



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

February 2020





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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.

03-07 February 2020

Organisations update

IOM

IOM delivered recommendations to the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU on a new pact on migration and asylum, a new comprehensive EU-Africa strategy, and the next Multiannual Financial Framework, and the European Green Deal. The recommendations also consider the role of climate change and migration.

The recommendations are available at:
<https://eea.iom.int/sites/default/files/publication/document/IOM%27s-Recommendations-to-the-Croatian-Presidency-of-the-Council-of-the-EU.pdf>

OHCHR

The UN Child Rights Committee is due to hold an extraordinary session in Samoa from 2 to 6 March to focus on the situation of children's rights in the Pacific region.

It will be the first time any of the UN human rights treaty bodies, as the Committees are officially known, will hold a session outside Geneva and New York.

During the meetings, the Committee will review three countries - Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Tuvalu. It will also hold a preparatory session for a future review of Kiribati.

The countries are among the 196 States parties to the Child Rights Convention. States are required to undergo regular reviews by the Committee of 18 independent international experts on how they are implementing the Convention, its Optional Protocols, as well as the Committee's previous recommendations.

The session in Samoa will allow Committee members to hear directly from government delegations, NGOs and other stakeholders, including children themselves.

A full schedule of the Committee's meetings, which will also be held in the Taumeasina hotel from 2 to 6 March, is available here. The public sessions will be livestreamed at <https://www.facebook.com/unsamoa> and the recordings of the public session will subsequently be available at <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events>.

The recommended hashtag for the meeting is #ChildRightsPacific.

The Committee is scheduled to publish its findings on the respective States, known as concluding observations, here on 10 March 2020. The Committee will hold a press conference to present the



findings on the same day at 10 a.m. Samoa time (9 p.m. on 9 March, Geneva time) in One UN House, SIDS Street, Apia, Samoa.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25521&LangID=E>

ILO

ILO launched the report "Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future", which also covers the Pacific region.

The report is available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_735607.pdf

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Fiji

Fijian chiefs from the northern province of Macuata have warned they will not allow seabed mining in the area.

The decision by the chiefs includes the province's natural resources management plan (NRM).

Head chief Ratu Wiliame Katonivere told the Fiji Times they would not allow seabed mining to take away their source of livelihood.

He said the chiefs also decided that no other mining activities would take place in the province.

Mr Katonivere said underwater mining was lethal to marine organisms.

The risks and harmful effects of seabed mining far outweighed the benefits of finding precious stones, oil or minerals, he added.

Macuata is home to a large portion of the Great Sea Reef which runs over 200km from Udu point to Bua and across the Vatuiria Passage.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/409685/opposition-to-seabed-mining-from-chiefs-in-fiji-s-macuata>



09-14 February 2020

Organisations update

UNFCCC

The UK Government has appointed Alok Sharma to be the president of the climate conference #COP26.

This year countries are set to submit new national climate plans. These plans, called National Determined Contributions (NDCs), are key building blocks of the Paris Agreement.

Taken together they must take us towards the central goal of the Paris Agreement: Stabilizing global temperature rise at 1.5°C.

At the moment countries are far off: The plans submitted by countries in 2015 take us to a temperature rise of around 3°C.

<https://unfccc.int/news/minister-for-cop-26-appointed>

ILO

More than 935 million workers in the world have jobs that don't match their educational level: 72% of them (677 million) are under-educated for their jobs, while the remaining 28% (258 million) are over-educated. This new data in ILOSTAT covers 114 countries, which means that the actual global figures are probably much higher.

The Statistics cover Tuvalu and the Cook Islands, available at:

<https://ilostat.ilo.org/2020/02/26/258-million-workers-in-the-world-are-over-educated-for-their-jobs/>

SPREP

Forum Trade Ministers and Officials converged from 11 to 13 February 2020, in Suva under the theme 'Pacific Trading Nations: From Surviving to Thriving'.

The Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM) was preceded by Pacific States of the African Caribbean Pacific (PACP) Trade Ministers Meeting and the Officials meetings for both Pacific ACP and FTMM.

Key outcomes of the 2020 FTMM include: endorsement of the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy (PAfTS 2020-2025), the region's blue print that will guide coordination and mobilization of resources towards four priority areas: e-commerce; connectivity; deepening forum markets (in the context of Quality Infrastructure and Trade Facilitation); and trade in services. Ministers also discussed enhancing governance of regional labour mobility; and linkages between trade and environment to reduce the production and consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons, and Trade and Health, in particular, implications of trade on the increasing incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases in the Pacific Region.

Trade Ministers welcomed the innovative and comprehensive Pacific Quality Infrastructure initiative which will be coordinated by PIFS as Main Implementing Entity (MIE), and called-up development



partners to cooperate with the Secretariat in the implementation of the Regional Quality Infrastructure initiatives.

