

Press release

Embargoed 14.00 (GMT) 28 November 2010

Leading New Climate Report to Show Tourist Paradises under “Acute” Stress

LONDON, 28 November 2010 – Major tourist destinations like the Maldives and Vanuatu are already facing impacts due to climate change similar in scale to exposed failed states like Haiti and Somalia – a major new climate change report will detail later this week.

The upcoming report will outline how many of the world’s idyllic island retreats, from the Dominican Republic and Grenada to Micronesia, Kiribati, Samoa or the Marshall Islands are already experiencing multiple and severe impacts due to the effects of climate change.

The report will describe how stronger cyclones and tidal waves are battering low-lying atolls and island states causing massive damage – with nearly 40% of GDP lost to just one storm in the worst of cases. Meeting the constant challenge of rising seas and tides eats away 4% of GDP in the Pacific alone. While warmer, more acidic oceans are triggering a shift of fish away from the tropics, a vital source of food and income. Rising heat also brings more insects and heightened risks of dengue fever and other climate sensitive diseases that increasingly challenge island communities.

Ross Mountain, the Director General of DARA, the specialist humanitarian organization who developed the publication, said:

“Some islands may no longer be viable. Others could be deathtraps since they lack anything remotely close to the drilled protection offered by tourist resorts. Dangers lurk behind the paradise most foreigners are exposed to. Communities on low-lying islands around the world are already in the grips of the climate crisis.”

Changes to the climate are so fast that the world's coral reefs, like Australia's Great Barrier Reef, could disappear as we know them today over the next 20 to 30 years, the report will point out.

An advisor to the report and DARA board member, the Former President of Costa Rica, Jose Maria Figueres, said:

"We are risking irreversible changes to the environment. But we still have the chance to avoid these if we act now. Tackling climate change head on is essential. The transition to a low carbon economy will bring a surge in growth, and support communities on the front-line in the fight against poverty. This report should provide a wake-up call."

The report – called the "Climate Vulnerability Monitor" - will be released in London on 3rd November together with the President of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, who held an underwater cabinet meeting last year to raise more awareness of his country's imminently threatened existence.

ENDS