

Pacific Climate Change & Migration Project NEWSLETTER

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Call for International Legal Framework to Protect Climate Change Displaced



Tuvalu Prime Minister Hon. Enele Sopoaga has called for a UN resolution to create legal protection for people displaced by the impacts of climate change

Tuvalu's Prime Minister Hon. Enele Sopoaga has called for a UN resolution to create legal protection for people displaced by the impacts of climate change, saying there was currently no international framework to protect their rights.

Speaking at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul on 24 May, 2016 where he made the proposal, he said it was time to start working out how to deal with communities that might have to be moved due to rising seas, water shortages and other threats to their homes.

"Think of a situation where Tuvaluans have to be relocated because no land is there. Under current international law, we don't have any framework to work from," PM Sopoaga said.

The Refugee Convention does not cover people displaced across borders by environmental degradation or climate-related disasters, and more recent initiatives to address the problem are non-binding.

"We have a real situation on our hands right now - 62,000 people every day are displaced by the impacts of climate change," the Prime Minister said. "We are going to see more of that happening, as predicted by science."

He said he supported a push by Pacific small island developing states in Istanbul to appoint a UN Special Representative on Climate and Security.

President of Nauru Bar on Waqa told the Istanbul summit that such a representative should report regularly to the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council on emerging climate-related security threats, as well as helping vulnerable countries develop action plans to boost their resilience.

"A new Special Representative... would be a lasting legacy of the World Humanitarian Summit and demonstrate to vulnerable countries and communities that we take seriously one of the greatest security threats of our generation," Waqa said during a roundtable on natural disasters and climate change.

At the session, the treasurer of the Philippines presented a new plan, backed by U.N. agencies and the World Bank, to strengthen the disaster preparedness of 20 vulnerable countries by 2020.

Other initiatives for managing climate and disaster risk also were discussed, including a new business-led forum to increase access to insurance in the most vulnerable countries.

Maarten Van Aalst, director of the Red Cross Climate Center, said the summit had underlined the need for a dramatic shift in how the world manages risk - something already recognized in the new Paris climate change agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. (Thomson Reuters)

Amplifying Pacific Voices at the World Humanitarian Summit

Pacific voices were heard loud and clear at the World Humanitarian Summit as Pacific representatives from civil society and regional agencies passionately addressed global leaders in Istanbul, calling for local responses to humanitarian needs.

In a plenary statement to member states and stakeholders Emele Duituturaga, Executive Director of the Pacific Islands Association for NGOs (PIANGO) said: "Climate induced disasters such as rising sea levels, irreversible loss and damage,

Collaborating for Resilience

A side event on "Collaborating for Resilience" brought together a range of actors working together to provide local responses to disasters and climate change across the region. They discussed work underway on improving early warning weather messaging in the Cook Islands, bridging the divide through Community Protection Committees in Tonga, community preparations for El Nino in Palau and 'instreaming' of climate change in the Solomon Islands.

Disaster Displacement

Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama addressed a Nansen side event on Disaster Displacement. He emphasised Fiji's commitment to supporting people from Kiribati and Tuvalu who are being displaced by climate change. The Prime Minister also committed to implementing Nansens' principles for managing the movement of people as a result of climate change and natural disasters such as category five Tropical Cyclone Winston which devastated Fiji on 20 February, 2016.

Disaster Roundtable

Fiji's Minister for National Disaster Management Inia Seruiratu told the Disaster Roundtable at the World Humanitarian Summit that the world must set aside the necessary funding to deal with the terrifying reality of extreme weather events, which will become more frequent as a result of climate change. Mr Inia Seruiratu told a panel that TC Winston was proof of the damage that these events can do and was a sobering lesson on the inadequacy of preparedness. Also speaking at roundtable, Samoa's Deputy Prime Minister Fiamema Mata'afa committed to supporting local responses and

and forced displacement of Island populations continue to threaten the security and well-being of Pacific Island peoples. We ask: where is the justice that those of us, who are least responsible, bear the greatest brunt of the climate crisis on the frontline? We call on world leaders to join our Pacific leaders in committing to the Paris Climate Agreement to accelerate transition to a de-carbonised global economy."

responders to disasters and backed a Pacific SIDS push for the appointment of a UN Special Representative on Climate Change and Security.

\$130m Needed for Natural Disaster Funding

A new scheme launched at the World Humanitarian Summit by UN agencies, the World Bank and countries most vulnerable to climate change is looking for funding of up to \$130million to help 20 at-risk nations prepare better for natural disasters.

