



# MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

May 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.

## 01-12 May 2019

### Organisations update

#### IUCN

“The Global Pact for the Environment was launched in 2017 as an initiative to conclude a legally binding international instrument under the United Nations that synthesizes the principles outlined in the Stockholm Declaration, the World Charter for Nature, the Rio Declaration, the IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law, and other instruments to solidify the environmental rule of law around the world and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 72/277 “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment” on 10 May 2018.

Through targeted contributions, WCEL and partners will continue to support the process in the coming months and years to reach agreement on a Global Pact to act as a third international Covenant, codifying the principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration just as the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both ratified in 1966, did for the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1949. Such a Pact achieves three main objectives:

- Establish the universal right to an ecologically sound environment as a human right at the international level, able to be invoked in international, regional, and national courts of law;

- Unify the guiding principles of international environmental law in one internally coherent legal document, thereby clarifying points of tension in international environmental law that have arisen given the existing sectoral approach to governance; and

- Empower citizens to hold home and neighbor governments accountable for their environmental policies.

A Global Pact for the Environment will greatly expand the rights of those suffering from environmental harms, allow and incent states and civil society to better hold polluters accountable, and lay the foundation for the incorporation of environmental concerns in all international governance, as is done for other human rights.

The Draft Global Pact for the Environment was launched on Saturday, 24 June during an event at the Sorbonne in Paris. French President Emmanuel Macron was the closing speaker vowing to personally act, on the basis of the preliminary draft, to lay the foundations for its adoption as a new global covenant for the conservation of the environment by the United Nations General Assembly.”



<https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-environmental-law/wcel-resources/global-pact-environment>

## Resilient Pacific

The theme of the very first Pacific Resilience Meeting was “Youth Futures in a Resilient Pacific” and as such it was preceded with a Youth Forum for which the Youth PRM outcomes statement – “Nothing About Us Without Us” was presented at the closing session.

For more information on Resilient Development in the Pacific: <http://www.resilientpacific.org/>

## SPREP

“A new partnership has been established to enhance environmental and social sustainability in the Pacific Region. The Pacific Learning Partnership for Environmental and Social Sustainability (PLP-ESS) will foster training, knowledge exchange, technical expertise and capacity building related to environmental and social safeguards and infrastructural development standards in the Pacific region.

PLP-ESS is an agreed collaboration mechanism between the partners that will respond to the needs of Pacific island countries to support capacity building. The PLP-ESS will deliver training, facilitate exchange of experiences and knowledge, mentor trainees, develop curricula, and provide assistance related to the common objectives.”

<https://www.sprep.org/news/the-pacific-learning-partnership-for-environmental-and-social-sustainability-established>

“Reducing risk, and saving lives and livelihoods in Niue is at the core of a new project launched this week in the island nation. The project will enhance the access to and understanding of weather, climate and disaster information from their National Meteorological Service.

Known as the CREWS Pacific SIDS Project, the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems Pacific Small Islands Developing States Project is a US\$5 million regional project. The Community-based Early Warning Systems is a sub-component, with a budget close to US\$900,000 and spans four Pacific islands, including Niue, for 2 years 2019 and 2020.

The project will help strengthen three different areas relevant to early warning systems; the Community-based Early Warning Systems and traditional knowledge; Pacific Meteorological Council Panels’ support to community-based early warning system and disaster risk reduction; and strengthening the information technology capacity of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services.

For Niue, this project is crucial. While Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Heta struck over a decade ago, the devastation it brought is still a fresh memory. Tropical Cyclone Heta caused the tragic loss of two lives on the island nation and immediate losses amounting to over five times their 2003 GDP.”

<https://www.sprep.org/news/enhancing-resilience-in-niue-through-access-to-weather-and-climate-information>



## MSG

"The MSG Secretariat highlighted the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) and the Melanesian Travel Card (MTC) during the recent ACP – EU dialogue with regional partners and stakeholders held in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

The ACP – EU dialogue aimed at further strengthening the ACP-EU Migration Action Technical Assistance Programmes provided to Pacific ACP states and regional organisations and to allow for all stakeholders to share their experiences on visa policies and modernisation of integrated border management.

