



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

June 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.

01-07 June 2019

Organisations update

UNEP

Twenty-seven Small Island Developing States have come together in a bid to manage and eliminate toxic chemicals and waste.

The initiative is backed by \$450 million in funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and partners.

Global program will prevent the release of over 23,000 metric tons of toxic chemicals and more than 185,000 metric tons of marine litter .

The Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small Island Developing States program – or 'ISLANDS' – will support island states across the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean to manage the growing impacts of chemicals and wastes on their unique environments.

Participating countries include: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Cook Islands, Dominican Republic, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Guyana, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Union of Comoros, and Vanuatu.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/taking-fight-frontline-island-states-unite-end-pollution>

UNDRR

"The final version of the Words into Action Guidelines– Disaster displacement: How to reduce risk, address impacts and strengthen resilience (Words into Action on Disaster Displacement) was officially launched during the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP19), receiving interest from GP19 delegations from around the world.

The Words into Action Guidelines on Disaster Displacement are part of a UNDRR series of guidelines that aims to ensure worldwide access to expertise. It provides guidance for governments on how to include disaster displacement-related provisions in their national and local disaster risk reduction planning, in accordance with Target (E) of the Sendai Framework. The development of



the guidelines has been led by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), with lead author Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat, and supporting author Silvi Llosa. Its development was generously supported by Germany, Switzerland and Norway. Since the first release for public consultation in DATE, the guidelines have been translated from English into Arabic, French and Spanish with support from Switzerland and France.

The Words into Action on Disaster Displacement addresses four priorities:

- 1) Understanding disaster displacement risk;
- 2) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster displacement risk;
- 3) Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience to reduce displacement risk;
- 4) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response to disaster displacement and to 'build back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction to achieve durable solutions.

It is organized around the Sendai Framework objectives and priorities, explaining for each in how far disaster displacement can be integrated in national planning and practice. It contains examples and case studies, reference documents, and a glossary."

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/wia-launch-gp19>

Guidelines available at: <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/58821>

PDD

The Regional Consultation towards a framework for regional cooperation on human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change in the Caribbean took place on 6-7 June, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The key topics for the consultation, the discussions will focus on four thematic issues: i) managing disaster displacement risks in the country of origin and the inclusion of human mobility into national and regional DRR policies and adaptation planning processes; ii) migration as adaptation to environmental and climate change; iii) protection challenges in the context of migration flows for displaced persons as well as migrants in countries affected by disasters; and iv) addressing cross-border disaster-displacement: migration law and policies. For more information: <https://caribbeanmigration.org/events/regional-consultation-towards-framework-regional-cooperation-human-mobility-context-disasters>

Some reports commissioned by the PDD:

Mapping the Baseline – To What Extent Are Displacement and Other Forms of Human Mobility Integrated in National and Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies? : <https://disasterdisplacement.org/portfolio-item/drrmapping>

The Role of Free Movement of Persons Agreements in Addressing Disaster Displacement – A Study of Africa : <https://disasterdisplacement.org/portfolio-item/free-movement-of-persons-africa>



IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is co-hosting the first-ever global conference on the regulation of international recruitment and protection of migrant workers, in partnership with the Government of Canada, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the US Department of State and the Province of Quebec.

<https://www.iom.int/news/canada-iom-co-host-first-global-conference-regulation-international-recruitment-and-protection>

UN

David Boyd, the UN's Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, called on states to take urgent action to improve air quality in order to fulfill their human rights obligations. In a statement, Mr. Boyd said that uncontaminated air is a core component of the right to a healthy environment, together with clean water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, a non-toxic environment, healthy biodiversity and a safe climate.

The UN expert reiterated his recommended measures for reducing air pollution, contained in a report presented to the UN Human Rights Council in March. These include monitoring air quality and impacts on human health; assessing sources of air pollution; establishing air quality legislation; and developing air quality action plans.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1039661>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

New Caledonia

New Caledonia's largest anti-independence party has formally asked France to organise another independence referendum - seven months after just over 56 percent voted for the status quo.

