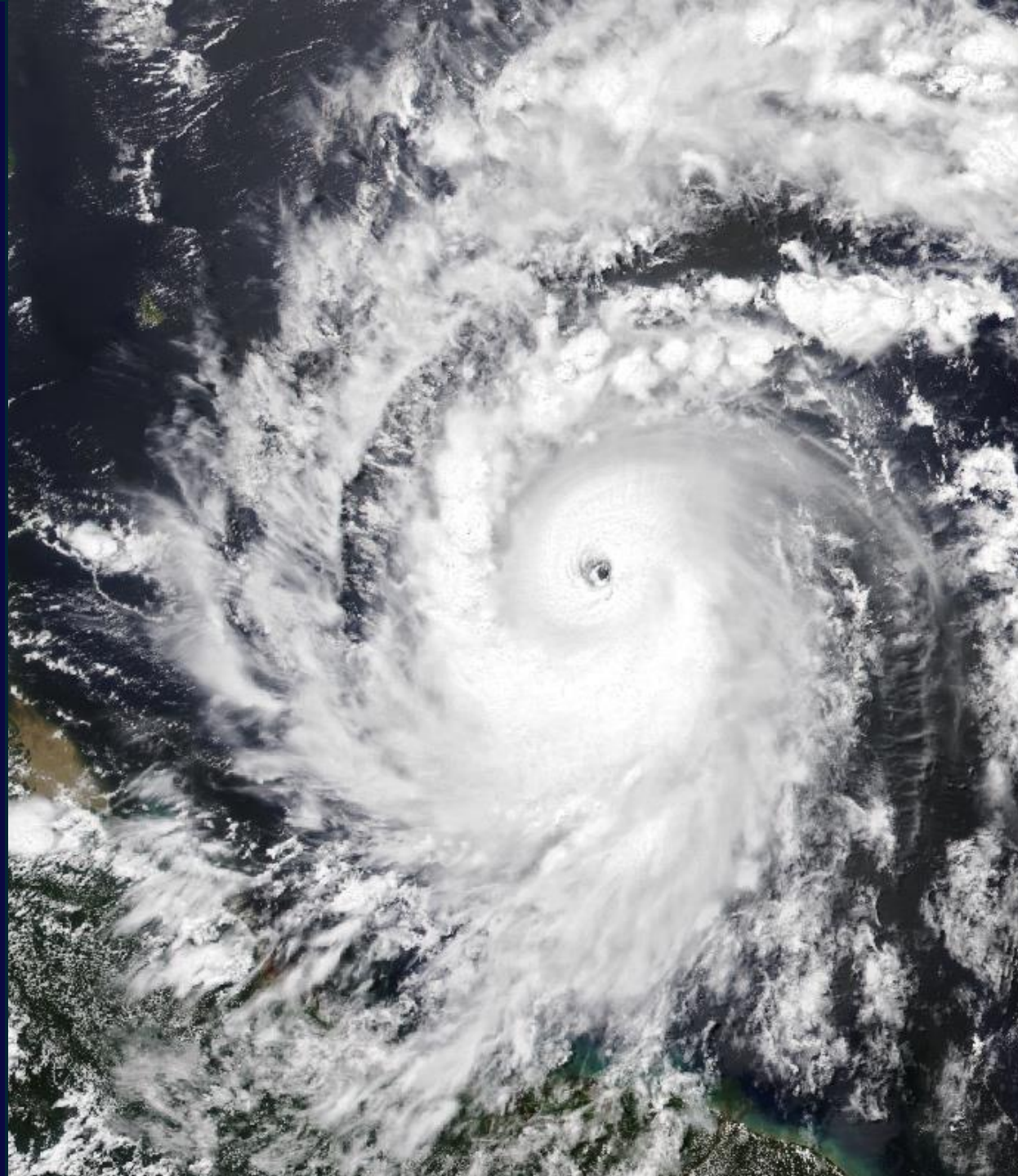
Scaling up early action beyond 2025

In collaboration with Wilton Park
2-4 October 2024

Summary Report

REAP



Summary

Scaling up early action beyond 2025 was hosted by the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) in collaboration with Wilton Park, from 2-4 October 2024. It offered an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and persistent challenges in efforts to scale early action over the past five years and look ahead to how we can best work together to 2030 and beyond to realise this ambitious agenda.

