



# MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

April 2019





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# 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.

## 01-05 April 2019

### Organisations update

#### UNFCCC

Experts and leaders meeting at the Korea Global Adaptation Week in Songdo, the Republic of Korea, have urged countries to increase their climate ambition and to scale up their efforts to build resilience to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

For the first time, Resilience Frontiers – an initiative undertaken by multiple agencies – will gather one hundred thought leaders for five days of foresight and collective thinking on how to maximize long-term resilience to climate change by harnessing the potential of emerging technologies and new sustainability trends, while mitigating associated risks.

<http://www.resiliencefrontiers.org/>

#### ILC

ILC's report on its topical summary is available at: <http://legal.un.org/docs/?symbol=A/CN.4/724>

ILC's fourth report on peremptory norms of general international law prepared by Dire Tladi, Special Rapporteur, is available at: <http://legal.un.org/docs/?symbol=A/CN.4/727>

ILC's report on crimes against humanity is available at: <http://legal.un.org/docs/?symbol=A/CN.4/726>

#### SPREP

Environment colleagues from Papua New Guinea and Samoa participated in a South-South knowledge exchange on managing environment data. Discussions focussed on open data and how each country manages and uses environmental data. The South-South Exchange took place at SPREP from 1-5 April 2019.

Papua New Guinea is leading the charge in developing an environmental data sharing policy encouraging the free exchange of environmental data amongst government agencies.



In the Pacific, environment data is often dispersed and stored on personal computers and lack a centralised repository for storage and retrieval. This lack of access to available data is a major challenge for environmental monitoring and reporting in the Pacific region.

The SPREP regional Inform project has helped established 14 national portals and supported with technical capacity training for its members. There is also a regional environment portal which hosts data from the region, SPREP and key development partners to allow for easy access to public information.

To access the data portal of SPREP: <https://pacific-data.sprep.org/>

To gain more information on the Inform project: <https://www.sprep.org/inform>

## MSG

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in partnership with the Pacific Community's (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) and the Pacific Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) held a refresher workshop on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with a mock session for the government delegation preparing to travel to Geneva to report on Vanuatu's implementation progress of the CRPD.

Vanuatu is the first Pacific nation to ratify the CRPD, having signed the treaty on the year, the treaty was opened for signature in 2007 and then ratifying it, one year later in 2008. Vanuatu's next periodic review would possibly be in 2023.

[https://www.msgsec.info/pr\\_msg-secretariat-supports-vanuatus-governments-constructive-dialogue-with-the-expert-committee-on-disabilities-in-geneva/](https://www.msgsec.info/pr_msg-secretariat-supports-vanuatus-governments-constructive-dialogue-with-the-expert-committee-on-disabilities-in-geneva/)

## PDD

To support Pacific Island Governments to address this multifaceted challenge, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with non-UN implementing partners Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Platform on Disaster Displacement will begin implementation on the project, *Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region* from 2019 onwards.

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/project-launch>

Participants from governments, the European Union (EU), UN agencies and civil society opened a two-day consultation today to address the risk of displacement associated with disasters and climate change in the Pacific island states region. The meeting is convened by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD); and attended by the governments of nine Pacific island countries (PICs) and territories, the European Union, Australia, France, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United States and Spain. This consultation will inform the design and



implementation of a project funded by the EU. It aims to enhance national and regional policies, operational capacities and the knowledge needed to prevent and respond to the risk of displacement in the Pacific island developing states.

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/governments-meet-in-fiji-to-address-displacement-caused-by-disasters-and-climate-change-in-pacific-island-states>

## **United States Government Accountability Office**

GAO was asked to review how U.S. agencies address climate change as a potential driver of global migration. For State, USAID, and DOD, this report (1) describes executive branch actions related to climate change and migration from fiscal years 2014 through 2018; (2) examines the extent to which the agencies discussed the potential effects of climate change on migration in their plans and risk assessments; and (3) describes agency activities on the issue. GAO analyzed documents on administration priorities; reviewed agency plans, risk assessments, and documentation of agency activities; and interviewed agency officials.

