



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

September-October 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.

01-15 September 2019

Organisations update

UNFCCC

At Asia-Pacific Climate Week (APCW, 2 – 6 September), experts have been examining ways to raise regional and global ambition to tackle climate change, with countries in the region showcasing their efforts to implement climate action in the energy, transport, agriculture, water and waste management sectors.

These initiatives, which stem from the countries' Technology Needs Assessments (TNA's), are at the heart of national climate action plans under the Paris Climate Change Agreement, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

<https://unfccc.int/news/achieving-low-emission-growth-in-cities-through-sustainable-urban-systems-management>

For more information on TNAs:

<https://unfccc.int/ttclear/tna>

For more information on the messages from the Asia-Pacific Climate Week, please see:

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/APCWMessages_UNCASummit.pdf

Global Commission on Adaptation

The Global Commission on Adaptation published a new report which finds that investing \$1.8 trillion globally in five areas from 2020 to 2030 could generate \$7.1 trillion in total net benefits. The five areas considered are early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, improved dryland agriculture, mangrove protection, and investments in making water resources more resilient. This represents only a portion of the total investments needed and total benefits available.

The report is available at: https://cdn.gca.org/assets/2019-09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf

SPC

"The World Customs Organisation's (WCO) Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, also known as the Harmonized System (HS) is the international guideline that identifies and compiles details of commodities imported and exported in an internationally consistent way



for customs, statistical and analytical purposes and trade negotiations. It is updated every five years. WCO members as well as non-members generally nationalise the classification to be able to accommodate the national tariff rates, upon which the classification becomes a legal document.

The latest HS version is for 2017 (HS17) which came into effect on 01 January 2017. In the Pacific only three Pacific Island Nations, namely Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea were able to implement HS17 on time. Most were unable to implement HS17 on the stipulated date because most of the Customs administrations lacked the necessary tools to enable them to nationalise their classification and some also lacked the necessary technical skills to undertake the work.

It was for these reasons that the Pacific Community (SPC) which provides technical assistance to the Pacific Island nations in the compilation of the International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) pushed for a Pacific regional HS17 (PACHS17)."

To read more, please see: <https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2019/09/pacific-island-nations-begin-work-on-the-pacific-harmonized-system-2022>

PIDF

The Pacific Island Development Forum has adopted "the Nadi Bay Declaration on the Climate Change Crisis in the Pacific".

To see the declaration, please visit: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6226356-Nadi-Bay-Declaration-on-Climate-Crisis-2019.html>

PIFS

Following the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting, "Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now" was issued.

To see the declaration, please visit: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/50th-Pacific-Islands-Forum-Communique.pdf>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Torres Strait Islands

"Torres Strait Islanders ask UN to hold Australia to account on climate 'human rights abuses': Climate change threatens Australia in many different ways, and can devastate rural and urban communities alike. For Torres Strait Islanders, it's a crisis that's washing away their homes, infrastructure and even cemeteries.



The failure to take action on this crisis has led a group of Torres Strait Islanders to lodge a climate change case with the United Nations Human Rights Committee against the Australian federal government.

It's the first time the Australian government has been taken to the UN for their failure to take action on climate change. And its the first time people living on a low lying island have taken action against any government.

This case – and other parallel cases – demonstrate that climate change is “fundamentally a human rights issue”, with First Nations most vulnerable to the brunt of a changing climate.

The group of Torres Strait Islanders lodging this appeal argue that the Australian government has failed to take adequate action on climate change. They allege that the re-elected Coalition government has not only steered Australia off track in meeting globally agreed emissions reductions, but has set us on course for climate catastrophe.

In doing so, Torres Strait Islanders argue that the government has failed to uphold human rights obligations and violated their rights to culture, family and life.”

<https://theconversation.com/torres-strait-islanders-ask-un-to-hold-australia-to-account-on-climate-human-rights-abuses-117262>



16-30 September 2019

Organisations update

UNFCCC

“Leaders from government, business and civil society have announced potentially far-reaching steps to confront climate change at the United Nations Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit in New York.”

Some of the commitments of the Climate Action Summit 2019 include:

- Small Island Developing States make a collective commitment to raise the ambition of their NDCs by 2020 and move to net zero emissions by 2050, contingent on assistance from the international community. They intend to move to 100 percent renewable energy by 2030 and provide support for initiatives that aim to address immediate adaptation needs and the transition to climate resilience.
- The Climate Investment Platform will seek to directly mobilize US\$1 trillion in clean energy investment by 2025 in 20 least developed countries. The platform will provide a menu of services to governments and private sector clients in their efforts to scale-up energy transition and accelerate investments for low carbon, climate-resilient development. It will also enable the delivery of ambitious NDCs.
- The LIFE-AR initiative, led by least developed countries, will strengthen South-South cooperation, aim to mobilize US\$30-40 million, and deliver pathways to climate-resilient development by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

The full announcement is available at:

https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/assets/pdf/CAS_main_release.pdf

PIFS

Lead negotiators of the Pacific States of the African, Caribbean, Pacific Group (PACP) and the European Union (EU) met to discuss the EU-Pacific Regional Protocol (PRP), which falls under the EU/ACP negotiations for a post-Cotonou Agreement.

