



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

March 2020





Table of Contents

Introduction	2
02-06 March 2020	2
Organisations update	2
UNEP	2
UN Women	2
UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues	3
OHCHR	3
Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update	4
Pacific – UN	4
Niue	4
9-13 March 2020	5
Organisations update	5
UNFCCC	5
PIDF	5
Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update	6
Cook Islands, FSM, Tuvalu	6
16-20 March 2020	7
Organisations update	7
IOM and UNHCR	7
Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update	7
Vanuatu	7
23-31 March 2020	8
Organisations update	8
UNFCCC	8
IOM	9
UN Network on Migration	10
Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update	12
Tuvalu	12



Introduction

This weekly update aims to highlight recent news on climate change, migration, and the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

Prepared as a part of the CLI_M_CO2 project, undertaken at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern, Switzerland.

02-06 March 2020

Organisations update

UNEP

The 13th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in Gandhinagar, India, led to the adoption of resolutions and decisions to help conserve migratory species globally. Among the key highlights of the meeting was the adoption of the Gandhinagar Declaration, which calls for migratory species and the concept of “ecological connectivity” to be integrated and prioritized in the new (zero-draft) post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/gandhinagar-declaration-welcoming-migratory-species-new-global-biodiversity>

The zero draft of post-2020 global biodiversity framework is available at:

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/efb0/1f84/a892b98d2982a829962b6371/wg2020-02-03-en.pdf>

UN Women

Twenty-five years after the World Conference in Beijing placed gender equality firmly on the global agenda, women continue to struggle to realize these rights, with a new report by UN Women finding that the climate emergency, conflict and the alarming rise of exclusionary politics all threaten future progress towards gender equality.

According to the report, along with the economic costs of the climate crisis, a rise in displacement, and forced migration, poverty and insecurity will have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including through greater exposure to abuse and violence.

The statistics are stark: although 39 percent of women currently work in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector, just 14 percent of agricultural landholders are women. Men are 75 per cent of parliamentarians, hold 73 per cent of managerial positions, are 70 per cent of climate negotiators and almost all of the peacemakers

“Women are vital for the management of and sustainable use of land and biodiversity resources,” explained Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on Twitter. “Transforming the balance of power and working for gender equality is key to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. This is the ask for #GenerationEquality and it involves all of us.”



UNEP's Global Gender and Environment Outlook 2016 (GGE0) identified gender inequality as one of the main challenges to advance the environmental dimension of sustainable development, as it has negative impacts on access, use and control of natural resources, as well as the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment for all. The GGE0 further calls for the adoption of gender responsive approaches in addressing barriers to sustainable development.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/gender-equality-critical-missing-piece-climate-puzzle>

UN Women's report is available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-womens-rights-in-review-en.pdf?la=en&vs=934>

UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

In his report, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, provides a clear working definition of the concept of a minority in order to guide his activities and those of the United Nations. He describes a series of initiatives, including three regional forums that complement the Forum on Minority Issues. In the thematic section of his report, he sets out the often misunderstood language dimension of education for minorities, which emanates from the proper understanding and implementation of international human rights obligations. He describes the parameters of the application of human rights, and in particular the principles of equality without discrimination, as of primary importance for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for all, including linguistic minorities such as users of sign languages.

The report is available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/47>

OHCHR

The Human Rights Council this morning held an interactive dialogue with David. R. Boyd, Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment. It also began an interactive dialogue with Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights.

Presenting his reports, Mr. Boyd said that last year was the second warmest year on record. Ocean temperatures were the highest on record, and the area of Arctic Sea ice was the smallest on record. More than 1 million species were at risk of extinction. Pollution killed nine million people every year. In light of this ominous background, his report on good practices might be considered surprising as over 500 good practices from 178 States had been identified. Good practices were broad, ranging from laws, policies, jurisprudence, strategies, programmes, projects and other measures that contributed to reducing adverse impacts on the environment. His report focused on the implementation of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. He also spoke of his country visits to Fiji and Norway.

Fiji and Norway took the floor as concerned countries. The Norwegian National Human Rights Institute also spoke.