The "Global Partnership for Preparedness" aims to help countries attain a basic level of readiness by 2020 for future disaster risks mainly caused by climate change.

The money will enable countries to access risk analysis and early warning systems, put together contingency plans, including pre-committed finance and respond better to shocks such as floods and droughts.

"The aim is to save lives, safeguard development gains and reduce the economic impacts of crises. Development gains, in particular, can otherwise be lost with each disaster," said United Nations Development Program Administrator Helen Clark.

Countries will be selected from the 43 nations belonging to the "Climate Vulnerable Forum", a group that spans Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific. Funding for the first phase has yet to be put in place but is likely to come from international institutions, UN agencies and government donors.



(L) Emele Duituturaga, Executive Director of the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) told the WHS that climate induced disasters such as rising sea levels, irreversible loss and damage, and forced displacement of island populations continue to threaten the security and well-being of Pacific Island peoples.

World Leaders Reaffirm Commitment to Paris Climate Agreement

In a strong show of commitment to the Paris Agreement, 175 parties (174 countries and the European Union), gathered at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 22 April, 2016 to take part in the largest-ever signing ceremony of its kind, held on Earth Day.

Pacific nations led by Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Marshall Islands, joined other leaders in committing to turn the Paris Agreement into meaningful action by presenting the UN with their plans for enforcing the Agreement at national level.

The ceremony, held the first day that the Paris Agreement was open for signature, marked the initial step toward ensuring the agreement enters into force. The agreement can enter into force 30 days after 55 Parties accounting for 55 per cent of global emissions deposit their instruments of ratification.

"The world will have met the requirement needed for the Paris Agreement to enter into force," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "if all 175 Parties that have signed take the next step at the national level and join the Agreement."

Fifteen countries submitted their ratifications during the signing ceremony, including small island developing countries on the frontlines of climate impacts like the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Somalia, State of Palestine, Barbados, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Samoa, Tuvalu, Maldives, Saint Lucia and Mauritius.

Several countries announced plans to join the agreement in 2016, including Australia, Argentina, Cameroon, Canada, China, France, Mali, Mexico, Philippines, and the United States. Other countries, including Brazil, the European Union, and the Russian Federation, pledged to swiftly work to complete the necessary steps for joining the agreement.

The Paris Agreement marked a watershed moment in taking action on climate change. After years of negotiation, countries agreed to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to keep temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.



I-Kiribati people campaigning against fossil fuels in May 2016. (Picture credit: Humans of Kiribati)

“Need for regime to protect climate change displaced,” says Tuvalu PM at UN HQ

Speaking at the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga called for a UN General Assembly resolution to establish a legal system to protect the rights of people displaced by the impacts of climate change. He referred to studies indicating that an average of 62,000 people are displaced each day as a result of the impacts of climate change.

In making this call, Prime Minister Sopoaga said that the concern about displaced people is not an indication that the people of Tuvalu want to migrate.

"This is certainly not the case. We want to stay. Our concern about displacement is a humanitarian one," PM Sopoaga said.

He said that the people of Tuvalu were committed to the Paris Agreement and that Parliament had approved Tuvalu's ratification of it. In his speech, PM Sopoaga also sought international support for a Pacific Island Climate Change Insurance Facility to help Pacific Island countries recover from the impacts of climate change disasters.

Prime Minister Sopoaga also recalled a paragraph in the Paris Agreement which referred to human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, migrants, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity. He said that the key message from this paragraph was the need to ensure that no one was left behind and that an inclusive approach is taken in every effort to address climate change.

Cyclone-hit Fiji Champions Climate Change Action

(UN News/UNOCHA Pacific) - Fiji was hit by Tropical Cyclone Winston, a Category 5 storm, on 20 February 2016, less than a week after the country became the first to ratify the Paris Agreement, which establishes a long term, world-wide framework to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Small island developing nations, like Fiji, have led the charge on climate change, sounding the alarm because their communities are on the front lines of rising sea levels and increasing natural disasters linked to rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Disaster Preparedness and Resilience

A Category 5 hurricane, as measured in intensity on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, is the strongest hurricane that can form on planet Earth. Only 11 cyclones in the Category 5 have been registered south of the equator since 1970.

Two of them hit the Pacific in the past 13 months. Pam, which ripped through Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in March 2015; and Winston, which took more than 40 lives and affected 350,000 people, about 40 per cent of Fiji's total population.