The document is available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/default/files/696460.pdf>

## **Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update**

### **Pacific**

The World Data Visualization Prize 2019: The winner of the static category is Dimiter Toshkov. His data visualisation is titled: "Small States can be Big Players in Development and Good Governance. Using our Small Countries are Beautiful dataset, this infographic shows how government effectiveness correlates with different development indices, as well as illustrating how small countries tend to be more politically stable and free, and less corrupt."

More information is available at:

<https://informationisbeautiful.net/2019/winners-of-the-world-data-visualization-prize/>



## 8-12 April 2019

### Organisations update

#### ILO

ILO's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary Global Tour, also featuring Fiji, is available for watching at:

<https://www.ilo.org/100/tour/en/>

#### SPC

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Pacific Community have signed an agreement formalising the Islands nations Country Programme for 2019-2022. The Programme provides a framework for work over the next 4 years and ensures that priorities identified by RMI as essential to achieving its development objectives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For the 2019-2022 Program, 7 priority areas have been identified; Statistics, BioSecurity, Food Security, Agriculture, Non-Communicable diseases, Gender, and Civil Registration/Vital Statistics. In addition, the Island Nation will continue to emphasise the ongoing projects in such areas as fisheries, education, disaster risk reduction, and climate change.

#### WB

World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings 2019: Development Committee Communiqué:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/13/world-bankimf-spring-meetings-2019-development-committee-communicue>

#### UNEP

In January 2018, UN Environment, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), launched a project aimed at strengthening national capacity to address the environmental impacts of humanitarian responses to population displacement in Guatemala, Lebanon and Nigeria. The project's activities have also been extended to Brazil, Turkey and Vanuatu.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/protecting-environment-humanitarian-responses-population-displacement>

Policymakers in charge of environmental policy and climate action are insufficiently aware of the various fiscal tools available to catalyse climate finance such as green bonds and transfer pricing. The latter is a mechanism for pricing transactions within and between enterprises under common ownership or control and which greatly boost implementation of climate laws when Article 6 of the Paris Agreement becomes operational. Article 6 is a key part of the Paris Agreement which allows Parties to voluntarily cooperate to meet their nationally determined contributions, providing for international transfers of mitigation outcomes, a new mechanism for mitigation and sustainable



development, and non-market approaches. Article 6 establishes the foundation for a post-2020 carbon market, but there are still many complex issues to be discussed and decided among Parties to finalize the Paris Agreement work programme.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/legal-readiness-climate-finance>

## **Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update**

### **Vanuatu**

"World's first drone-delivered vaccine in Vanuatu: The vaccine delivery covered almost 40 kilometers of rugged mountainous terrain from Dillon's Bay on the west side of the island to the east landing in remote Cook's Bay.

On a small island in the remote South Pacific, a one-month-old baby was the world's first child to be given a vaccine delivered by a drone.

The state-of-the-art craft which transported the vaccine, travelled nearly 40 kilometres over rugged mountain terrain, flying from Dillon's Bay in western Vanuatu to remote Cook's Bay – a scattered community accessible only on foot or by small boats – where 13 children and 5 pregnant women were inoculated by a nurse.

Henrietta H. Fore, the Executive Director of UNICEF said the tiny aircraft's flight "is a big leap for global health."

"With the world still struggling to immunize the hardest-to-reach children, drone technologies can be a game changer for bridging that last mile to reach every child," she explained."

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036991>



## 15-19 April 2019

### Organisations update

#### PIFS

The speech of the Deputy Secretary General at the opening of the regional CSO Forum is available at: <https://www.forumsec.org/dsg-cristelle-pratts-opening-address-at-the-2019-regional-cso-forum/>

#### ADB

Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2019: Strengthening Disaster Resilience

The report is available at: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/492711/ado2019.pdf>

Asian Development Outlook 2019: Growth Outlook is available at: <https://www.adb.org/news/infographics/asian-development-outlook-2019-growth-outlook>

### Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

#### Pacific

"Democracies across Asia and the Pacific are struggling to resist disinformation and protect press freedoms, according to a new report.

Reporters Without Borders, on Thursday, released its 2019 index, showing an increase in self-censorship of journalists in parts of the Pacific last year.

Although Pacific Island countries generally rose in press freedom rankings, Reporters Without Borders was also concerned about an absence of editorial independence.

