recently completed or on-going projects both at national and regional level, as well those to be drawn from successful operational set-ups, are solidly incorporated into a structured and well-established base for future activities. This work is being carried out within the framework of existing resources and is scheduled for completion by mid-2015. However, this activity is mentioned here as the first key activity of the project, since it is the sine qua non condition for good management and efficiency in implementing future projects.

2. **The proposed overall structure of the Programme** is the establishment of three separate units, under the supervision of an overall project director or manager. To ensure the participation of IOC islands and their sense of ownership of the Programme, the present **ISLANDS Regional Platform** will work in close cooperation with the project director. The units will be as follows: A disaster risk management unit; a climate adaptation unit; and a communication unit.
3. **In each country, a hosting agency** for the Programme will be designated, after evaluation of its capacity to provide support to project implementation, including in the field of modern technology. This agency should be permanently represented in the country delegation for the regional platform.
4. Particular attention will be paid to the importance of **including the non-governmental community** in the overall Programme: the business community, the NGO associations active in the environment sector and education, as well as the humanitarian and Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations. DRR and ACC concern the population as a whole, and action to reduce the risk of catastrophic events will not be successful if these sectors are not included.
5. A tentative work Programme is being established, detailing **activities, measurable goals, and indicators of success**. This Programme needs to be discussed and periodically reviewed with the donor community to ensure a common approach in the interests both of the donor and the recipient. To be successful, activities need to cover both substantive and institutional levels.
6. The **first distinctive approach of this work Programme** is that it will identify and concentrate on a few key activities to be thoroughly detailed and implemented, rather than working superficially on all the broad areas that could be included in an overall strategy. Work will begin, of course, by determining this overall strategy, taking into account related IOC programmes for sustainable development. However, once this general framework has been established, the aim is to determine the key activities and the key performance indicators that will ensure both the quality of the output and its relevance to the overall strategy. Investment in DRR and infrastructure reinforcement remain a priority goal.
7. The **second distinctive approach** is to select, whenever appropriate, specialized institutions rather than independent consultants for providing the necessary support and guidance for undertaking these key activities. The aim is to benefit from “corporate” knowledge and the capacity to provide continuous support to national teams in the beneficiary countries, who will be trained to acquire the necessary skills in their own particular country. Experience has shown that this is one of the best ways to ensure sustainability in the field of activity concerned.
8. The **third distinctive approach** is to ensure that, to the largest possible extent, local expertise is used to implement the Programme. It is important that the output should be the result of the work of local experts. Although these experts will have received training and technical support from outside sources, results must be considered as “their” output, not that of a foreign consultant.
9. **With regard to the Disaster Risk Management Unit**, the objective is to cover the full spectrum of disaster risk management. In order to avoid duplication of activities and wastage of resources, it is proposed to cover five different fields of activity:
 - **Risk Identification** (loss data bases, hazard mapping, risk modeling, social perceptions);
 - **Risk Reduction** (territorial and sector planning, building codes, risk mitigation work, education);
 - **Financial Protection** (budget planning and appropriation, risk investment, risk transfer);
 - **Preparedness** (alert systems, early warning, response planning and management, logistics);
 - **Post-Disaster Reconstruction** (recovery, rehabilitation).

10. The base for implementing this Programme is provided by the achievements of IOC's "Risques Naturels" project, which is now drawing to a close, as well as by the ongoing ISLANDS Financial Protection Programme funded by the EU, UNISDR and the World Bank.
11. With regard to the **Communication Unit**, the emphasis will be put on combining two essential but separate requirements. On the one hand, the highly technical nature of the project requires the extensive acquisition and communication of technical expertise. However, on the other hand, there is a need to deliver information in plain, non-technical English, in order to enable understanding and awareness-building for the population at large concerning the Programme's activities and achievements.
12. **The ACC Unit** is at present being organized. Recently completed IOC projects in the area of climate change provide a good basis for this work, which is being discussed and enlarged in collaboration with specialized organizations in this field. One important area to be covered will be the prospective measurement of future environmental and economic impacts of climate change in the IOC region.

Discussions have started with the EU to obtain financing for this project in the next European Development Fund programming process. We are however **looking for additional support and assistance from donors** willing to join the Programme and having specific expertise in a range of relevant fields, including for example climate change adaption, advanced mapping techniques, protection of critical infrastructure, education/university training courses, and small businesses protection. As islands, we also need to increase our capacity to protect our shores from erosion and destructive storm surges. The present administrative and technical capacity of IOC to provide support and to manage operational projects is stretched to the limit. We are therefore also aiming to set up **a small scientific and technical facility**, of the type established in the Pacific (SOPAC).