

Caritas Australia welcomes the Australian Government taking a leading role in protecting aid workers.

Overnight at the UN Summit of the Future in New York the Australian Government has announced it will be taking a leading role in the development of a new Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel.

A statement from the **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong**, acknowledged 2024 is shaping up to be the most dangerous year on record, despite the establishment of the Geneva Conventions 75 years ago, which are supposed to limit human suffering in fields of conflict.

Kirsten Sayers, Interim CEO at Caritas Australia said of the move, “It is incredibly rewarding to see the government working hand in hand with Australian NGOs, by taking onboard our sector-wide stance around World Humanitarian Day back in August and channeling that into global action. This is an important moment in Australia’s diplomatic history, where as a country we are taking a stance on what is right and fair by working to protect the innocent – a stance that is fundamentally aligned with Australian culture.”

The statement from Penny Wong’s office acknowledged the role of the humanitarian sector and the developing world in helping the Australian government establish existing and new approaches to global challenges. Beyond convening ministers and humanitarian leaders to begin working on new protections for humanitarians, it also looked at approaches to climate and development challenges in the Asia Pacific region.

Existing initiatives such as the Falepili Union, commitments to the Asian Development Fund and the provision of internet connectivity in the Pacific were noted, alongside a new commitment to offer Climate Resilient Debt Clauses in sovereign loans by the end of 2025. These clauses are designed “to help developing countries build economic resilience in the face of climate change and other shocks, resist coercion and focus on delivering for their citizens” the statement said.

Kirsten Sayers commented on this development stating that, “Political momentum has been building around climate financing each year at COP. Last year we visited Canberra ahead of COP alongside Pacific climate leaders to discuss this very issue. We also took a report to Dubai detailing the widespread climate impacts island communities face.”

“Each year we are thankful to see greater alignment between the actions of the Australian government and the needs of our Pacific neighbors, with this latest announcement an important step in helping them face down some pretty significant challenges.”

To support Caritas Australia’s humanitarian efforts, visit www.caritas.org.au/emergency and to support climate vulnerable communities visit www.caritas.org.au/climatecrisis or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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