The Deputy Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr. Peter Eafeare in his remarks during the meeting stated that the MSG sub-region signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Skilled Movement Scheme (SMS) was incepted in 2013. Mr Eafeare said the rationale for the SMS was to facilitate temporary movement of skilled MSG nationals within the MSG sub-region. He said the SMS now formed the basis for a labour mobility regime in Chapter 7 of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA).

The Deputy Director General said that the scope of the MFTA extends beyond trade in goods to include new areas of trade in services, labour mobility and cross border investments and is intended to operationalize this labour mobility regime through technical assistance from the ACP-EU Migration Action and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

He stated that the baseline assessment studies recommended amendments to domestic legislations and policies on immigration and labour to waive visas and work permits, a Standard Operating Procedure to facilitate movement of skilled nationals within MSG sub-region and the Melanesian Travel Card (MTC). Once enforced, the MTC will greatly improve efficiency and effectiveness in movement within the MSG sub-region of certain categories of visas for MSG nationals.

Mr Eafeare said that the MFTA will become operational as soon as two members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group completes the domestic processes to ratify the Agreement.

The Deputy Director General conveyed the Secretariat's sincere gratitude and appreciation to ACP-EU Migration Action and IOM for their continuous support to the MSG labour mobility regime."

<https://www.msgsec.info/the-melanesian-free-trade-agreement-melanesian-travel-card-and-labour-mobility-highlighted-in-the-recent-acp-eu-dialogue-in-port-vila/>

## Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

### Pacific

"The UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Vanuatu on the last stage of his Pacific Ocean mission to view the effects of climate change. He called for 'enlightened self-interest' from world leaders to save 'the whole planet' from climate change. Pointing out that entire villages are being relocated, livelihoods destroyed and people becoming sick from climate-related diseases, Mr. Guterres lamented: "The risks are all too real".



He drew attention to his time in Tuvalu, where he saw “an entire country fighting to preserve its very existence”.

And yet, the UN chief found “remarkable” that the countries facing these enormous challenges, have decided that “they are not giving up” but are instead “determined to find solutions”.

Mr. Guterres echoed the “three urgent messages” to world leaders that he had “consistently conveyed” throughout his visit to the Pacific, beginning with shifting taxes from salaries to carbon. “We need to tax pollution, not people,” he reiterated.

Second, he flagged that countries must stop subsidizing fossil fuels. “Taxpayer money should not be used to boost hurricanes, spread drought and heatwaves, melt glaciers and bleach corals”, he asserted.

And third, he argued against building new coal plants by 2020, saying “we need a green economy not a grey economy”.

Mr. Guterres said that solidarity or generosity is not being sought, “it is enlightened self-interest from all decision-makers around the world” that is needed “because it’s not only of the Pacific that is at stake, it’s the whole planet”.

“To save the Pacific is to save the whole planet”, concluded the Secretary-General.”

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1038731>

## **Tuvalu**

'One day we'll disappear': Tuvalu's sinking islands, Rising seas are on the verge of swallowing two of the tiny archipelago's nine islands, and the encroaching waves haunt locals' dreams by Eleanor Ainge Roy in Tuvalu.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/16/one-day-disappear-tuvalu-sinking-islands-rising-seas-climate-change>

## **FSM, Marshall Islands, Palau**

Just over 2500 citizens from Freely Associated States, or FAS, are making the Northern Marianas their home. The US Census Bureau said the figure represented a five percent decrease from previous counts. FAS refers to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau. The estimate, to be used for the next five years, provides the basis for determining Compact Impact funding in fiscal year 2019, which this year amounts to \$US34 million. Under the Compact of Free Association, funding is provided to help defray costs associated with increased demands placed on the CNMI, Guam, Hawai'i and American Samoa by migrants from the FAS.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/389341/fas-migrant-numbers-drop-in-cnmi>



# 13-19 May 2019

## Organisations update

### IPCC

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released on Monday an update to its methodology used by governments to estimate their greenhouse gas emissions and removals.

Governments are required to report their national greenhouse gas inventories — comprising estimates of greenhouse gas emissions and removals — to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) including under processes such as the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.

The updated IPCC methodology improves this transparency and reporting process by ensuring that the methodology used to determine these inventories is based on the latest science.