The 18 Congress members of the Future with Confidence coalition have invoked the Noumea Accord clause which allows for a referendum to be called if one third of the 54 Congress members wish to have one.

In a letter to the French High Commissioner in Noumea, the group said it wanted the vote to be held as soon as possible.

It said the pro-independence FLNKS had signalled that it won't object to another plebiscite on whether New Caledonia should become fully independent.

The party said a quick vote was needed because of the uncertainty.

A date for the vote will be set by the French government and is expected to be no later than November 2020.



The Noumea Accord provides for a third referendum by 2022 should voters again reject independence next year.

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=6317923915d017f43639df00b7493b>



10-21 June 2019

Organisations update

PIFS

Representatives from 13 Pacific Island States gathered at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in Suva today for a two day regional workshop on the next phases of the Post Cotonou Negotiations, with the European Union (EU).

The Post Cotonou negotiations were launched in September 2018 between 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and 28 EU member states. Together, the two groups represent more than half of all UN member countries and home to over 1.5 billion people. The negotiations will set out the tone, priorities and parameters of the relationship, including development cooperation between the EU and the ACP countries over the next 20 years.

It has recently been agreed that the new agreement will be signed in Samoa in 2020.

At a major roundtable between Pacific Leaders and the EU in Apia in February, Pacific Leaders articulated the priorities they would want to see reflected in any agreement, including: Ocean Governance through the Blue Pacific identity; Safeguarding the Region's Resources and Security; Building on the economic potential and sustainability of the region's fisheries resources; Realising Sustainable Development goals and aspirations; Strengthening Commitment to addressing climate change and disaster resilience ; and, Striving toward Quality Education and Universal Health.

<https://www.forumsec.org/pacific-regional-workshop-on-post-cotonou-negotiations-opens-in-suva/>

Following an invitation from the Government of Vanuatu, a team of senior Pacific officials are in Port Vila this week to peer review the development of Vanuatu's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

<https://www.forumsec.org/peer-review-of-vanuatus-sdgs-reporting-is-a-global-first/>

Global Peace Index

The annual global peace report says that an estimated 971 million people — including more than 2.4 million Australians — live in areas with high or very high exposure to climate hazards including cyclones, floods, bushfires, desertification and rising sea levels.

The report is available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GPI-2019-web003.pdf>



UNFCCC

The UN Climate Change Annual Report has been published, which is available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UN-Climate-Change-Annual-Report-2018.pdf>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

NZ

"New Zealand's Foreign Minister is asking why countries would sign up to international agreements such as the Paris Accords and Boe Declaration if they never intended to uphold them.

In an exclusive BUZZ FM / Daily Post interview on Friday, Winston Peters pulled no punches when asked to contrast New Zealand's Pacific Reset and Scott Morrison's Pacific Step Up.

Citing the Boe Declaration as a key indication of the will of the Pacific, Peters stated, "it was in accord with the present [New Zealand] government's feeling with regard to climate change and the dramatic effect it's having in the Pacific islands. We hear loud and clear the voice of... not panic... but utmost concern amongst Pacific islanders about what's happening in their part of the world."

All the way up to the Secretary General of the United Nations, he said, "we've made it very clear what the Pacific wants: a response befitting the problem we face.

"In Solomon Islands, six islands have disappeared of late. More will happen."

Peters refused to be tied to any particular tactic, however. "When you talk about these responses, they all in various circumstances will be appropriate. But what we can't do is stand by and claim that it's not happening. Because it is."

Pressed to provide detail of concrete action from his government, Peters told the Daily Post, "Let me tell you the first tangible action: We just increased our climate change response by 50%, by [NZ] \$100 million (US\$65.8 million). From \$200 million (US\$131.6 million) to \$300 million (US\$197.4 million). Now we'd have got to \$400 million (US\$263.2 million) if we could afford it, but we couldn't. But 50% is pretty substantial in one year."

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=13604210055d004f78bc6f12c18d55>

Fiji

A Fijian family may yet have their day in a European court in what's being seen as a landmark case in the fight against climate change.