Trade Ministers supported the prioritisation of more environmentally friendly regional and national trade policies in alignment with the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol; and reflected on interlinkages between Trade and Health in the context of fighting against trade-related Non-Communicable Diseases and new products such as e-cigarettes.

Pacific ACP Trade Ministers met in the margins of the FTMM and discussed number of crucial issues including the future of the Pacific ACP-EU relations under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement successor framework, revisited the suspended comprehensive EPA, the future of the Pacific ACP configuration, and Pacific preparations for the forthcoming 12th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial conference. Following the Pacific ACP Trade Ministers meeting, the Regional Authorising Officer (RAO) and European Union signed Euro 94 million aid for trade financing agreements, which will support Pacific Regional Integration and private sector development initiatives for the next 5 years.

The overarching message for this year's FTMM was the need to consider a range of sustainable development challenges faced by the Pacific region to enable formulation of coherent economic, social and environmental regional strategies and policies that are inclusive, promotes regional economic integration, strengthens connectivity and leads to export-led growth, increased investment in priority areas and decent work opportunities in the region.

<https://www.forumsec.org/forum-trade-ministers-meeting-and-related-meetings/>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

EU - Pacific

The European Union (EU) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) today signed financing agreements for the Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme (EUR 37 million, approximately 88.9 million FJD) and the Investment Facility for the Pacific (EUR 57 million, approximately 137million FJD). The agreements were signed by the Secretary-General of the PIFS, Meg Taylor, DBE, and the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation for the Pacific, Mr Christoph Wagner, in the margins of the Pacific ACP Trade Ministers Meeting at PIFS Head Quarters, Suva.

Meg Taylor, DBE, said: 'Today's signature marks an important milestone in the longstanding partnership between the Pacific and the European Union. As of today, all 11th EDF Pacific regional programmes have been approved and 100% of the funds (in total EUR 197 million) have been committed. On this occasion, I would like to thank our colleagues and partners at regional and national level for their contribution to this important achievement. While preparing the operational launch of these 11th EDF Programmes in the Pacific, we are also making good progress in the negotiations on the Post-Cotonou Agreement, which will shape the future Pacific-EU partnership.'

Mr Wagner added: 'The private sector is a key partner for sustainable development and essential for attaining the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme (PRISE) seeks to strengthen the regional trade- and business enabling environment in line with the regional economic integration goals set out in the 'Blue Pacific' identity. It will also assist Pacific businesses seize new opportunities arising under the EU-Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement. The Investment Facility for the Pacific, on the other hand, will provide grant funding to leverage critical investments in the Pacific in partnership with International Financial Institutions. All this will be done in a climate-smart way, aiming at sustainable growth of the blue and circular economies in the Pacific.'



Pacific Regional Integration Support Programme (PRISE):

Over the next 5 years, the PRISE programme will provide support to 15 Pacific Island Countries*. The main implementing partners include: the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Pacific Community (SPC) and, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Support will focus on: trade facilitation (customs & biosecurity), regional aid-for-trade coordination as well as on strengthening strategic value-chains and improving the business enabling environment.

*Beneficiary countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

<https://www.forumsec.org/eu-and-pifs-sign-two-financing-agreements-totaling-eur-94-million-to-boost-climate-sensitive-business-trade-and-investment-in-the-pacific/>



16-20 February 2020

Organisations update

SPREP

The regional preparatory meeting for the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction opened at the headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum in Suva, Fiji. Over the next three days, delegations of Pacific Islands Forum members will discuss common interests and develop regional positions ahead of the negotiations to commence in New York in late March, 2020.

Opening the meeting, Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum and Pacific Ocean Commissioner, highlighted the significance of the BBNJ process for the Pacific Region. "I am confident that you will work towards achieving a strong and robust treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction – the most significant international law of the sea treaty of the 21st century."

She emphasised the importance for robust cooperation to promote our collective interests. "As negotiators, you are carrying the voice of the Blue Pacific to the international stage and this necessitates a deepened understanding and recognition of our collective positions and priorities."

Speaking on behalf of the Forum Chair Tuvalu's High Commissioner to Fiji, H.E Temate Melitiana, said the Forum members were ready to do their part and conclude the negotiations by 2020.

<https://www.forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum-meet-to-plan-ahead-for-last-round-of-high-seas-treaty-negotiations/>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

NZ – Fiji

Fiji and New Zealand have agreed to expand their security partnership into policing co-operation. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was hosted by her Fiji counterpart Frank Bainimarama today in Suva.

A joint statement from the two leaders referred to the strong, positive trajectory of the countries' relationship, which includes addressing existential threats facing the Pacific region.

Citing common security challenges, Ms Ardern and Mr Bainimarama acknowledged the success of a bilateral defence partnership programme launched last year. Having rebuilt defence links after some years apart following Fiji's last coup in 2006, security ties are getting closer again - the two countries have announced a foray into policing co-operation.