In addition, Winston's fury wiped out generations of aspirations for rural schools and agricultural projects in a space of a few hours.

This timing comes from the fact that the provision of food is one of the most crucial, in addition to potable water, shelter and sanitation, for example, and that the fastest growing staple in the Pacific Islands – the sweet potato – takes at least six months to grow.

The recovery phase takes much longer. One year on, Vanuatu is still recovering from the devastation of Cyclone Pam. For its recovery, Fiji has followed the "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030", a voluntary non-binding

"We don't realise it would be big like this because this is the first time a big cyclone, the first time a tsunami came in our village," Vilisa Naivalubasaga from Mudu Village, on one of Fiji's 300 islands, told the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Pacific, as she was preparing food with other women in a temporary shelter.

The cyclone thrust Fiji to the centre of a narrative around climate change, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction, and the vital role for humanitarian work when these three intersect.

agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk, but that responsibility should also be shared by the local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.

For example, Fiji's disaster management system at the national level is complemented by local offices. Ahead of Winston's landfall, the Fijian authorities, under the leadership of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), activated evacuation centres and moved people to those facilities, saving many lives. Military, police and other personnel on leave had been ordered back to active duty and worked with local officials.

But a key question, not only for Fiji but other countries, is how to make communities more resilient to such natural disasters.

In Fiji, vital disaster preparedness measures include the introduction of stringent building codes to ensure that all structures, whether in urban or rural areas, are disaster-proof. There are also considerations on how to build. Nails are no longer the main choice for roofing, for example. But even development projects need to be rethought. Solar panels, which are increasingly utilised in Fiji for clean energy are often placed on rooftops. Unfortunately, they are often one of the first objects to be blown away in heavy winds.



Path of destruction: TC Winston and a massive storm surge left a path of destruction across Fiji on 20 and 21 February 2016, leaving more than 40 people dead, damaging or destroying more than 31,000 houses and wiping out life-sustaining food crops

Relocating above the waves

Some village leaders on the Island of Koro, where cyclone Winston made landfall, have started discussing complete relocation of villages to higher ground, far away from future storm surge and rising sea levels, and have identified suitable land if this goes ahead.

"That's a good message coming from the villagers themselves," said Amena Yauvoli, Fiji's former Ambassador for

Climate Change and Oceans, following a visit to his home community of Nasau on the island of Koro.

"Relocation comes with lots of costs and even the emotional traditions and attachment to the current village site is always there," he said, stressing that ample time for discussions should be given before any definitive step forward by the village and the government.

Celebrating Europe Day

UNESCAP and the Pacific Climate Change and Migration Project were pleased to be part of the European Union's Europe Day 2016 development partner exhibition at St. Joseph's Secondary School in Suva in May. The three-day exhibition which was open to schools and the public, was officially opened on 10 May by the European Union Ambassador to Fiji and the Pacific, HE Andrew Jacobs.

In his speech to mark Europe Day, Ambassador Jacobs said: "Everywhere in the world the European Union is a major trading partner, a major investor, an important donor for humanitarian and development aid, the most significant diplomatic power. Too often we forget how strong we can be when united. This is why we need Europe Day: to be proud of what we have achieved, to keep in mind that we cannot take it for granted.

"Our partnership with Fiji and the Pacific is based on our shared values, on common concerns and on common aspirations. We work closely with our Pacific partners to tackle global challenges - some challenges are so big that only a global response will suffice to overcome them," he said.

Ambassador Jacobs said that the European Union is committed to continue working closely with the Pacific on climate change, not only alongside it in international negotiations, but also as a key development partner – providing support for mitigation and adaption, and

on the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

"I am confident that the close collaboration between the European Union and the Pacific Island Countries at COP21 last December played a major role in ensuring the good outcome that is the Paris Agreement – a contemporary, robust and balanced deal to limit global warming, expertly concluded by a strong French chair.

"The EU and Pacific partners were, and remain, leading members of the "High Ambition Coalition" that pushed the bar high and got results. Pacific leaders particularly from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Fiji were effective in drawing attention to the plight of Pacific countries and to the need for action, rapid action. Europe was proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you in Paris," Ambassador Jacobs said.

Europe Day is celebrated on 9 May every year. It marks the day in 1950 when Robert Schuman, the then French Foreign Minister, called on the nations of Europe to unite for peace. Robert Schuman's appeal to overcome age-old divisions just five years after the Second World War which devastated Europe, laid the foundations of what has become the European Union. Over the years the EU has grown from six members in 1957 to 28, with 500 million people.