In the ensuing discussion, speakers welcomed the fact that 80 per cent of the United Nations' Member States recognized the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The Special Rapporteur's report was a powerful reminder that many countries had achieved significant milestones through increased action on the implementation of that right. However, speakers expressed concern about the impact that the environmental crisis had on children's rights, reminding that more than 1.7 million children under the age of five lost their lives every year as a result of avoidable environmental impacts. Least developed countries and small island developing States bore the greatest brunt of climate change and it was ironic that countries which had generated only nominal amounts of greenhouse gases annually were the most vulnerable. Accordingly, technical assistance was needed to assist them to implement their environmental programmes. Speakers also emphasized that the private sector had to assume more responsibility.

The relevant documents can be found at:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25640&LangID=E>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Pacific – UN

The President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly has called on the Pacific to support sustainable development aspirations across the region. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande is in Fiji for a four-day visit and said safeguarding marine resources was vital.

The UN was committed to working with the Pacific to address climate change and protect livelihoods, culture and heritage.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/411168/un-assembly-chief-visits-fiji>

Niue

Niue is the latest Pacific nation to implement a ban on single-use plastic bags. The ban began this week, however there will be a transition period where existing stocks must be used by 1 June. Plastic shopping bags litter roadsides, add to excess rubbish in the community, and provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes. To combat that the government has imposed a Prohibition Order after receiving Cabinet approval in February. The Chamber of Commerce has taken the lead in response to the ban by placing signs outside the main shopping areas, encouraging people to use cloth or re-usable shopping bags. Over the next few months the two bodies will join with the Ministry of Natural Resources in kicking off various initiatives to address waste management.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/411120/niue-latest-to-introduce-plastic-bag-ban>



09-13 March 2020

Organisations update

UNFCCC

Around two dozen new signatories, from a variety of sectors including energy, finance, education, architecture, events and technology, have recently joined the Climate Neutral Now initiative of UN Climate Change, eager to play their part in decarbonizing the economy and helping the world to reach zero net greenhouse emissions.

Climate Neutral Now participants take action by addressing their own climate footprint through a three-step method: estimating their emissions, acting to reduce them, and compensating the emissions that could not be avoided by supporting green projects in developing countries. With the new signatories, the Climate Neutral Now Initiative has meanwhile passed the milestone of 300 participants, bringing the number up to 355.

For more information on Climate Neutral Now, please visit:

<https://unfccc.int/climate-action/climate-neutral-now>

PIDF

The PIDF Secretariat hosted a preliminary discussion and way forward on the Pacific Region's Organisations Partnership (PROP) concept with IUCN's Regional Programmes Director, Mr Andrew Foran. IUCN indicated its support for the PROP concept, however, stressed the importance of re-looking at the initiative to capture clear directions, purpose, collaborative framework and the return on investment for interested organisations.

The Pacific Region is fortunate to have a number of organisations (Regional/Sub-Regional Organisations, International CSOs, UN Agencies, Academic Institutions and Interest Groups) performing important work related to Green/Blue Economy and Sustainable Development in order to improve the lives of Pacific people and their environment. For this reason these organisations have felt it necessary to form a loose partnership (called Pacific Region's Organisations Partnership) to optimise the work of these organisations.

The Pacific Region's Organisations Partnership (PROP) aims to build a network of organisations active in the Pacific islands region to introduce and share information related to their Green/Blue Economy and Sustainable Development work and initiatives of the various organisations and promote collaboration between them."

<http://www.pidf.int/>



Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Cook Islands, FSM, Tuvalu

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has published its findings on the countries it examined during its session in Samoa from 2 to 6 March: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Tuvalu.

The findings contain positive aspects of how the respective States are implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, highlight matters of concern and make recommendations. The findings, officially known as concluding observations, can be found here:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2410&Lang=en

Besides reviewing the above-mentioned Pacific countries, the Committee held a preparatory session for a future review of Kiribati.

Committee members also met children, UN agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society representatives at the historic outreach session in Samoa to discuss the human rights issues that are important for children across the Pacific region.