They are the remotest family among ten, mostly from Europe, who are suing the European Union over its climate targets.

Sáminuorra, a group representing indigenous Swedish youth, is also among the plaintiffs.

They plan to appeal after the European General Court dismissed the so-called People's Climate Case last month.

Petero Qaloibau, his three children and 80-year-old mother, decided to become part of the action in order to shine a light on how the climate crisis had affected their livelihood in Fiji.

They are located the furthest from the court which sits in Luxembourg and grow crops and fruit trees while running a small eco-tourism business for extra cash.

"If it can happen to me here in the Oceania region, I believe it would happen anywhere else in the world," Qaloibau told RNZ Pacific by phone from his village on the coast of Fiji's second largest island of Vanua Levu.

"That is why I quickly grabbed the opportunity."

The other families include cattle-herders in Kenya, a lavender farmer in France and forest owners in Portugal.

They are backed by a range of charities and scientists including the German charity Protect the Planet.

The group claims the EU's target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 is inadequate and breaches their fundamental rights.

They're not seeking damages but are aiming to have three European laws which deal with greenhouse gas emissions annulled.

The case puts together families who are all suffering in some respect from climate change, according to retired German law professor Gerd Winter who is representing the group, pro bono.

"All of them are directly affected."

Qaloibau said his earnings from copra, kava and nature tours have become more important since his small shop was swept away during a cyclone in early a decade ago.

"There was raining and raining and a bit of strong wind and we have a big wave coming in.

"On a normal day we see the other side of the bay from my village but when there was this tidal wave we couldn't even see the other side of the bay, of the island.

"We have to move to higher ground, so we have to run for our lives."



The increasingly extreme weather and other effects of climate change also appeared to be affecting the family's crops and Qaloibau estimated the family's income was half what it used to be.

The European court last month dismissed the case on procedural grounds.

It reasoned that every individual is likely to be affected one way or another by climate change and the plaintiffs had not shown they were "sufficiently and directly" affected by the European policies.

Professor Winter described it as "absurd" that the more serious the damage and the more people are affected, the less access there is to the court.

A "narrow interpretation" of the law cannot hold in times of climate change where everybody is at risk, he said and people like the Qaloibaus should also have redress.

"All of those who are affected by public action of European public authorities in a negative sense must be able to rely on the EU fundamental rights."

An appeal is being planned and the lawyer said if that is successful, the case would then be heard on its merits and the families might be invited to attend.

"We hope that at the next level the court will do this and then at least one person of every family will be invited to join.

"I think this is very important for the judges also to see that they are real persons, not only abstract interests, appearing before the court."

It would be very significant if the substantive case is heard and is successful, according to Professor Winter.

"It would be clear that everyone can argue that he or she is affected ... Which means that also future generations will come into the perspective of climate law."

Meanwhile, Petero Qaloibau said his community is very much in support of the action his family is taking, especially as there are unwelcome plans to relocate the village further inland.

"They don't want to move away from the village but there is continuous coastal erosion so, yes, we have no other option.

"So, when I came up with the idea of voicing our voices for them, they actually supported me well for that too.

"There is a lot of fear as of now on where would be the next move from here."

The families have until mid-July to submit their appeal.

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=19516936745cf996d9ae8034c875e4>



24-28 June 2019

Organisations update

UNHCR

UNHCR announced the first Global Refugee Forum, which will take place on 17 and 18 December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The event, which is being held at Ministerial level, will be co-hosted with Switzerland and co-convened by Turkey, Germany, Ethiopia and Costa Rica. Additional co-convening arrangements are being explored and will be announced in due course. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is expected to attend.

With tens of millions of people affected by war, conflict and persecution, the Global Refugee Forum will be an opportunity for countries to take stock of today's situation and to strengthen the international response. It follows the new Global Compact on Refugees that was agreed last December by the UN General Assembly, and is part of its implementation.

The Global Refugee Forum is a unique occasion for States and others to come together and announce bold, new measures they will take to ease pressure on host countries, boost refugee self-reliance, and search for solutions.

