

PACIFIC – UK HIGH LEVEL CLIMATE DIALOGUE

7/8 July 2021

Virtual

CHAIR'S SUMMARY (COP26 PRESIDENT – ALOK SHARMA)

1. The Pacific-UK High Level Climate Dialogue brought together Pacific Islands Leaders with the COP26 President Designate in an important milestone ahead of COP26 in Glasgow this November. This event, delivered in collaboration with Wilton Park and One CROP (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Pacific Community), built on previous engagement with the region on climate change, and provided a unique opportunity for Pacific Island Leaders and the COP President to engage in open and frank discussion ahead of COP26.
2. Leaders from Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Tuvalu, Niue, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Ministers from Nauru, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the CEO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Samoa, youth leader Gladys Habu, the Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum, Directors General from the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Pacific Community and the Forum Fisheries Agency attended the event.

OPENING

3. COP26 President welcomed Leaders and representatives and expressed sympathy for the impacts of the pandemic being felt by Pacific countries. He recognised that countries across the Pacific region face extensive challenges due to climate change. Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) are amongst the world's smallest emitters of greenhouse gasses, but face some of the most extreme impacts of a changing climate. He emphasised his commitment to working closely with PSIDS for two key reasons; to ensure COP26 delivers for the countries most vulnerable to climate change, and because the PSIDS are essential to the success of COP26, playing a pivotal role in the multilateral system and being a formidable power in negotiations. COP26 President remarked that the most important thing that COP26 can deliver for the Pacific, is to keep alive the possibility of staying within the 1.5 degree temperature limit.

The UK Presidency set out the four COP goals and highlighted the progress being made against them, including the commitment of all G7 countries to end international coal financing and to net-zero 2050 targets, alongside nationally determined contributions to get them to this goal. However, COP26 President noted this is not enough, and G20 countries need to follow suit. COP26 President urged Pacific Leaders to use their influence and moral authority to encourage G20 countries to step up with greater ambition and action, and for

those Pacific countries still to do so to come forward with their own ambitious NDCs and net-zero targets.

COP26 President emphasised his focus on adaptation and climate finance. He spoke of the need to deliver on the agreed target of US\$100bn per year, referring to recent progress with G7 countries but recognising the need for increased commitments more widely.

COP26 President welcomed this opportunity to hear the priorities of PSIDS Leaders for COP26 and their thoughts on where the UK and Pacific can work together in the lead up to Glasgow to make those priorities a reality.

DISCUSSION: PACIFIC PRIORITIES FOR COP26

4. Leaders agreed with the COP26 President that the world needs to step up its emissions targets and its actions to keep the 1.5 temperature limit alive, noting that we have now reached levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that we have not seen for 3 million years. Leaders talked about the need for greater action sooner, commenting that flattening the curve on temperature warming by the middle of the century would be too late, that emissions must peak by 2025. Early peaking is necessary not only to protect climate vulnerable Pacific SIDS but also larger, more resilient countries who will also experience greater severity and frequency of heat domes, wildfires, floods and storms and therefore need to take action to close the mitigation gap. High emitters, especially G20, must commit to higher mitigation targets now, and COP26 must set the path for peaking emissions by 2025. Finance and access to finance are lagging behind the needs of countries.

Participants highlighted the importance of including super pollutants, such as methane, black carbon and HFCs, in reduction targets. Rapid reduction of these powerful GHGs could make a significant difference to the achievability of the 1.5° target.

Throughout the event, Leaders spoke of the heightened vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Challenges due to the pandemic may affect PSIDS presence at Glasgow, with travel remaining difficult, but Leaders and COP26 President agreed on the importance of ensuring PSIDS representatives are fully briefed on logistical issues, including the provision of vaccines where necessary. Pacific Leaders encouraged the UK Presidency to consider Ministerial proxies and remote participation, where practical.

Many participants outlined the urgent need for access to all types of finance to decarbonise their economies and adapt to climate change as the world recovers from COVID-19. Leaders highlighted that the \$100bn goal is still unmet and

shared concerns regarding the insufficient focus of finance on adaptation. Leaders spoke of the need for development partners to significantly reduce loans as an instrument of climate finance, suggesting unlocking private-sector finance as an alternative, through grant-based or highly concessional de-risking funds. Leaders also emphasised the difficulty of accessing climate finance, calling for simplification of the bureaucracy surrounding funds; using a more programmatic approach; and supporting countries' capacity to manage these processes.

The finalisation of the Paris Rulebook was also highlighted by participants. Several speakers referred to the need to set common five-year time frames, along with calls for Kyoto credits to not be brought forward as Article 6 mechanisms are agreed.

Participants highlighted the need to prioritise adaptation. For a region where GHG emissions are minimal, and climate impacts severe, significant adaptation is required for their survival. Loss and damage continues to be an important topic for PSIDS, with leaders calling for the operationalisation of the Santiago Network.

Pacific countries welcomed the COP26 Presidency's focus on the climate-ocean nexus, making clear their desire for the ocean to be incorporated in UNFCCC processes. Countries highlighted the role the ocean plays in regulating temperatures across the globe. Speakers also noted the reliance on the ocean across the Pacific for culture, livelihoods, food security and sustainability of coastal communities. Efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change must also protect marine environments and biodiversity, and many participants echoed calls for climate finance to be available for ocean projects.

THE VOICE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

5. Youth Leader Gladys Habu of the Solomon Islands spoke passionately about the impacts of climate change, including the very personal story of Kale, one of several islands now completely submerged in the Solomon Islands as sea levels rise. Kale Island was the home of Gladys' grandparents, and the personal loss felt by Gladys as Kale became submerged has motivated her to become a powerful climate advocate. Gladys Habu called on PSIDS Leaders to overcome political divisions. She called on all leaders to declare a climate emergency to prioritise the climate crisis and work together to protect her generation and those to come. Gladys highlighted three top priorities ahead of COP26:
 1. Increased representation from (Pacific) Youth in climate negotiations and events,
 2. For all countries to comply with their commitments to the Paris Agreement, highlighting the urgency in doing so over the next decade, and
 3. Increasing support to developing countries to access climate finance, to manage the impacts of climate change.

NEXT STEPS

6. All participants spoke passionately about the need to work in unity, within the region and with the UK Presidency, to encourage greater ambition from large emitters, mentioning key milestones such as the G20, the latest IPCC report, UNGA and COP itself.
7. The UK Presidency is holding the July Ministerial, which will be an opportunity for Ministers from Fiji, RMI and PNG to come together in-person to discuss expectations for COP26, the shape and substance of the potential outcome, and to provide guidance on outstanding negotiations issues. The Ministerial will discuss keeping 1.5 alive; scaling up adaptation; loss and damage; finalising Article 6 in the Paris Rulebook; and mobilising finance. Ministers from Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Fiji have been invited to attend.
8. PSIDS welcomed opportunities to work together on climate finance in the lead up to COP26 including the work of the Access to Finance Taskforce, co-chaired by Fiji.
9. The High Ambition Coalition was very effective in Paris, at COP21, and RMI will be mobilising this coalition ahead of COP26 to set a high bar for negotiations and work closely with the UK Presidency on ambitious outcomes.