

## Australian National Statement: Grand Bargain Annual Meeting 2023

Australia remains committed to the Grand Bargain. In an era of growing humanitarian need and multiple complex crises, reform remains critical, and this forum uniquely brings all relevant actors together.

Australia supports collective action by the multilateral humanitarian system. While overall humanitarian funding has increased, need has increased even more and some crises remain relatively neglected, so the call for greater efficiency and effectiveness is more important than ever. Humanitarian action cannot resolve conflicts or end violence, but collective, strategic and context-appropriate early action can minimise the impact. This Annual Meeting is focused on the future direction of the Grand Bargain. The agreed enabling priorities for a more effective and efficient humanitarian system align with Australian objectives—in particular our focus on locally-led humanitarian action, participation, and multi-year, flexible funding. We support the new Grand Bargain framework and welcome the focus on engaging development and international finance actors and the growing attention to anticipatory action. However, we believe that greater energy and coordination by signatories is still required to sustain the progress made on the Grand Bargain's key reform priorities.

We believe that Pacific voices and those from other small island developing states add to our understanding of the importance of reform and its impacts when in place.

Australia is taking practical steps to support locally led action.

**We work closely and collaboratively with governments and institutions in the Indo-Pacific to position our assistance under their leadership.** This allows us to assist quickly and effectively at times of crisis, and also to support local leadership, capacity building and preparedness over the longer term.

For example, our partnership with and deep links in Vanuatu meant that Australia was positioned to assist quickly and effectively during the response to two tropical cyclones in quick succession - (TC) Kevin and Judy on 1 and 3 March. Working in partnership with the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) ensured that Australian support focused on GoV priorities. Australian NGOs and our Rapid Assessment Team supported the NDMO, working alongside key GoV departmental leads to conduct assessments and deliver emergency supplies. Australia's long-term funding and support to Vanuatu also helped to restrict loss of life using the Australian Disaster-Ready program's early warning systems and Australian funded evacuation centres. Australia also provided on-going support to the NDMO and communities to plan and prepare for emergency events and ensure buildings remain climate resilient.

Over the longer term, we are working through a regional development organisation in the Pacific—the Secretariat of the Pacific Community—to support the leadership of National Disaster Management Authorities and build the capacity of national emergency responders from 14 Pacific countries, through the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance.

Australia's three-year, AUD 3 million, partnership with the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) is making a practical difference on locally led humanitarian action globally. Our funding has supported HAG and the Pacific Islands Alliance of NGOs to develop a methodology for measuring localised humanitarian action. This methodology has been influential and is now being implemented by other humanitarian organisations to baseline localised humanitarian action in Yemen in 2022 and Ukraine in 2023 with the support of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies.

**We have established multi-year, flexible partnerships with innovative partners who are making sustained and transformative change to drive locally led action.** Our five-year, AUD 50 million arrangement with the Australian Red Cross (ARC) has supported a phased transfer of power and resources to other national red cross societies. We are assisting these societies to work with national disaster management authorities to lead their own response efforts and become more financially sustainable. At the same time, this partnership has helped to redefine ARC's role. In 2015, ARC employed 93 Australia-based staff in its international programs; in 2022 the

comparable figure was 39. Australian and ARC support helped national societies like the Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (Timor-Leste Red Cross) to make key decisions for the 2021 flood response in Timor-Leste, including developing referral pathways to specialist organisations such as UN Women for women during crises.

This work is underpinned by a commitment to ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of women, girls, those with disabilities and other marginalised groups, as community leaders, first responders and agents of change who have unique knowledge and experience essential to the resilience and recovery of crisis affected communities.

Australia will continue to drive practical action and progress on its commitments and supports progressing the continued collective ambition of the Grand Bargain.