In Papua New Guinea, it said journalists faced intimidation, direct threats, censorship, prosecution and bribery attempts.

"All this was particularly visible during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in the capital, Port Moresby, in November 2018, when journalists who wanted to raise sensitive issues were censored by their bosses and the government was accused of accommodating the Chinese delegation's demands for certain journalists to be excluded although they had obtained accreditation," the RSF 2019 index said."

<https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/387573/media-self-censorship-still-present-in-pacific-rsf>





## Vanuatu

"A Chinese company has won the tender to build Vanuatu's new Ministry of Finance.

The Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Company will build the ministry on the site of the The Condominium Building which will be demolished.

From 1906 to 1979, the building complex had been used by colonial powers to house the Joint British and French Salary Departments of the Joint Colonial Administration of the 83 islands of the New Hebrides.

The Chinese company has already secured a number of Vanuatu government projects including the first tar sealed roads on Tanna and Malekula, the extension and strengthening of Port Vila International Airport and the current repair and extension of Korman Stadium."

<https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/387525/chinese-company-to-build-new-vanuatu-finance-ministry>

## PNG

"The Papua New Guinea MP, Davis Steven, who resigned as justice minister yesterday, says the country has to seriously rethink how it goes about government business.

As well as announcing he was resigning to concentrate on his electorate, the Esa'ala MP revealed he has deep concerns with the current state of governance.

Mr Steven said critical steps were required to reposition the nation's future, and that more than ever systems of governance needed to be strengthened.

According to him, the rule of law is at stake with systems and process that are weak, easily undermined and compromised by those in leadership.

The MP, who was also the Attorney-General, said the law and justice sector needed to be taken seriously or the country would regret its ignorance."

<https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/387386/resigning-png-justice-minister-cites-rule-of-law-concern>

## Kiribati

"The Kiribati Government celebrated the completion of the renovation of the Nippon Causeway Project at a handing over ceremony in Betio last week.

The Nippon Causeway is the only link between the two most populated towns in Tarawa namely, Betio, where the country's only international port is located, and Bairiki, an administrative centre that has most of the Government Ministries and offices.



President Taneti Maamau thanked the Government and people of Japan for their generosity and support in funding the renovation of the causeway at a cost of more than 3 billion Yen or AUD\$50 million."

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=19007309195cbd4aab608d96daaec6>

## Guam

"We are in a competition, and the competition is real," Naval Base Guam commander Capt. Jeffrey Grimes declared, and the competition is with China.

China's forces are expanding "their influence and capabilities," Grimes said. He pointed to the South China Sea as being where "the Chinese have created islands and they have militarised these islands."

The country has also made diplomatic inroads throughout Micronesia.

Grimes highlighted the Chinese interest in gaming and tourism in the CNMI, and infrastructure investments in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The strategic fuel reserve on Naval Base Guam is 60 million gallons, he said.

"Unfortunately, the Navy, besides the submarine force, is not nuclear," he said. "We need that gas."

At Naval Magazine there are more than 100 separate storage bunkers in which "a good portion of our nation's war fighting weapons" are stored.

Captain Grimes said "not only do we have beans, bullets and ammunition," Guam serves as a communications hub for the Navy throughout the region."

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=11504284045cbd4c4b2b936f229665>



## 22-30 April 2019

### Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

#### Kiribati

Pacific climate migration a political tug of war: The Pacific is at the forefront of climate change, and some countries are facing the displacement of their people. Laura Walters travelled to Kiribati and Fiji for this Newsroom three-part series on climate migration. In this first instalment, she explores the political and ideological debate over whether i-Kiribati should be given the option to 'migrate with dignity', or 'stay and fight'.

Laura Walters is a senior political reporter based in Wellington who covers justice, education and immigration.

In Newsroom's second instalment of the three-part climate migration series, Laura Walters will look at the New Zealand Government's plans to deal with climate-related migration in the Pacific.

Her travel to the Pacific was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade through its Pacific Journalism Grant.

