

Message from the ERC on the  
Cluster Approach in the Pacific  
Region

From: IASC Correspondence/OCHA/GE  
To: OCHA IASC Members  
Date: 26/01/2012 00:28  
Subject: Message from the ERC: Consultation with IASC on cluster activation in the Pacific region

**THE FOLLOWING IS A MESSAGE FROM VALERIE AMOS, EMERGENCY RELIEF  
COORDINATOR:**

Dear IASC Colleagues,

I seek your endorsement for the formalization of the regional coordination arrangements for the Pacific region, in accordance with the agreed IASC procedures for implementing the cluster approach.

I refer to the attached letter and cover note seeking IASC endorsement of the Humanitarian Architecture in the Pacific region, submitted for your consideration by the respective Resident Coordinators in Fiji, Mr. Knut Ostby, and Samoa, Ms. Nileema Noble. Together they work with 14 Pacific Island Countries (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu).

The Pacific islands face multiple natural disasters annually, with varying degree of national capacity to deal with emergencies. This has left small and dispersed populations highly vulnerable. In this context, effective humanitarian response requires a tailored approach. In order to respond effectively to disasters in the region, the UN Country Teams in Fiji and Samoa established the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) in 2008, based on the principles of humanitarian reform and the cluster approach. The PHT is the agreed coordination mechanism among all the major humanitarian actors in the region and maintains seven open-ended clusters and an early recovery network for effective and inclusive preparedness and response. The PHT partners seek to formalize the arrangement to have a more accountable and better resourced humanitarian architecture in the Pacific, which can formally engage with regional and national partners.

The following arrangements have been agreed with the national PHT partners and are designed to complement and support national disaster response arrangements:

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>
Health and Nutrition	WHO / UNICEF
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	UNICEF
Food Security	FAO
Education	UNICEF / Save the Children
Protection	OHCHR / UNHCR
Emergency Shelter	IFRC (convener)
Logistics	WFP

UNDP to facilitate the PHT Early Recovery Network following emergencies.

As per the usual procedures, please let me know if you have any concerns with the proposed arrangements. I would be grateful if you could revert to me by 1 February 2012, copying Ms. Ingvill Tveite (tveite@un.org) on your reply. If I do not hear from you to the contrary, I will inform Mr. Knut Ostby and Ms. Nileema Noble that the coordination arrangements have been endorsed by the IASC.



Cover Letter.pdf



Formal Endorsement Request Letter.pdf

Best regards,

Valerie



THE RESIDENT COORDINATORS OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM'S OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

18 January 2012

Dear Valerie,

We are writing to seek formalization of the coordination arrangements for the Pacific region, in accordance with the agreed IASC procedures for implementing the cluster approach.

As Resident Coordinators in Fiji and Samoa, our offices work with 14 Pacific Island Countries (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) across the Pacific region. Countries in the region have small and scattered populations that are spread out across a vast ocean and are highly vulnerable to tropical cyclones, volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis. Emergencies in the region often overwhelm national capacity and have a severe impact on economies and livelihoods, significantly affecting populations. When a nation is overwhelmed and in need of support, international humanitarian organizations are faced with the challenge of allocating resources from around the region (and beyond) to respond to a localized, often isolated community's needs.

In an effort to make humanitarian assistance more predictable, coherent and accountable, in 2008 humanitarian partners agreed to establish the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) based on the principles of humanitarian reform and the cluster approach. The PHT is the collaborative mechanism among all major humanitarian actors for humanitarian preparedness and response in the region.

Due to the frequency of disasters, the small and varied in-country presence of disaster response partners, and the need for well coordinated contingency planning and preparedness activities, PHT Clusters have been agreed to on an open-ended basis and are mobilised in consultation with regional partners in the event of an emergency. Under this approach, if an emergency exceeds the capacity of the PHT Clusters, global Cluster support will be requested in consultation with our partners in the region, as was done following the Samoa tsunami of 2009 when six clusters were activated. Since 2008, the PHT has assisted Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in more than a dozen emergencies and has facilitated seven inter-agency contingency planning exercises with national authorities through this model.

The establishment of the PHT has improved humanitarian coordination in the Pacific. To further strengthen coordinated and predictable humanitarian action in the Pacific, the PHT seeks IASC endorsement of the regional humanitarian arrangement in the Pacific and the agreed Clusters, with an aim to:

- Strengthen global-level support for PHT Cluster preparedness efforts;
- Ensure PHT Cluster initiatives fully reflect evolving IASC standards and practices;
- Inform the IASC of the agreed coordination architecture in the Pacific, the PHT, prior to future emergencies in the region that may require Global Cluster support;
- Further strengthen the inclusion of gender and protection mainstreaming in preparedness and response; and
- Inform national and regional partners of the complementarity and linkages between the PHT and the global humanitarian architecture.

Ms Valerie Amos  
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs  
Emergency Relief Coordinator  
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
NEW YORK

UN Agencies based in Fiji and Samoa serving the Pacific:

FAO, IFAD, ILO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDSS, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, UNIBDR, UNOCHA, UNOHCHR, UN WOMEN, WHO & WMO

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Following consultations with the PHT partners, we seek to formalize the Cluster Approach for the Pacific region with the following lead-agency arrangements in place:

Cluster	Lead Agency
Health and Nutrition	WHO / UNICEF
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	UNICEF
Food Security	FAO
Education	UNICEF/Save the Children
Protection	OHCHR/UNHCR
Emergency Shelter	IFRC (convener)
Logistics	WFP

UNDP has agreed to facilitate the PHT Early Recovery Network following emergencies.

These arrangements have been discussed with national partners and are designed to complement and support national disaster response arrangements. The inclusion of the PHT Clusters in recently revised national policies and the national level formation of clusters in two PICs reflects a growing recognition of the value of the PHT and ownership of the cluster approach by national partners.

With the IASCs endorsement of the PHT regional cluster approach in the Pacific, we aim to have a common understanding that:

- The PHT regional clusters are the agreed mechanism to facilitate on-going preparedness and contingency planning;
- The PHT regional clusters are the agreed coordination mechanism for effective and efficient international emergency response in support of national authorities for which PHT partners have the required capacity;
- Where emergencies exceed the regional capacities of the PHT, a request for global cluster support will be formally made through your Office.

In accordance with agreed IASC procedures for formalizing the use of the cluster approach, we ask you to share this proposal with the IASC Principals for their consideration and approval to ensure that there are no objections to these regional arrangements.

We would like to thank you again for your support and look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

  
Knut Ostby  
UN Resident Coordinator  
Suva, Fiji

  
Nileema Noble  
UN Resident Coordinator  
Apia, Samoa