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For Immediate Release

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Samoa Government and the International Community Plan for Disaster**

Samoa Government officials will join with over 20 representatives of local and regional humanitarian agencies in a three-day workshop to plan strategies for responding to a disaster. The Inter Agency Contingency Planning Workshop will commence on Wednesday 15 April and will be held at the Development Bank of Samoa.

Ms. Filomena Nelson, the Principal Disaster Management Officer of the National Disaster Management Office, explained why the workshop was important. “In a big disaster, national and local response capacity can be quickly overwhelmed by forces of nature,” she said. “International humanitarian organizations stand ready to assist, but they have to come from many different locations, they bring a variety of skills and resources, and they need to coordinate their operations between themselves and with our own. This workshop allows us to plan together how we will manage these issues.”

The main objective of the workshop is to bring together key humanitarian actors from the Samoa Government, Red Cross, Donor partners, UN organizations and NGOs to review and improve the disaster response system at a national and regional level.

In the Pacific, a number of factors complicate the response to a disaster. According to the UN Resident Coordinator in Samoa, Ms Naheed Haque, “Humanitarian assistance in the Pacific is complex. There is a high degree of disaster risk combined with small, scattered populations on vulnerable small islands separated by vast areas of ocean. Only with diligent planning and preparation can we expect to be able to respond appropriately under these circumstances.”

The workshop will include an overview of current disaster trends in Samoa, key response actors both at national and regional level, the national disaster response structure as well as the regional response structure. Participants will discuss the disaster history of Samoa and its implications on humanitarian needs and required responses. Participants will also conduct a one-day simulation to test how effectively the international community’s response structure supports the Samoa Government’s response structure.

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