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**New toolkit promotes closer regional cooperation in rapid disaster response**

Today I am pleased to announce the completion of the East Asia Summit (EAS) Rapid Disaster Response Toolkit, a comprehensive guide for regional decision makers for both sending and receiving international disaster assistance.

The Toolkit heralds a new era in rapid disaster response, providing valuable tools that decision makers in EAS countries can employ with ease, both when providing and receiving international assistance in times of disasters.

The application of this important resource will enable countries to respond quickly and effectively to assist countries affected by major natural disasters, an issue with which our region is all too familiar.

The Toolkit includes three tools:

- a user-friendly and accessible listing of the designated national focal points of each EAS participating country responsible for managing offers and requests for international disaster assistance;
- guidance and advice for EAS decision makers to consider when readying for and responding to disasters within the region. This resource draws on existing regional arrangements such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response; and
- the response arrangements and capabilities of every EAS participating country. This includes key administrative requirements, such as customs and immigration, which are fundamental for ensuring rapid response to disasters.

The Toolkit was developed over three years by Indonesia and Australia, in collaboration with EAS participating countries including New Zealand, to strengthen rapid disaster response capabilities across the region.

Standing here in Christchurch today, we are reminded of the ongoing need to strengthen our collective capacity to cooperate in times of disaster. Four years on, it is great to see the impressive progress that has been made in recovering from the devastating earthquakes.

Australia's expertise in emergency response is widely respected but we can always learn from the experiences of our regional partners.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of building strong relationships to improve disaster response. The EAS Rapid Disaster Response Toolkit is a great example of

Australia's active participation in international efforts to reduce disaster risk and build resilience within our region.

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