The Forum will bring together governments, international organizations, local authorities, civil society, the private sector, host community members, and refugees themselves. New contributions and proposals to advance these objectives are expected during the Forum and after.

The first Global Refugee Forum will focus on six areas: arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions, and protection capacity.

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/6/5d10c6f64/unhcr-launch-first-global-refugee-forum.html>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

PNG

"Dozens - potentially hundreds - of people in a remote part of Papua New Guinea's New Britain were fleeing from their villages on Wednesday, after one of the country's most active volcanoes erupted into life. Mr Saunders said the volcano had been showing signs of increased activity for the past few weeks, but the eruption started in earnest on Wednesday, when the 2,334 metre volcano started spewing ash as high as 13km into the air."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/392997/hundreds-evacuated-in-png-after-volcano-erupts>



Marshall Islands

"The United Nations continues to let politics cloud its judgement and is failing to prevent tragedies, the President of the Marshall Islands says. Hilda Heine addressed the UN Human Rights Council on Monday in Geneva, delivering scathing criticism of the UN's role in the Marshall Islands' nuclear legacy. She said the UN Trusteeship Council had failed to halt large-scale atomic tests in the Marshall Islands, leaving grave and ongoing human rights challenges.

"These impacts could have been avoided had the United Nations not let politics cloud judgement, and been more engaged with local voices. It is a mistake which has been repeated on the global stage."

Dr Heine said the UN had also failed the Rohingya people of Myanmar, where the military has been accused of a scorched earth campaign which has driven out more than 730,000 of the Muslim ethnic group since August 2017. An internal UN report in May said the campaign was executed with "genocidal intent".

The treatment of the Rohingya was "a tragedy and gross violation of human rights which could have been otherwise prevented," Dr Heine said.

She also urged the council to do more to address the human rights implications of a warming climate.

Once academic, the climate crisis now required real policy decisions and the Marshall Islands was already having to decide which communities it can salvage and which it will have to let go, Dr Heine said.

"As a low-lying atoll island nation, we have no higher ground for retreat. Climate change impacts and future risks are an obvious violation of not only our core human rights, but also our security and basic dignity."

Dr Heine also hit out at the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of human rights records of member states.

"We want to play our fair role, but we feel that we are often duplicating information already in the UPR. This burden is a major barrier for treaty participation in our region."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/392991/un-failing-to-prevent-tragedies-hilda-heine>

Samoa

"Ten Samoans on the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme have been expelled for various reasons including theft, smoking marijuana and for extra marital affairs. Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi said not only have the workers been banned from the scheme but their villages have also been blacklisted until further notice.



This means no more workers from these villages will be allowed to go on the scheme.

"Time and again, I have personally advised all our RSE workers before leaving to remember the importance of their seasonal employment engagement because it's their families, children and their villages which are reaping the fruits of their hard labour," he said.

The village of Poutasi, Falealili, one that has been a success story in the past with RSE workers is now blacklisted because three workers from there were allegedly involved with alcohol-induced criminal activity.

Other villages under suspension from the scheme include Matautu, Falealili; Gagaifolevao, Lefaga; Fasito'otai; Satuimalufilufi; Moata'a; Tuae'fu and Neiafu, Savai'i.

"This action serves as a reminder and a deterrent to seasonal workers that are disobedient and show any undesirable behaviour which will compromise more jobs for Samoans, that they will be weeded out without hesitation," said Tuilaepa.

Around 2,500 Samoans are on the New Zealand RSE scheme."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/392844/samoan-workers-expelled-from-new-zealand-rse-scheme>

Palau

"Palau has asked Australia to establish its planned regional security hub in Palau or the North Pacific. The Pacific Fusion Centre was announced in September 2018 to assist with security threats including drugs, illegal fishing and people smuggling.

Australia has not announced a location but has said it will be established in the middle of this year.

Palau made the request during talks on Tuesday with visiting Australian officials."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/392972/palau-calls-for-regional-security-hub-to-sit-in-north-pacific>