There is much to be proud of in the past five years. Early action has moved from a niche approach to one central to many organizations' work, with demonstrated impact on protecting lives and reducing suffering. Somalia, REAP's newest Board member, is an example of where these approaches have made a real difference, with early warning and early action now part of its national transformation plan.

However, there was also recognition that there are numerous remaining challenges. More needs to be done to protect people, including in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and to safeguard livelihoods. During the event, floods in Kathmandu resulted in more than 200 people losing their lives, despite the good work done by Nepal to embed early warning systems and early action. We agreed that we need better coordination between partners, more systemic approaches, and to better understand the challenges that people and communities face in receiving and acting on warnings.

Over the course of the event, we explored possible futures for the Partnership. The rich discussions validated the Board's decision to continue the Partnership beyond its initial 2025 mandate, and we collectively proposed that the Partnership should:

- retain its focus across the ***breadth of the early warning and early action value chain***, supporting systemic approaches
- continue to ***convene and connect*** across initiatives and disciplinary, methodological and organizational silos, and formalize the relationship with and contribution to the Early Warnings for All initiative
- expand opportunities for ***frank and open discussion among trusted partners*** on challenges and needs in scaling early action, acting as a "neutral broker"
- formalize its ***policy learning*** function, serving the Partnership and other stakeholders by spotlighting and showcasing good practice, identifying and aggregating knowledge gaps and working to fill these gaps, and scanning for and identifying trends in early action and other emerging issues of relevance
- invest more in its ability to ***connect with regional and national actors***, enhancing the Partnership's relevance and usefulness for these audiences and ensuring it is led by country needs.

Internal

We acknowledged the tension between the long-term changes required to scale and embed early warning and early action and the immediate and existential risks facing individuals and communities in climate-vulnerable countries. Thus, in setting our priorities, we must account for both the medium-to-long-term work of shifting the system and the real urgency needed to protect lives and livelihoods in the short term.

We explored how our ambition can be resourced with financial and non-financial contributions from Partners. The United Kingdom, as the sole donor of REAP for its first five years, remains committed to its success beyond 2025. However, as the ambition of REAP expands it is essential that support from Partners grows in proportion. The different types of partner organizations – national governments, civil society and the private sector, international organizations and donors – had the opportunity to reflect on their potential contributions to the Partnership in the coming years and what they need from the Partnership to be able to participate fully and to best effect.

This document provides a summary of the discussion over the three-day event, in accordance with the Wilton Park protocol. It captures the key points; it is not intended to be exhaustive and contributions have been anonymized and paraphrased.



Internal

Our achievements in early action

We reflected on the last five years of early action and our collective achievements in mainstreaming what, in 2019 at the founding of REAP, was a niche approach championed by a smaller community of actors. For example:

- Somalia successfully built capacity in early warning and early action, and used them in 2022 to avert famine during the El Niño event. Its focus on early action is now reflected in its national transformation plan, moving early action into the Prime Minister's office to drive an integrated, systemic approach to managing risks.
- International agencies have improved their ability to deliver early warnings and assistance (e.g. through cash transfers) directly to people ahead of crises. Studies show that early action reduces the cost of humanitarian action; stress is reduced for affected people compared to post-shock support. The evidence base for early action continues to grow; however, the scale of interventions addresses only a fraction of the need.
- Civil society engagement has delivered lessons on early action approaches that prioritize people and communities, particularly the most marginalized. Involving local civil society in designing systems that work for people in their context is essential for translating early warnings into action and overcoming barriers to acting on warnings.
- The political commitment made through the UN Secretary-General's Early Warnings For All initiative, beyond offering momentum and resources to this collective effort, reinforces the importance of early action as an approach to disasters.



Internal

The persistent challenges we face

While recognizing the positive progress over the last five years, we acknowledged the significant work still to be done to ensure that people everywhere are protected through early warning and early action, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

- In attempting to reach scale, it is important to prioritize the 'first mile'. Focusing only on digital or tech solutions or taking a one-size-fits-all approach leaves the most marginalized behind. Scaling should take place through participatory and co-design approaches with communities so that warnings result in action.
- The availability, suitability and structure of funding must be improved. We reflected on the need for appropriate financing for countries and the challenges of a system not designed for 'no regrets' spending or attracting investments into higher-risk contexts. Funding must support the maintenance of infrastructure and capabilities, not only the initial investment.
- Poor coordination results in duplicated investments or fragmentation in national contexts. National governments are the best placed to advise what they need – and, of equal importance, what they *don't* need.
- Early action is still often siloed, rather than integrated into broader national systems, policies and plans. Scaling early action requires cross-ministry and cross-sector collaboration and coordination, with civil society and the private sector. It also requires enablers such as governance and social protection systems, which fall outside of the scope of, for example, disaster management agencies.