The new report, the 2019 Refinement to the 2006 IPCC Guidelines on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (2019 Refinement), was prepared by the IPCC's Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (TFI). A plenary session of the IPCC Panel in Kyoto, Japan, adopted the report's Overview Chapter and accepted the main report.

To access the report: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/2019-refinement-to-the-2006-ipcc-guidelines-for-national-greenhouse-gas-inventories/>

### PDD

“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>

Interview: Deciding whether to migrate and where to go : <https://disasterdisplacement.org/staff-member/deciding-whether-to-migrate-and-where-to-go>

The Role of Free Movement of Persons Agreements in Addressing Disaster Displacement – A Study of Africa : This report considers the potential for free movement agreements to address three core



protection needs of cross-border disaster-displaced persons. These are: 1) access to territory, 2) status and rights during stay, and 3) opportunities for lasting solutions.

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/portfolio-item/free-movement-of-persons-africa>

## WB

The World Bank Group today released the *Little Data Book on Gender 2019* to provide an easily accessible entry point to statistics tracking gaps between men and women, boys and girls for 217 economies around the world with comparable data for 2000 and 2017.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/05/16/world-bank-group-releases-little-data-book-on-gender>

## UNEP

“Pollution from plastic waste, acknowledged as a major environmental problem of global concern, has reached epidemic proportions with an estimated 100 million tonnes of plastic now found in the oceans, 80-90% of which comes from land-based sources.

Governments this week amended the Basel Convention to include plastic waste in a legally-binding framework which will make global trade in plastic waste more transparent and better regulated, whilst also ensuring that its management is safer for human health and the environment. At the same time, a new Partnership on Plastic Waste was established to mobilise business, government, academic and civil society resources, interests and expertise to assist in implementing the new measures, to provide a set of practical supports – including tools, best practices, technical and financial assistance - for this ground-breaking agreement.

Other far-reaching decisions from the two weeks included the elimination of two toxic chemical groups, which together total about 4,000 chemicals, listed into Annex A of the Stockholm Convention, namely Dicofol and Perfluorooctanoic Acid, and its salts and related compounds. The latter has till now been used in a wide variety of industrial and domestic applications including non-stick cookware and food processing equipment, as well as a surfactant in textiles, carpets, paper, paints and fire-fighting foams.

Important progress was also made under the Rotterdam Convention, which provides a legally-binding framework for information exchange and informed decision-making in the trade of certain hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals. Two chemicals, the pesticide phorate and the industrial chemical hexabromocyclododecane were added to Annex III of the convention, making them subject to the Prior Informed Consent Procedure, through which countries can decide on future imports of these chemicals. A further decision, to approve procedures and mechanisms on compliance with the Rotterdam Convention – seen as a crucial step for further improving implementation of this key convention - was adopted with great appreciation by Parties.”

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/governments-agree-landmark-decisions-protect-people-and-planet>





## Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

### Pacific

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction- Statement by Dr. A. Aumua, SPC Deputy Director-General: <https://www.spc.int/updates/news/speeches/2019/05/global-platform-for-disaster-risk-reduction-statement-by-dr-a-aumua>

### Fiji

Fiji Cabinet has endorsed a landmark National Climate Change Policy that will guide the sustainable development of the Fijian economy through 2030: <http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=6599708805cde37a0a18ca10eb5f9f>

### Marshall Islands

"The local government of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands has bought hundreds of acres of land in Hawaii as a climate change bolthole.

Bikini Atoll was rendered a radioactive wasteland by American nuclear tests in the 1940s and 50s and its people were forced to relocate.

Last month, the Bikini Local Government based in the capital Majuro bought 283 acres of land in the Hawaii town of Hilo.

Mayor Anderson Jibas says the \$US4.8 million purchase is insurance in case climate change renders Bikini islanders homeless.

"Our island, Bikini Atoll, is radiated with Caesium-137 and so on. We think that it's best for the future for at least a backup plan for our people."

Anderson Jibas said the local government will now develop the land so it's ready for relocation.

"We want to recoup some of the money that we spent on this backup plan for our future use.. we will be using some of the land to divide and put houses and all that and try to resell."