Laura Walter's first instalment is reproduced below, which is copied from: <http://www.pina.com.fj/?p=pacnews&m=read&o=665396755cbe9dccbd932bbbc45b83>

#### **Written by Laura Walter:**

Driving along the lone road of Kiribati's capital, there's a slight rise about halfway between the airport and Betio village at the other end of the hook-shaped atoll.

At its peak there's a sign, like the ones found in small towns around the world, advertising a quirky point of difference.

"Mauri & welcome to Eita. The highest point on South Tarawa 3 metres above sea level."

The 33 low-lying atolls that make up Kiribati are struggling against rising seas, and the increasing frequency and ferocity of king tides, and other storm events that inundate schools, hospitals and homes.

The country has become the canary in the coalmine in the fight against climate change.

During the past few years, there's been no shortage of news coverage on its challenges, helped in part by the country's former President Anote Tong.

Tong coined the phrase 'migration with dignity', and began to prepare his countrymen to leave before they were forced out, as scientific predictions put Kiribati underwater in the next 100 years.



A deal was struck with Fiji for land near Naviavia village on the mountainous island of Vanua Levu, and Tong began to share his plan for inevitable migration with the world.

But Tong is no longer in office, and the new Government led by Taneti Maamau has done everything it can to wipe the 'migration with dignity' plans from the minds of its people.

Maamau's policy is best described as 'stay and fight', relying on adaptation and mitigation measures.

A former official for Tong's government says Maamau sees the former administration as "throwing in the towel" and admitting the country's doomed.

The man, who did not want to be named due to his current employment situation, disputes this, saying it's about being realistic about scientific projections, and giving i-Kiribati a choice in the matter.

Newsroom was unable to find out exactly how Maamau categorises Tong's approach, or his true feelings towards the prospect of climate migration or forced displacement, because despite repeated requests and subsequent promises of interviews, that discussion never happened.

But it's fair to say the debate over climate migration is heated, and in the past few years, it's become a political tug of war in a country that has no time to spare in creating a plan for the future.

Climate now biggest migration driver

The world is experiencing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 68.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes, and that number will increase as rising seas and extreme weather events destroy homes, food and income sources.

Until now, the world's reference point for the global refugee crisis has been the Middle Eastern conflict and its flow-on to Europe.

But in 2017, University of Otago economics researcher Dennis Wesselbaum discovered climate has now taken over as the strongest driver of migration.

"There's also this threshold story, where it's business as usual but at some point something snaps, and things change. It's about being prepared for that moment."

His analysis of international migration figures over 35 years finds not only are the effects of climate change influencing decisions to migrate, it is a stronger driver than income and political freedom.

The research shows weather events, like storms, floods, heat waves and droughts have different effects on migration, and single or unforeseen events, like storms, can have a long-lasting impact on a country's migration figures.



"It is clear climate migration is a global issue that needs cross-country discussion. Both developed and at-risk countries need more planning and policy to prepare for what is likely to be a growing trend of people wanting to move from countries experiencing climate change." Wesselbaum says.

"There's also this threshold story, where it's business as usual but at some point something snaps, and things change. It's about being prepared for that moment."

Wesselbaum thinks the tipping point will come within the next 10 years.

This gives countries a limited window to create policies to address climate-related migration. The problem is a lack of available, accurate data.

But controversy surrounding climate change makes it difficult to have the discussion about climate-related displacement.

Add to that current anti-migration sentiment, and growing nationalist views, around the world as demonstrated by Brexit, Trump's America and in the response to the UN Migration Compact.

"I just can't see that this will become less of the problem heading into the future," Wesselbaum says.

Day-to-day challenges take precedence in Kiribati

Most of Kiribati's capital is not much more than a couple of hundred metres wide; in some points it's far narrower.

Families therefore have no choice but to live by the shoreline. Homes, schools, hospitals and roads are also vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and are frequently flooded.

Everyone on the island knows about climate change, sea level rise, and what the global community is saying about their country's fate. But that isn't what occupies their minds day-to-day.

One young woman who runs a resort on neighbouring North Tarawa says the most she talks about rising seas is when researchers and reporters visit. Its foreigners who raise the issue.

New Zealand High Commissioner to Kiribati Michael Upton says climate change is important, but there are other pressures that take priority.