Internal

Exploring the future of REAP

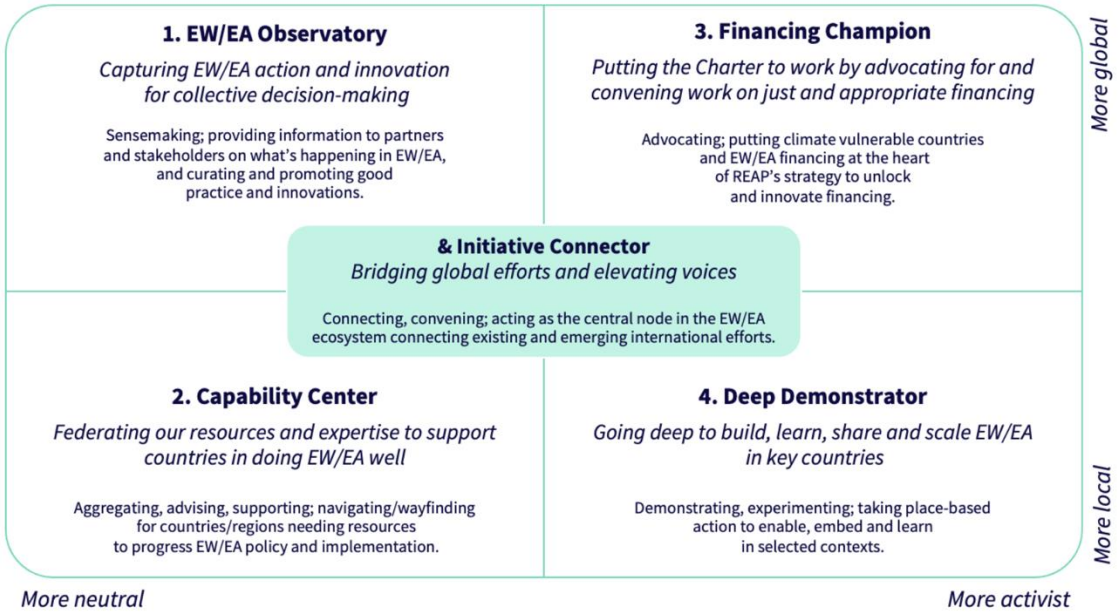
We worked with four provocations that explored different value-add roles REAP might play in the ecosystem.

These provocations were derived from the research conducted and the work done by the core design team to understand the value of REAP and the persistent gaps and challenges in scaling early action. The provocations tested certain tensions, such as the stance of REAP, its thematic focus and its level of engagement.

The four provocations explored were:

1. EW/EA Observatory
2. Capability Center
3. Financing Champion
4. Deep Demonstrator

The central 'Initiative Connector' element was considered key to REAP's success in its next iteration and was part of each provocation.



Internal

Provocation 1: EW/EA Observatory

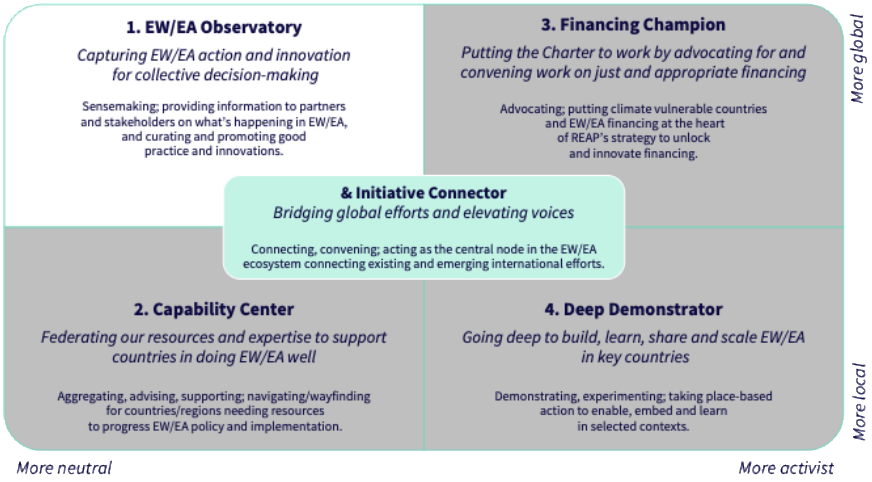
This provocation tested the idea of REAP as a facilitator of the learning agenda for early action, helping to make sense of information, aggregate and prioritize areas for further learning, promote good practice and innovations emerging from countries and regions, and forecast trends.

