

Worsening realities in Oceania shows need for continued dialogue

The recent catastrophic earthquakes that devastated parts of Indonesia and Solomon Islands should be a wakeup call for leaders within and beyond the Oceania region, the head of the Catholic Church in Fiji has said.

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, who will be giving the welcome address at a three-day online event beginning next Monday, offered prayers this week for all affected across the region.

“I remain deeply concerned about the worsening realities for people to recover from natural disasters in our region and I am praying for those who have been severely injured as a result of the destructive earthquakes, particularly the souls of the departed and their families.”

As president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania, Archbishop Chong will be hosting his fellow Bishops of the Oceania region for their General Assembly in Suva in February 2023. Archbishop Chong said he hopes that by listening to the diverse experts selected from Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, the dialogue at next week’s event about the future of ‘Our Ocean Home’ looks to generate insights and recommendations from the peripheries for the Assembly to consider in February 2023.

With Suva as the location for the Assembly, it is the first time in 16 years that the Pacific Island nations will have the opportunity to host a group of expert voices and lift-up often marginalised voices from Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia on the topic of ‘Our Ocean Home’. Everyone is invited to participate and reflect on the wisdom and insights shared and offer recommendations from across the region.

Archbishop Chong is expected to welcome hundreds to the online event, including deep-sea voyagers and First Nations people from Kiribati, Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, as well as scientists, practitioners and practical theologians. The event offers live translators in Tok Pisin, Bislama, French and Auslan so that as many people in the region can join in the dialogue.

To register for this free online event email oceania@acu.edu.au.

Media Contact:

Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606 or emilie.ng@acu.edu.au