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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**2007/2008 SOUTH PACIFIC TROPICAL CYCLONE SEASON OUTLOOK**

**Highlights:** *2007/08 TC Season is to commence under weak La Nina influence with possible return to near neutral conditions by late in the season. Average to below average cyclone activity is likely. Countries west of Dateline are under increased risk this season than those to the east. Fiji is likely to be affected by one or two tropical cyclones at least with slightly higher chance of them passing over western and southern Fiji Waters. Rainfall across most of the country is likely to be average to above average with chance of flooding higher than usual.*

The South Pacific Tropical Cyclone (TC) season formally begins on November 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on April 30<sup>th</sup>. However, tropical cyclones can also develop outside this period, as observed in the past, though this occurrence is rare especially under La Nina conditions. The average\* number of tropical cyclones occurring in the Southwest Pacific per season is nine, with **eight** of these occurring within the RSMC Nadi-TCC area of responsibility (0°-25°S and 160°E-120°W).

A weak La Niña condition currently exists in the equatorial Pacific. With the exception of the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI), all ENSO indicators have showed an intensifying La Niña as of September 2007. Models forecast the La Niña to last until early 2008. Associated and expected with the current La Niña conditions is the South Pacific Convergence Zone (major rain bearing system) being displaced southwest, closer to Fiji.

**Tropical Cyclone Prediction for the Southwest Pacific this season**

The average number of tropical cyclones expected to occur in conditions similar to present is between 7 and 8. Given the current and expected ocean and atmospheric conditions in the equatorial Pacific, there is expected to be a westward shift in the regions most likely to experience Tropical Cyclones during the season. This suggests a slightly higher risk than normal for the Coral Sea, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, near-average risk for countries near the Date Line (e.g. Fiji and Tonga) and a slightly lower risk than normal for countries further east of the Dateline.

**Tropical Cyclone Prediction for the Fiji Islands this season**

On average 2 to 3 tropical cyclones pass through Fiji EEZ per season with 1 to 2 directly affecting land areas. With the current oceanic and atmospheric conditions, the chance of tropical cyclone(s) affecting Fiji is near average; however there is a slightly higher chance of tropical cyclone(s) passing through the western and southern Fiji EEZ.

**Rainfall Prediction for the Fiji Islands for the Wet Season**

Based on the current weak La Niña conditions, rainfall is predicted to be average to above average across most of the country. With the present tropical cyclone and rainfall predictions, the likelihood of high intensity rainfall and flooding is higher than usual. Sea surface and air temperatures are likely to be average to above average.

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\*Average for 1970/71 to 2005/06 TC seasons.