



MINISTRY OF RURAL AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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**** For Immediate Release ****

Government teams depart for Lau

SUVA – As announced by the Acting Prime Minister, two joint Government teams will depart for a six-day deployment to the Lau Group today following the aftermath of the impacts of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption in Tonga last week.

The two teams will be deployed onboard the MV Iloilovatu and the MV Veivueti.

The deployment which will be led by the Office of the Commissioner Eastern Division is part of Government's immediate response to the impacts of the recent volcanic eruption in Tonga, which according to information received by the relevant authorities had impacted parts of the Lau Group.

The teams will be visiting six islands in Lau to conduct Initial Damage Assessments (IDAs) and also deliver immediate humanitarian relief supplies for the severely affected villages.

Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Inia Seruiratu said the teams would also include technical and scientific expertise from the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Environment, the Water Authority of Fiji and the Ministry of Fisheries who would be travelling to conduct assessments and monitoring of the air and water quality, marine resources and food security in these affected islands.

"Additionally, we will have teams from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and other key agencies who will be part of these deployments," Hon. Seruiratu said.

"The two teams will be visiting the islands of Moala, Vanuabalavu, Lakeba, Vatoa, Moce and Ono-I-Lau. We had been closely working with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs who had been gathering data from the ground in Lau. As per the information they have received, these six islands have been identified as the only ones in the Lau Group that had sustained damages as a result of the tidal surges that inundated the villages last Saturday."

Ministers Hon. Jone Usamate and Hon. Dr Iferemi Waqainabete and Assistant Ministers Hon. Vijay Nath and Hon. Selai Adimaitoga will be part of the deployments.

Hon. Seruiratu has acknowledged the Australian Government for their continuous support, especially towards funding for these two deployments.

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