Desirable elements of this provocation were:

- The potential to add value by going beyond collecting information to transforming it, though this would need to be linked to areas of demand
- Fits clearly within the existing capabilities of REAP Partners and Secretariat, including creating space for national government and civil society contributions, and the potential to couple it with a thematic focus, e.g. financing
- Focus on the quality of interventions, with REAP as a trusted and credible source
- Can potentially address knowledge management challenges at the organizational level, though users and incentives will be important considerations

Less desirable elements of this provocation were:

- Concerns that the terminology of 'observatory' would imply a policing or accountability role and REAP does not have a mandate for this – nor should it
- The extent to which this function is already taken up by other organisations, including Early Warnings For All and the UNDRR Observatory





Internal

Provocation 2: Capability Center

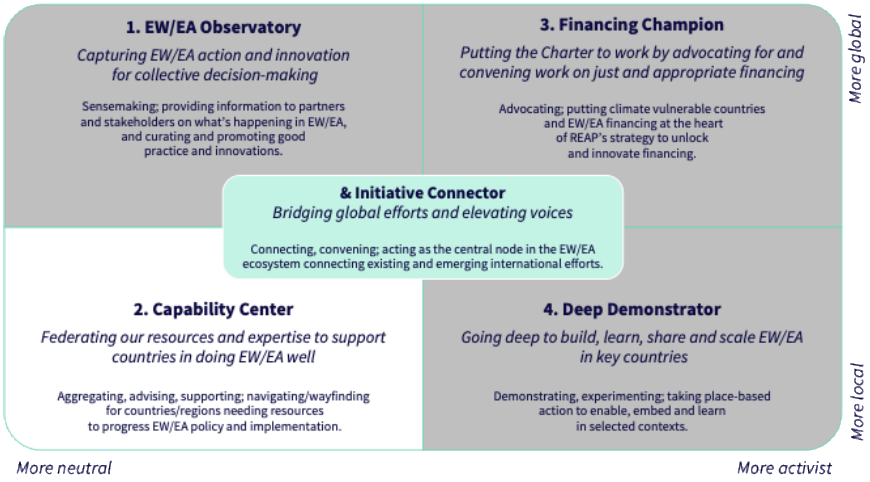
This provocation tested the idea of REAP focusing on providing the services of its Partners to other Partners and/or to external stakeholders, providing countries and regions with resources to support policy change and implementation.

Desirable elements of this provocation were:

- The strong focus on regional and national governments and their needs, and supporting action at this level, including through peer-to-peer models
- The Partners in this model play a much more active role in service of the broader early action community; leverages the expertise of the Partners

Less desirable elements of this provocation were:

- It is unclear how this could be operationalized and the resource commitment that would be needed from Partners to be able to do this
- The risk of the model being too top-down and creating additional levels of gatekeeping, and sensitivities with existing relationships





Internal

Provocation 3: Financing Champion

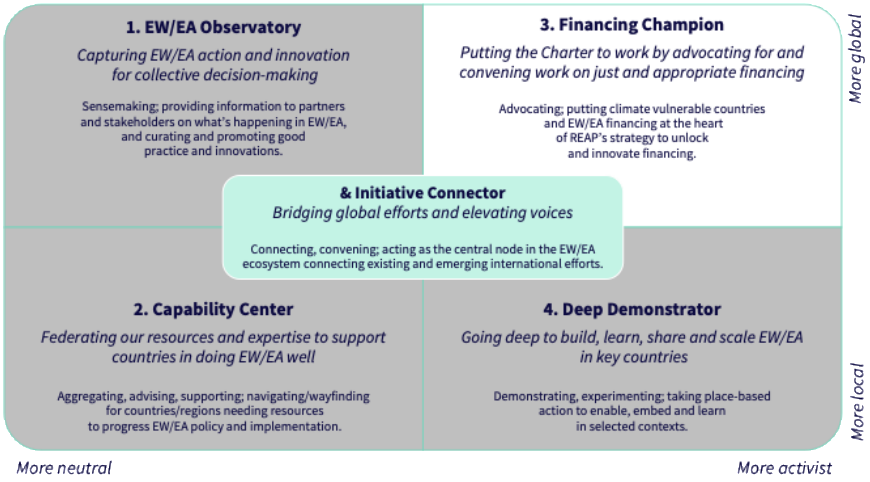
This provocation tested the idea of REAP focusing its efforts on a single thematic area, such as financing, and taking on a stronger advocacy role for the type, quality and availability of financing. The Getting Ahead of Disasters Charter would potentially be one of the mechanisms through which this could be pursued.