The Prime Ministers welcomed the expansion of government-to-government links, which have flourished across a range of areas - including peace and security, climate change and disaster resilience, labour mobility, agriculture and fisheries.

There has also been collaboration on economic reform, and advocacy on Pacific issues, the statement adds.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/410349/fiji-and-nz-to-expand-security-partnership-into-policing>



23-31 February 2020

Organisations update

International Bar Association

IBA has launched the Model Statute for Proceedings Challenging Government Failure to Act on Climate Change, which consists of 23 articles. The Model Statute is available at: <https://www.ibanet.org/Climate-Change-Model-Statute.aspx>

OHCHR

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered Kiribati's combined initial to third periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Experts recognized the islands' vulnerability to climate change and asked about efforts to increase women's resilience and adapt to its impacts.

The Experts welcomed Kiribati to its first dialogue with the Committee and commended its wide-ranging efforts to implement the Convention, in spite of the formidable challenges it faced as a small island developing State and an archipelago of islands.

Most formidable was the challenge of climate change, which at its heart was a question of climate justice: even though Kiribati did not contribute to the global warming, it suffered the brunt of it.

In Kiribati, the strong cultural patriarchal heritage and certain customs and practices were at the root of one of the highest rates of violence against women in the Pacific. The prevailing beliefs and attitudes, including among women and girls, showed how urgent it was to accelerate the action to change mindsets and eliminate stereotypes.

Taoaba Kaiea, Minister for Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs of Kiribati, introducing the reports, said that Kiribati faced many challenges in the implementation of the Convention, including barriers of isolation, overpopulation and lack of capacity and resources.

He said that the rise of the sea level, climate change and king tides remained the most pressing issues. King tides in particular were a chilling warning of the destructive impact of global warming. Informing the Committee of the national efforts to adapt and strengthen the resilience, he said that those would yield more impact if matched with concrete multilateral efforts to combat climate change and provide resources for mitigation through sustained cooperation.

The delegation said that since the ratification of the Convention in 2004, Kiribati had progressed a significant number of measures to eliminate discrimination and violence against women. It had tried and failed to introduce sex and gender as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Constitution, which required the support of two-thirds of voters in a referendum. Kiribati was a very patriarchal society and the Government was working on raising the awareness of the people on gender equality and women's rights, for example through a programme such as the Kiribati Male Behavioural Change.



The news article is available at:
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25592&LangID=E>

The initial report of CEDAW is available at:
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/KIR/1-3&Lang=en

UN High Level Panel on Internal Displacement

Opening the inaugural session of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement in Geneva, Mr. Guterres spoke of the acute and relentless crisis of people forced from their homes by conflict and human rights violations alone. Many have been living in limbo stranded for years after their initial displacement without secure housing, jobs, education or other needs and opportunities. The UN chief urged its members to bring fresh ideas to prevent forced displacement, better protect and assist displaced people and identify swifter solutions to displacement.

"Our work is timely", said Panel co-chair Federica Mogherini, the European Union's former foreign policy chief. "Since the beginning of the year, close to a million people have been displaced as Idlib in Syria is under attack".

The Panel, tasked with raising global awareness and finding concrete long-term solutions to the dire issue, is expected to meet four times over the next 12 months and consult with countries and relevant organizations before submitting its recommendations to the Secretary-General by February 2021.

It was created last October and is constituted by representatives from government, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and countries particularly affected by displacement to improve UN efforts and those of its Member States to help all those affected, including the displaced and their host communities.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/02/1058011>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

West Papua

The United Liberation Movement for West Papua remains hopeful it will be granted greater status in the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

The Movement has observer status in the MSG, whose full members are Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia's FLNKS group.

Vanuatu will take over the group's chairmanship from PNG when it hosts the next MSG leaders summit in Port Vila in April.

The Movement's secretary Rex Rumakiek says he expects there will be a decision on its membership application in Vila.

He says a recent MSG foreign minister's meeting in Suva showed support for the Movement to do more than simply observe.

"An initiative by Papua New Guinea as the chairman of the meeting, he asked around all the ministers whether they want to support us to speak or not. He wanted them to say yes or no. It was Fiji actually who first agreed, yes let them speak," Rex Rumakiek said.

Mr Rumakiek said he was hopeful the MSG would be granted full or associate membership in the MSG, but he admitted that Indonesia's government influence would seek to work against it.



Indonesia, which has previously opposed the Movement's involvement in the group, has associate member status in the MSG.

The Liberation Movement said the MSG and the Pacific Islands Forum were well placed to hold Jakarta to account for human rights abuses in Papua.

However both regional groupings have had little success with their requests for access to papua to be granted to independent human rights monitors.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/410641/west-papuans-remain-hopeful-of-melanesian-spearhead-group-prospects>