He said in recent months, a US-provided trust fund used to buy the land in Hawaii had also been used to buy transport boats and an apartment block."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/389416/bikini-atoll-govt-buys-climate-change-bolthole-land-in-hawaii>



## 20-31 May 2019

### Organisations update

#### ILA

The ILA's regional meeting will be about migration and international legal regulation. The full programme is available at: <http://www.ilaslovenia2019.com/programme.html>

#### EU

"Europe is readying a new fleet of satellites that will monitor CO2 emissions at every point on earth, creating the first worldwide system to independently track polluters. The fleet of three satellites is slated for launch in 2025, in time to inform the UN's global stocktake of greenhouse gas emissions three years later, the European Space Agency (ESA) confirmed. The project is well advanced. The ESA has begun consultations with industry on building the newly-designed Sentinel 7 spacecraft, which will cost an estimated €633 million. Funding depends on the EU's 2021-2027 budget, which needs to be agreed by the European Parliament and member states. Right now, much of humanity's CO2 is measured by proxy, with data supplied by countries on the fuels burned within their borders. These are known as inventories and can give a good approximation, particularly in highly developed countries. But things get muddy where governments aren't able to track and measure their economy in detail; that is the case in a large part of the world."

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/05/27/eu-plans-satellite-fleet-monitor-co2-every-country/>

"The European General Court has thrown out a lawsuit that pressed for stronger 2030 EU climate targets.

Ten families and an indigenous group filed the "People's Climate Case" in May 2018, arguing the EU's "inadequate" goal of 40% emissions cuts from 1990 levels threatened their human rights.

The court found the plaintiffs had not shown they were uniquely impacted by climate change and therefore did not satisfy the criteria for a substantive hearing.

The judges' order said: "It is true that every individual is likely to be affected one way or another by climate change, that issue being recognised by the European Union and the Member States who have, as a result, committed to reducing emissions. However, the fact that the effects of climate change may be different for one person than they are for another does not mean that, for that reason, there exists standing to bring an action against a measure of general application. The group, which is backed by NGOs Protect the Planet and Climate Action Network Europe, announced on Wednesday their intention to appeal to the European Court of Justice.

The plaintiffs, from six different EU countries, Kenya and **Fiji**, maintain that they face unique personal losses as a result of climate change and Europe's policies fail to protect them. Portuguese forest owner Armando Carvalho lost trees in severe wildfires in 2017, while the Saami reindeer herders of Sweden say warming conditions threaten their whole way of life."



<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/05/22/european-court-throws-climate-lawsuit-saying-plaintiffs-not-unique/>

## US

“The Climate Action Now Act passed the US house 231 votes to 190. It is sponsored by 224 Democrats but does not include a single Republican backer, prohibits the use of federal funds in leaving the Paris Agreement. Although the costs are likely to be minimal. It also compels the government to comply with the country’s national climate pledges. President Donald Trump would need to report to congress within 120 days on his plans to meet the obligations.”

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/05/02/congress-passes-bill-opposing-trump-paris-agreement-withdrawal/>

## Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

### Australia

“PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said on Sunday he would resign after seven years at the helm as it became clear the Opposition had enough numbers to topple him in parliament this week.

It is unclear who will replace O'Neill, though he wants to hand over his job to former two-time PNG prime minister Sir Julius Chan, 79.

O'Neill was Australia's key partner when it came to negotiating and then maintaining arrangements to keep 550 refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island even after the country's High Court found the detention centre was unconstitutional.

Since then his government has negotiated a number of contracts with Australia which have been controversial. Payne said Australia would continue to have a good relationship with the key Pacific nation, but, asked about offshore processing she said: “We'll obviously deal with those issues as they arise”.

“I think it's premature to speculate on those. As we've seen in recent weeks, Papua New Guinea politics is historically and clearly currently very dynamic. You'd be a very brave person to predict outcomes at the moment.”

One Australian contractor working on Manus Island told The Age and Sydney Morning Herald that their future was impossible to predict, and depended how profoundly power would shift in Papua New Guinea with O'Neill's demise.

Payne praised O'Neill, saying he had played a pivotal role in strengthening Australia's partnership with PNG, which receives more than \$500 million (US\$346 million) in aid from Australia each year.”

<http://www.pina.com.fj/index.php?p=pacnews&m=read&o=8917259295cec8c42a6e3054664671>