Desirable elements of this provocation were:

- Financing is a persistent challenge and unlocking more high-quality finance is important; the ability to focus primarily on the quality of the financing would be an important perspective that is often missing
- The potential to focus on how we can use existing finance more effectively as a community of actors focused on early action

Less desirable elements of this provocation were:

- This concept should not include the development of instruments/products but rather focus on advocacy
- The centrality of the Charter was a concern for some of us amid 'declaration fatigue' and additional donor commitments and targets
- It is unclear if advocacy alone can shift the global systems and incentives that drive the current financing approaches; will another organization working on this add to or cut through the noise?
- REAP as a more neutral broker is attractive to some Partners; taking a stronger position may create challenges for continued membership for some Partners





Internal

Provocation 4: Deep Demonstrator

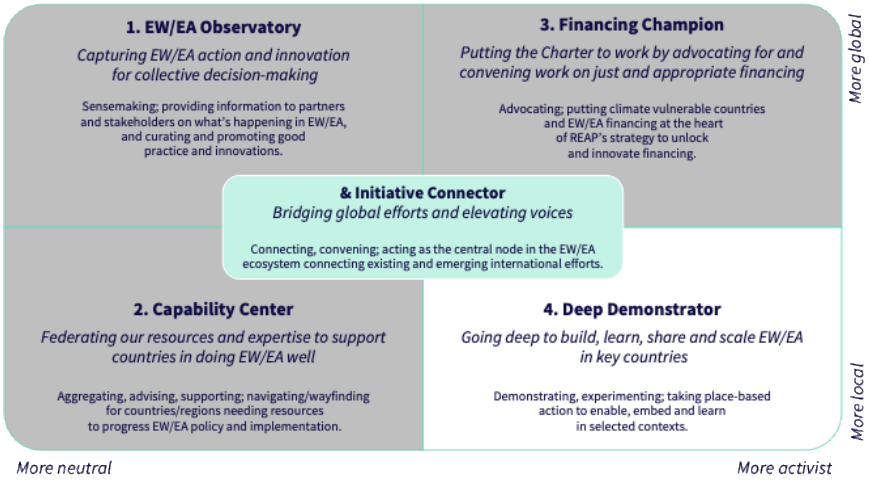
This provocation tested the idea of REAP focusing on driving deep transformation in 1-2 selected contexts, working together with the national government and Partners. These interventions would provide insights on delivering system transformation for early action that could be shared across other contexts.

Desirable elements of this provocation were:

- A strong connection to real change at the country level and measurable impact (its greatest strength)
- Enormous potential for evidence generation; however, from our research, we also understand the limitations of evidence in driving action, even where it is credible and persuasive
- Potential to help governments in planning and coordinating investments to avoid a 'projectized' approach

Less desirable elements of this provocation were:

- It would require a fundamentally different way of working for REAP, and different Secretariat capabilities
- Is it unclear what the value-add would be over existing initiatives and grants, and there is the potential for further confusion with the introduction of another actor
- This is ultimately the responsibility of national governments; how would this sit alongside national systems building?
- This kind of change should be the *outcome* of the other work that REAP does as a partnership





Internal

High-level direction for the future

Through small-group and plenary discussions, it was agreed that the design of the next strategy for REAP should ensure that the Partnership:

- retains its focus across the ***breadth of the early warning and early action value chain***, supporting systemic approaches
- continues to ***convene and connect*** across initiatives and disciplinary, methodological and organizational silos, and formalize the relationship with and contribution to the Early Warnings for All initiative
- expands opportunities for ***frank and open discussion among trusted partners*** on challenges and needs in scaling early action, acting as a "neutral broker"
- formalizes its ***policy learning*** function, serving the Partnership and other stakeholders by spotlighting and showcasing good practice, identifying and aggregating knowledge gaps and working to fill these gaps, and scanning for and identifying trends in early action and other emerging issues of relevance
- invests more in its ability to ***connect with regional and national actors***, enhancing the Partnership's relevance and usefulness for these audiences and ensuring it is led by country needs.