16-20 March 2020

Organisations update

IOM and UNCHR

A “vital lifeline” for vulnerable families forced to flee their homelands has fallen victim to the COVID-19 pandemic as two UN agencies announced on Tuesday that they are temporarily suspending resettlement travel for refugees. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said the measure will take effect in the coming days and will remain in place “only for as long as it remains essential”. The spread of the new coronavirus has seen countries drastically reduce entry into their territories, while international air travel has been restricted in some regions.

Some countries also have placed a hold on resettlement arrivals due to their public health situation. These “quickly evolving regulations” directly impact resettlement travel for refugees, the agencies explained. Some families have experienced extensive delays while others have been stranded or even separated.

Furthermore, international travel could increase refugees’ exposure to the virus.

“Resettlement provides a vital lifeline for particularly vulnerable refugees, and IOM and UNHCR will continue their work in refugee-hosting countries, in collaboration with all relevant partners, to ensure that the processing of cases for resettlement continues”, they said in a statement.

“We will also remain in close contact with refugees themselves and all of the agencies that work to support the use of resettlement as a critical protection measure”.

The agencies appealed to States to ensure that the most critical emergency cases can travel. They plan to resume full resettlement travel “as soon as prudence and logistics permit”.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059602>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Vanuatu

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and tightening regional travel restrictions, the Pacific Islands Forum election observer mission for the 2020 Vanuatu General election has been recalled.

“Our only consideration was ensuring that team members were able to return to their home countries, said Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor.

“The decision was not taken lightly and in no way a reflection of Vanuatu’s preparedness. We wish the people of Vanuatu a successful election”

The election observer mission comprised of senior electoral officials from Tonga, Nauru and supported by Forum Secretariat staff.

<https://www.forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum-recalls-observer-mission-team-to-the-2020-vanuatu-general-election/>



23-31 March 2020

Organisations update

UNFCCC

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Climate Change secretariat is embracing telecommuting and teleconferencing options in order to carry on with its work, as demonstrated by the upcoming 17th Meeting of the Adaptation Committee (AC 17), which took place virtually on the originally scheduled dates, 24-27 March 2020.

The Committee's virtual discussions this week focus on agenda items that require immediate extensive inputs and guidance from members, as follows:

1. All items addressing mandates from the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA), including:

Launching consideration of the approaches to reviewing the overall progress made in achieving the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change by considering a draft technical paper that reviews and discusses the scientific literature on this topic and existing national-level approaches to assessing progress on adaptation.

Reviewing a draft of the first synthesis report, which is addressing the topic of How developing countries are addressing hazards as a first in a series of synthesis reports addressing various adaptation themes in the context of the recognition of developing countries' adaptation efforts, that will be prepared biennially under the guidance of the Adaptation Committee and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG).

Discussing information collection and preparation for the global stocktake more broadly. The Adaptation Committee, along with other constituted bodies, has been asked to prepare a synthesis report as an input into the global stocktake.

Discussing an initial draft outline for supplementary guidance for voluntary use by governments as they prepare their adaptation communication.

Finally, finalizing its development—in partnership with the LEG, partner organizations of the Nairobi work programme, and other stakeholders—of an inventory of methodologies for assessing adaptation needs related to action, finance, capacity-building, technological support, and other areas.

2. Consideration of its technical paper on data for adaptation at different spatial and temporal scales. Sufficient, high-quality data is critical to planning and implementing adaptation efforts, and the paper helps elucidate the data required and provided for adaptation.

Further, Adaptation Committee members will work via e-mail, collaborative online spaces, and other virtual platforms as needed over the coming weeks to ensure that the other items on the agenda also move forward. This includes the Adaptation Committee's ongoing work on topics related to mainstreaming gender, engaging the private sector, awareness raising and outreach, and more.



<https://unfccc.int/news/unfccc-adaptation-committee-meeting-goes-digital>

IOM

IOM joined the health and humanitarian community to launch the interagency COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

The plan is part of a joint response by IOM and its agency partners mandated to address the direct public health and indirect humanitarian consequences of the pandemic on populations in crisis around the world.

Under the HRP, IOM is appealing for USD 100 million to strengthen its response to the global threat posed by COVID-19 in many crisis-affected countries – ranging from Haiti to Nigeria, Syria to Myanmar, Afghanistan to Venezuela, and beyond.

“COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on the health, economy and well-being of people around the world,” said IOM Director General, António Vitorino. “We must not forget the devastating impact this disease will have on the tens of millions of people who are already living in dire humanitarian situations.”

The Global HRP appeals for nearly USD two billion from UN Member States to enhance the ability for agencies to curb the impact of COVID-19 in countries most vulnerable to its disastrous effects. The HRP will also address needs of more than 100 million people dependent on the UN for lifesaving humanitarian assistance in countries covered by existing humanitarian response plans.

This includes the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for the Syria crisis, the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for the Venezuela crisis and the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis (JRP), among many others.

“IOM reiterates the need for migrant-inclusive approaches to the overall COVID-19 response and calls on countries to address the particular needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, regardless of their legal status, in the spirit of Universal Health Coverage,” said DG Vitorino.

“The fight against COVID-19 cannot be won unless the response plans in all countries include migrant populations”

Strategic priority objectives of the HRP include:

- containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decreasing its morbidity and mortality; decreasing the deterioration of human assets and rights, while promoting social cohesion and livelihoods;
- protecting, assisting and advocating for refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.
- The disease is likely to compromise the lives of millions of people in countries that have under-resourced, overburdened health systems struggling to provide adequate healthcare for all. This is



particularly worrying in densely populated areas – including urban areas, camps and camp-like settings.

Another concern: COVID-19's indirect consequences could include a drastic deterioration of state and regional economies, and more broadly, education systems as well as societies' respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Measures instituted to stem the spread of COVID-19, while necessary, also impact the delivery of humanitarian assistance as the movement of goods and aid workers becomes restricted and people in need face new obstacles to reaching services. The risk of intensified xenophobia and discrimination directed toward migrants and foreigners also remains high.

"This is the time for the international community to unite in combating this terrible virus. In doing so, we must not turn our backs on the world's most marginalized but instead seek solutions that protect our entire global community," said IOM DG Vitorino.

<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-joins-global-response-prevent-spread-mitigate-impact-covid-19-crisis-affected-communities>

UNOCHA's Global Humanitarian Response Plan is available at: <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf>

UN Migration Network

"As the world confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Network on Migration salutes the immense efforts to date to combat this crisis and urges that all – including migrants regardless of migratory status – are included in efforts to mitigate and roll back this illness's impact. To that end, migrants must be seen as both potential victims and as an integral part of any effective public health response. It is particularly important that all authorities make every effort to confront xenophobia, including where migrants and others are subject to discrimination or violence linked to the origin and spreading of the pandemic. COVID-19 does not discriminate, and nor should our response, if it is to succeed.

A comprehensive approach to this crisis has implications for national and local public health, housing, and economic policies. Migrants and people on the move face the same health threats from COVID-19 as host populations but may face particular vulnerabilities due to the circumstances of their journey and the poor living and working conditions in which they can find themselves. Migrants too often face needless obstacles in accessing health care. Inaccessibility of services; language and cultural barriers; cost; a lack of migrant-inclusive health policies; legal, regulatory and practical barriers to health care all play a part in this, as does, in too many instances, prejudice. If a migrant fears deportation, family separation or detention, they may well be less willing to access health care or provide information on their health status.

Too often, millions – including migrants – are denied the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, food, water and sanitation, and find little choice but to live in overcrowded,



unhygienic conditions, with limited or no access to health services. This is a combination which increases communities' and migrants' vulnerability to disease, and massively hinders the ability of authorities to effectively put in place the early testing, diagnostics and care vital for effective comprehensive public health measures. It is crucial that government authorities at national and local levels take the measures necessary to protect the health of all those living in unsafe conditions and the most vulnerable regardless of status. Measures should include adequate prevention, testing, and treatment; continued and increased access to emergency shelters for homeless people without barriers related to immigration status; and suspensions of evictions.

While many countries have chosen to tighten controls at their borders in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, it is critical that such measures be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner, in line with international law, and prioritizing the protection of the most vulnerable. Enforcement policies and practices, including forced return and immigration detention, must be carried out in accordance with human rights obligations and may need to be adjusted to ensure they are compatible with effective public health strategies and maintain adequate conditions. In this regard, it is vital that any limitations on freedom of movement do not unduly affect human rights and the right to seek asylum, and that restrictions are applied in a proportionate and non-discriminatory way.

