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### **ITU/ESCAP WORKSHOP ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT. BANGKOK THAILAND 12-15 DECEMBER 2006.**

#### **NAURU COUNTRY REPORT.**

##### **Introduction.**

Nauru (Nah roo) is a lone Island situated in the Central Pacific on 0 deg 26,3' Latitude and 166 deg 56, 6 E latitude, or roughly 30 miles south of the equator. It is approx 3000 kilometers from Sydney Australia, and approx 4000 kilometers from Hawaii. Such is the isolation that it was never really discovered until the late 1800's. Nauru is an elevated coral atoll. It presents itself different from other coral Islands in that there is the same surf, reef, beach and belt of coconut palms sequence of other Pacific Islands, but behind this fringe is a grey sharp wall like coral formation will be seen, unusual to other coral Islands. It is not surprising then that the Island can be clearly distinguished from 20-25 miles out on a clear day.

##### **Discovery of Phosphate.**

The Island would have had no more fame than any other Island had not a piece of rock used as a door stop attracted the attention of a scientist in a Sydney office. The rock turned out to be one of an extremely high quality phosphate extracted from the Island of Nauru, and so the phosphate industry was born. Mining has since been reduced dramatically due to the depleted reserves of phosphate as well as a weakened economy. However it has again restarted recently with markets in Australia, and the Asian countries.

In country disaster threats.

It has been widely believed by everyone on Nauru that due to its geographical location, Nauru is immune to such natural disasters such as cyclones, hurricanes and tsunamis. There has never been on record of such an event happening in the history of the Island. With strong gusts of the westerly winds resembling anything connections to the disasters mentioned above. It therefore can be said that it may be through this assumption that the area of disaster management has been widely overlooked to date.

National authorities involved in Disaster Management.

As mentioned earlier, it is a common belief by a lot of people that because of its location Nauru is immune to the natural disasters experienced by other countries on an annual basis. Although this notion has so far held true, it is also believed by others that it is only a matter of time when Nauru will be hit by a natural disaster of some sort. The question now will be, are we ready for such a calamity if it was to happen? There are several bodies from various departments who have some sort of a disaster plan ranging from air and rescue services to health as well as the police, but in a research carried out by the author of this paper, there was no actual national disaster plan although one was drawn up some time in the past, it has never been tested and in some cases read. This is why this workshop could not have come at a more appropriate time as far as Nauru is concerned as it will be the starting block to what may be the eventual formation of a practical national disaster plan co ordinated by various departments and tested at various times through national disaster drills involving all the concerned parties.

Strategy and Initiatives towards Disaster Management.

At the preparation of this paper, there are strategies and initiatives being put in place which will form the broad outline of a national disaster plan, these include a preparation of a paper on a “all hazards” approach to natural disasters. These will include such issues as legislation, priority communication channels, and other resources including morgues and body bags. Currently this is all still at the discussion stage with a best practice method to be adopted after considering the outcomes of this workshop.

## Challenges and areas of assistance needed in Disaster Management.

Nauru, with its scarce resources in the area of expertise and funding will need all the assistance it can get from ITU/ESCAP and member countries in order to prepare and formulate a country disaster plan to address any type of disasters, natural or otherwise. As mentioned before areas of special concern will be the formulation of a legislation which will effectively empower various departments in time of emergencies and disasters. The other area that assistance will be required will be the infrastructure, ie in times of a disaster vital services like communications and health links need to be restored immediately before any other assistance can be offered or received. Training of proper personnel needs to be undertaken. Nauru unlike many countries in this workshop is slightly more at a disadvantage stage in that we have not experienced any disasters of any kind and even with all the preparation we may have put into formulating a plan, there will never be enough planning to experience such an event for the first time. It is hoped that we never have to go through such an experience. However at the same time it does not justify being complacent and with the assistance and experiences gained from this workshop, it is hoped that Nauru will be better prepared for such an event should it ever happen in the future.

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