These points draw together the strengths from the different provocations, including the importance of remaining an inclusive Partnership, having a thematic focus on finance alongside the broader value chain, driving learning on early action, and delivering value to regional and national levels.





Internal

Headlines from the future

After building consensus on our direction of travel, we focused on our desired outcomes by generating and prioritizing headlines from the future. Recurring themes included increased access to finance, coverage, and participation from communities. During the discussion, we acknowledged the tension between the long-term and system-level changes required to scale and embed early warning and early action and the immediate and existential risks facing individuals and communities in climate-vulnerable countries. Thus, in setting our ambition and targets, we must account for both the medium-to-long term work of shifting the system, as well as the real urgency needed to protect lives and livelihoods in the short term.

2025

"REAP serves to further amplify the SG's call for scale up and access to efforts to provide EWS for all of the world's most vulnerable"

2026

"Early warning standards put first mile and marginalized communities at the core of design"

"There is an increase in public private partnerships as a result of REAP 2.0"

"The least heard voices – women, people with disabilities and marginalized people – are more central to the stories we are telling"

"REAP works to identify and target persistent challenges in sustainably financing and delivering people-centered EWS and early action at national and local levels"

2027

"REAP publishes 'The Last Mile', a compendium of solutions to bring EW/EA to communities across the globe"

"Countries report their needs are driving international investments"

"20,000 women are provided micro-insurance cover to guard against extreme heat related losses"

"We have broken down silos between climate, humanitarian and development actors, including in financing"

2028

"EWS cover all of the risks people face, providing people with comprehensive information to make informed decisions"

2029+

"We have catalyzed investments into EW mechanisms and built local risk capacity"

"At risk actors have defined needs and measures in place to make informed decisions and responses"

"National governments in vulnerable countries are empowered and have access to resources to implement EW/EA systems"

"Financing for people-centered EWS has increased and is coherent and coordinated, getting to the local level and enabling systems change"

"Broken international financing system replaced by what we want, says Chair of AOSIS"

Internal

Contributing to the way forward

We closed with reflections on what we can contribute to REAP's future success and what we each need from the Partnership to enable our participation. We all reiterated our support for the Partnership going forward; selected contributions and needs are highlighted below.

NAT'L GOVTS

- Role of providing national and regional inputs and perspectives on successes, challenges and needs, and holding global initiatives to account for meaningful change on the ground
- Committing to sharing learnings and insights and to elevating the discussion of early action and the potential of REAP within governments and regional fora, including high-level political support
- Needs support in navigating the space, drawing on the networks of the Partnership and its resources to build capacity, and support on advocating for the financial architecture to support early action

DONORS

- Role of providing support for the Partnership and actively engaging within the constraints of each government
- Committed to advocating for the role and value of REAP within governments and in advancing the case for the integrated climate, humanitarian and development approach
- Needs support in engaging within the boundaries of their governments' respective priorities and within the capacity of their staff, which are often single officers or small teams. Some types of participation are easier to make a case for internally than others. Needs to see results and hear from national governments that REAP is making a difference on the ground

CIVIL SOCIETY & PRIVATE SECTOR

- Role of providing expertise and insights from respective fields to inform evidence base and practice, particularly for marginalized voices
- Committed to building the evidence base for early action, and in experimenting for collective learning where possible; advocating for people-centered early action in national, regional and international fora
- Needs stronger connections to the expertise of other partners, continuing seat at the table alongside international organizations, and support to participate fully given the resource constraints CSOs face

INT'L ORGS

- Role of providing support for the Partnership, particularly through technical expertise, profile and advocacy
- Committed to continuing to support the Partnership through, for example, staff secondments and hosting arrangements
- Needs support in making the case for REAP with evidence of its impact, and a clearer understanding of how REAP adds to, rather than duplicates, other initiatives that international organizations are either leading or contributing to

Internal



With thanks to Kamal Kishore