These include: issues that come with poorly planned infrastructure; a lack of fresh and clean water; access to toilets and proper sanitation systems; severe over-crowding – in some places density is on-par with Tokyo or Hong Kong; difficulty growing crops thanks to a lack of arable land; and competition for limited jobs.

These realities are unavoidable on South Tarawa, thanks to the one road that runs straight up the centre of the island, with small villages dotted on either side.

More than half of the country's 110,000 people live on this one island.



Volunteer Service Abroad in-country programme manager Trevor Johnston says this roads means visitors can't avoid the harsh realities of life in Kiribati, as they might be able to in other parts of the Pacific.

Travelling from one end of South Tarawa to the other, you can see the shack-like homes, with families sleeping literally one on top of the other. You can see the pigs in corrugated iron pens; and children washing on the side of the street or in the lagoon – where they also defecate and sometimes fish.

The problem is that climate change exacerbates all these issues.

No-one wants to abandon their land

I-Kiribati who spoke to Newsroom said they did not want to leave their land.

"People in the Pacific are no different from people anywhere else. Their roots are there, no one just willingly abandons their roots," UNICEF Pacific head Sheldon Yett says.

"People want to find ways to stay, to make it work, and be where their ancestors were, where their grandparents were, where their kids grew up; where they have so many great memories. And who wants to get on a boat to go to a community that may or may not welcome them?"

But former official says giving people good options for migration isn't about admitting defeat, it's about being realistic and giving people a choice.

"Nobody wants to admit the fact that you're doomed. It's hard for anyone to do that.

"But if you're a leader you don't need to be emotional, you have to be practical, you have to be realistic."

There are already some options for i-Kiribati to migrate, through New Zealand's Pacific Quota scheme and seasonal work programme. There has long been a discussion about whether the quota number should increase.

But the trends of how many people apply to leave their homeland for New Zealand are fickle; and those who work in this area say there isn't a clear tie between the number of applications and the growing impacts of climate change.

At this stage, New Zealand has no immediate plans to alter migration settings for Kiribati, or other Pacific countries, due to climate change.

Currently there is a lack of data and understanding about climate-related migration patterns, and the current sensitive political nature of the discussions means New Zealand's focus for now is on climate adaptation and mitigation projects.

The current Government has its Kiribati Vision (KV20), which talks about adaptation and building a climate component into different strategies and plans from all government departments.



And last year, it launched its first climate change policy, which focuses on safeguarding the existence of the island, emphasising the need for an all-of-government approach, and calling on the support of partners to adapt and mitigate the risks to the country.

The plan does not include migration.

"This is very offensive and shows lack of respect to the people on the ground who are doing all they can to cope, and to the Government of Kiribati that is trying hard to build a brighter future and hope for its people."

"We can try our best to build up the islands, but in 50 years' time or 100 years' time, our children will still need a home," the former Kiribati official told Newsroom.

"When it comes to that stage – and the science is very straight forward, and the time will come. And when that day comes the international community needs to have that moral capacity to help."

Tong spoke about this issue in the 2018 documentary Anote's Ark, which set Kiribati doomsday clocks to between 30 and 50 years from now.

The current Government hit out the film, calling it misleading and unethical.

"This is very offensive and shows lack of respect to the people on the ground who are doing all they can to cope, and to the Government of Kiribati that is trying hard to build a brighter future and hope for its people," Maamau told media.

Some displacement unavoidable

While climate migration is a sensitive topic for Kiribati, and has been subject of a political tug of war over the past few years, the research shows even with mitigation and adaptation measures, at some point in the future, there will be a certain level of displacement.

Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, Fiji and the Solomon Islands are already struggling to manage internal climate-related displacement, and a country with limited stable and productive land like Kiribati doesn't have the same options when it comes to migration within its own borders.

This means countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu need to create a strategy to avoid chaotic unplanned and unregulated migration.

And New Zealand needs to figure out what part it will play when it comes to supporting the Pacific, and dealing with migration within its region.

Otago's Wesselbaum says the current rate of warming will see climate migrants and displaced people sooner rather than later.

"This raises the question for New Zealand of how we, as an individual country, can prepare for the impact on our population, as well as our land," he says.