Students from St. Joseph's Secondary School at the PCCM booth at the Europe Day Development Partner Exhibition in May 2016.



EU enlargement, single European currency and the fall of the Berlin Wall were amongst issues discussed by EU Ambassador Andrew Jacobs at a seminar at the EU development partner exhibition to celebrate Europe Day in May.



Head of the UNESCAP Pacific Office, Iosefa Maiava speaks to Fiji One News at the Europe Day exhibition in May 2016.

Seminar Spotlights Climate Change and Human Mobility

Climate change is now recognised as a factor driving the movement of people around the world- Internationally, migration, displacement and human mobility are recognized in the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, and further reinforced through the Paris Agreement in 2015. As Pacific Island countries increasingly experience the effects of climate change, more Pacific governments will need to consider options for dealing with human mobility.

The Pacific Climate Change and Migration (PCCM) project was pleased to be part of a panel discussion at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on 1 June, 2016 to discuss key messages and recommendations put forward in the recently-launched Pacific Regionalism Papers on Climate Change and Human Mobility. The PCCM's focal point in Tuvalu, former Prime Minister Bikenibeu Paeniu joined Julia Edwards of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) on a panel which was moderated by Tim Bryar, PIFS Conflict Prevention Adviser.

A key suggestion made by Mr Paeniu during the discussions was the need for a focused regional framework on climate change. He also recommended more government support for the Tuvalu diaspora living below the poverty line in New Zealand and in other Pacific countries. Ms Edwards discussed PCC's work on resettlement issues and the practicalities of climate induced relocation of communities, based on the experiences of the Carteret Islanders of Papua New Guinea.

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat says that currently there is little evidence to suggest that the movement of people in the region can be attributed exclusively to the impacts of climate change. The majority of human mobility in the region is linked to development opportunities and the impacts of disasters from natural hazard risk events such as tropical cyclones, flooding and tsunamis. A Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat/United Nations University study in 2015 found that reasons for choosing to migrate were not always the direct consequences of climate change but rather a worsening of living standards, including access to education and employment.

Where climate change is a source of migration, it is in combination with factors such as the deterioration of lands, water and infrastructure. Such findings are consistent with statistics on the growing rates of urbanization in the Pacific, which reflect internal movement from rural to urban areas as well as issues of infrastructure and services.

Any policy response to the issue of the movement of people in the Pacific must consider the multiple drivers of human mobility. The term 'human mobility' is used at the international level to describe three forms of human movement: displacement, migration and resettlement.

Download the paper on Climate Change and Human Mobility here: <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/fpr-updates/climate-change-human-mobility-in-pacific.html>



The PCCM project's Tuvalu National Expert Bikenibeu Paeniu and PIFS Conflict Prevention Adviser Tim Bryar at the seminar on climate change and human mobility in June 2016.

Mexican Ambassador is New UN Climate Chief

The UN has selected Patricia Espinosa as the next head of its climate change body. Mexico's Ambassador to Germany will take over from Christiana Figueres when she leaves on 6 July, after two terms leading the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Ms. Espinosa has more than 30 years of experience at highest levels in international relations, specializing in climate change, global governance, sustainable development and protection of human rights. Since 2012, she has been serving as Ambassador of Mexico to Germany, a position she also held from 2001 to 2002. She previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico from 2006 to 2012.



New UN Climate Chief, Mexico's Patricia Espinosa

Reducing Inequality is Key to Achieving Sustainable Development in the Pacific

“Gender inequality continues to be an obstacle,” says ESCAP Pacific Office

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Fiji Ministry of Finance held a national consultation in Suva on 15 June to explore innovative policies to measure, analyse and combat growing inequalities.

Pacific Island Developing States face unique challenges in relation to inequality due to their small size, remoteness and vulnerability to economic and natural shocks, with youth three times more likely to be unemployed in the region.

“Gender inequality continues to be an obstacle, with over 65 per cent of women having experienced violence at the hands of a partner in some Pacific countries, and across the region. Women and persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment and decent work opportunities,” said Iosefa Maiava, Head of the ESCAP Pacific Office.

“Tackling inequalities by strengthening social protection systems and revamping labour market policies will bring direct socioeconomic benefits for countries, and ultimately determine the success of the Sustainable Development Goals,” said Patrik Andersson, Chief of the Social Integration Section at ESCAP.

“Fiji is currently taking a leading role in reducing inequalities in the South Pacific region,” Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum told the consultation.