For our response to this pandemic to be effective, we must overcome the current barriers to adequate, affordable, truly universal, health coverage. The inclusion of all migrants and marginalized groups is necessary in all aspects of the response to COVID-19, whether we are looking at prevention, detection, or equitable access to treatment, care or containment measures, or safe conditions of work. Risk communication messages on how to protect everyone need to engage with all communities and be available in languages and media formats that are understandable and accessible by all.

Immigration detention centers are too often overcrowded and lack adequate healthcare and sanitation. In order to avoid a rapid spread of the virus, States should put in place the necessary measures to protect the health of migrants in these facilities and urgently establish non-custodial alternatives to detention as a measure to mitigate these risks.

Further, it is important that migrants are included in measures that are being introduced to mitigate the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. Migrants and their families are often part of marginalized and vulnerable groups that are already experiencing economic hardship as a result of containment measures. The impact of the closing down of activities due to the pandemic may particularly affect low-wage workers and those in the informal sector, including youth and women, who are often in precarious or temporary jobs and lack access to social protection, paid sick leave, or lost earnings support. Domestic workers may be more acutely affected by social distancing measures and isolation in employers' homes, and subject to discrimination.

Specific attention is needed for those workers many of whom are migrants, who continue ensuring indispensable services for people during the pandemic, such as those in the care economy and, the service industry and the gig economy, to ensure safeguards of their entitlements and fundamental rights at work. We welcome measures taken by Member States to extend working visas and other appropriate steps to alleviate constraints faced by migrant workers and their families due to the business closures, and to ensure the continuing protection of their international human rights, including their labour rights.



Only with an inclusive approach, truly leaving no-one behind, will we all be able to overcome this global crisis of unprecedented magnitude and proportions.”

<https://www.migrationnetwork.un.org/statements/covid-19-does-not-discriminate-nor-should-our-response>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Tuvalu

“A cleaner and healthier Tuvalu for today and future generations.”

This is the vision behind the Tuvalu Integrated Waste Policy and Action Plan 2017-2026, the main national policy framework to guide the management of waste in the country.

The Government of Tuvalu has published the second annual review of the implementation status of the action plan, which reports that despite implementation challenges, there is evidence of “significant progress” in several areas, including waste management.

These changes include an increase in waste generated on the islands that has come about due to a proliferation of consumption of “more wasteful imported products,” according to the Plan. Excess waste presents a significant challenge considering the “extremely limited land mass” of atoll countries such as Tuvalu.

The Policy and Action Plan, endorsed by the Government of Tuvalu in 2016, consists of six goals: strengthened institutional systems to address gaps in waste management; the stakeholders fully understand the merits of proper waste management and co-share the responsibility of managing waste; establish strong public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the delivery of waste services; delivered waste services follow best practice and are cost-effective; enhanced capacity of waste practitioners; and waste activity outcomes are reported and disseminated to relevant stakeholders.

The last goal of the Policy and Action Plan is achieved, in part, through the conduct of annual reviews of the implementation status of the Integrated Waste Policy and Action Plan. Since 2016, two annual reviews have been conducted. The latest one was released in May 2019, and covers the period from January 2018 to March 2019.

The 2019 Annual Review reports that despite challenges to implementation of the Waste Policy and Action Plan, there is evidence of “significant progress” especially on goals two, three, and five due to the Department of Waste Management elevating these to the national level with the support of key stakeholders.

The report also outlined progress on achieving Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as reviewing existing waste-related legislation and merging into one Act; developing specific regulations to support strict enforcement of the new waste legislation; allocating a reasonable budget for waste services; implementing public awareness programmes involving communities and schools on all waste service areas in Tuvaluan language; reducing occupational and public health and safety incidents by 50%; 100% coverage of collection in the main island and at least 80% coverage of



collection in the outer islands; and exploration and participation in information exchange programmes with other countries within and outside the region.

<https://www.sprep.org/news/tuvalu-making-significant-progress-in-waste-management-according-to-latest-annual-review>