Negotiators discussed texts in strategic priority areas for the PACP region, including: environmental sustainability and climate change; inclusive and sustainable economic development; oceans, seas and fisheries; security, human rights and governance; and human and social development. Discussions were also held on the basis for engagement, and means of implementation.

Post Cotonou negotiations were launched in September 2018 between the seventy-nine (79) ACP countries and twenty-eight (28) EU member states. The successor to the Cotonou Agreement is scheduled to be signed in Samoa in 2020. The three ACP regions are currently negotiating their respective regional protocols, as well as continuing negotiations of the Foundation Agreement.

<https://www.forumsec.org/progress-made-on-eu-pacific-regional-protocol-negotiations/>



IPCC

The IPCC approved and accepted *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* at its 51st Session held on 20 – 23 September 2019. The approved Summary for Policymakers (SPM) was presented at a press conference on 25 September 2019.

For more information on the report: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/home/>

SAMOA Pathway

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States was held from 1-4 September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action – or SAMOA Pathway and the announcement of 300 multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of SIDS. It also established a unique intergovernmental SIDS Partnership Framework, designed to monitor progress of existing, and stimulate the launch of new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS.

On 27 September 2019, the General Assembly held a one-day high level review of the progress made in addressing the priorities of small island developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway. The General Assembly has decided that the high level review will result in "a concise action oriented and inter-governmentally agreed political declaration" .

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/samoareview>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

UN High Representative for Small Island Developing States

Small island nations are "not sitting idly by" but are emerging as "frontrunners" in the fight against climate change according to Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, the UN High Representative for Small Island Developing States.

To read more, please visit: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1047652>



01-15 October 2019

Organisations update

ILC

The full report of the seventy-first session of the International Law Commission includes a chapter on sea level rise. The report is available at: <http://legal.un.org/docs/?symbol=A/74/10>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Tuvalu

“The Asian Development Bank is giving Tuvalu \$US4 million so it can improve the management of its finances and the national infrastructure.

The Improved Fiscal and Infrastructure Management Programme involves two reforms.

Firstly, it aims to improve public financial reporting and public procurement, while putting in place mechanisms for redress and noncompliance.

Under the second reform, improvements will be made to building standards and the management of national infrastructure, which, the bank said, would enhance resilience to disasters and help service delivery.”

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/402302/tuvalu-receives-us4m-from-asian-development-bank>



16-31 October 2019

Organisations update

PDD

The Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) consists of a Steering Group, Advisory Committee, and Secretariat. However, several states who are not members of the PDD Steering Group have shown interest in its work. To reach out to such states and to strengthen awareness regarding the protection and assistance needs of disaster displaced persons, a Group of Friends (GoF) of the PDD was established.

The first meeting of the Group of Friends took place in Geneva on 16th October 2019, co-chaired by the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco, welcoming 33 UN Member States on board. Broad representation from Pacific Small Island Developing States, African, Caribbean, and European countries showed the extensive interest on the topic of Disaster Displacement, and wide-ranging commitment to our common goal to better protect those displaced in disasters and climate change contexts.

<https://disasterdisplacement.org/first-meeting-of-group-of-friends-of-pdd-in-geneva>

SPREP

The Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) is officially in operation, with the hosting of two important trainings and workshops this week. The PCCC was funded by the Government of Japan through grant aid to the Government of Samoa, with funding support from the Government of New Zealand, which will assist in resourcing the Centre. It is hosted by and located at the SPREP Campus in Vailima, Samoa. It will serve as shared resource for Pacific island countries and territories, as well as a regional hub for climate change information, applied research, capacity building through training and learning and innovation.

The Centre will also host the Pacific islands preparatory meeting for the 25th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change next month.

<https://www.sprep.org/news/a-week-of-firsts-for-the-pacific-climate-change-centre>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

New Zealand

"Tuvalu's Human Rights Commissioner is lobbying New Zealand to drop what he describes as discriminatory immigration laws for disabled people.

Sa'aga Teafa has taken up the cases of two Tuvaluan families, who say they have been forced apart by tough medical requirements for New Zealand residence.



He said he had raised concerns with New Zealand Foreign Ministry officials. One of those affected, Laasi Anderson, said her visual impairment meant she was unable to join her husband and daughter in New Zealand.

"They tell me that disabilities are not allowed there. I can't go with my husband, with my family because of my health."

Health requirements for residence visas in New Zealand, while considered on a case-by-case basis, are strict.

Applicants aren't allowed to impose undue costs or demands on the public health system."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/402560/nz-immigration-rules-a-concern-tuvalu-human-rights-head>

Marshall Islands

Marshall Islands and Taiwan sign trade deal: An economic cooperation agreement was signed on Friday in Tapei after meetings between Dr Heine and her Taiwan counterpart Tsai Ing-wen. According to a release from Tsai's office, the agreement would boost trade and investment between the two countries, and "elevate the bilateral partnership to greater heights".

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/401955/marshall-islands-and-taiwan-sign-trade-deal>