“We are keen to share with other Pacific Island nations strategies and solutions we have developed that are tailored to the unique regional challenges that we and our neighbours face. ESCAP’s work in this area supports Fiji’s efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable members of society have access to quality health care, education and other essential services,” he added.

Over 50 high-level government representatives and key stakeholders from civil society and academia came together to discuss critical policy measures to achieve more inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies in Fiji. The meeting built on the findings of a recent ESCAP publication entitled *Time for Equality: The Role of Social Protection in Reducing Inequalities in Asia and the Pacific* as well as the ESCAP Social Protection Toolbox, which provides access to an interactive database of over 130 good practices in social protection from developing countries.



Fiji’s Minister for Finance and Attorney General, Hon. Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum (seated second from left), Patrik Andersson (first from left, ESCAP Bangkok), Iosefa Maiava, Head of the UNESCAP Pacific Office (first from right) and participants at the joint UNESCAP and Fiji Government National Consultation on Reducing Inequality, held in Suva on 15 June, 2016.

Migration is the “brutal reality” of Climate Change

- By Anote Tong , former President of Kiribati

(Climate Home, 21 June, 2016) — Climate change poses the most significant moral challenge to the global community and an existential threat to the future of many communities worldwide.

With the projected rise in sea levels by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of up to one metre within the century, the most vulnerable coastal communities and low-lying island states —several of which are in Pacific—face the real possibility of their islands and communities being submerged well within the next hundred years.

Recent events and the experience of the most vulnerable island communities clearly indicate that climate change is already seriously affecting the low-lying island communities in the Pacific. Cyclone Pam, which hit and seriously damaged Vanuatu in March of 2014, also veered north on a path never previously witnessed to hit the islands of Tuvalu and the southern island of the Gilbert Island Group of Kiribati. Kiribati is on the Equator and was previously not prone to cyclone events, being in a region regarded as free from cyclones. This unprecedented event clearly indicates that the weather patterns in this region are being altered and suggests that sea level rise may not be the most immediate threat to the security of these highly vulnerable island countries, but rather more highly energized and more frequent storms.

Cyclone Winston, which hit Fiji early in 2016, was categorised as the most severe storm ever recorded in the southern hemisphere. These cataclysmic events, together with ongoing and increasing severity of coastal erosion and periodic flooding, have now rendered what were once viable communities uninhabitable. Sea water has intruded into the underwater aquifers (a source of potable water and a lifeline for these communities), causing contamination to water supplies and damage to food crops.

On the southern island of the Gilbert Island Group, some villagers have now relocated to other parts of the island and several more will have to do the same well within the next decade. However, these atoll islands are on average no more than two meters above sea level. Therefore, the ability and the options for relocation on the islands are limited.

Against this background and against the projected increasing severity of climate change impacts, the future of these communities and their capacity to continue as viable communities on their home islands is also severely limited. Unless significant resources are to be made available from the developed world to build capacity to withstand the increasing severity of climate change impacts, a community's ability to adapt and to remain in its homelands would not be an option.

In an attempt to provide themselves with any measure of an option against the relentless onslaught of climate change, these most vulnerable countries have formed coalitions such as the Climate Vulnerable Forum. The CVF is composed of countries ranging from the highly populous nation of Bangladesh to the small island nations of Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati in the Pacific, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean.

To highlight their extreme vulnerability as atoll island nations, the latter group formed the Coalition of Atoll Island Nations on Climate Change (CANCC), to focus international attention on the reality that their future as sovereign nations is in serious jeopardy.

But in spite of the strong desire and commitment of these countries to be able to continue to remain in their homelands, their ability to adapt and build the resilience required to withstand ongoing and future climate change impacts is entirely dependent on substantial intervention by the international community.

And even then it would be most unlikely that the scale of resources needed to guarantee the security of their entire populations is likely to be forthcoming. Relocation, no matter how undesirable, must therefore be the brutal reality of the future of atoll island nations, and part of the solution.

Kiribati has advocated that migration with dignity must be part of a climate change adaptation strategy, rather than relocation of its people as climate refugees. But the reality of what faces member countries of the CANCC in the future also holds true for countries like Bangladesh, where a significant number of their very large population is highly vulnerable and would also need to relocate from their existing communities.

And the moral challenge for the global community, among others, is then: “Are we able to face up to a catastrophe that is of our own creation?”

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Campaigning against fossil fuels in May 2016. (Picture credit: Humans of Kiribati)



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