

At UN Assembly, Pacific small islands urge collective action against climate change impacts

21 September 2017 – Addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, leaders from Pacific small Island developing states highlighted the growing impact of climate change on the lives of their people and called for concerted action to address the threat.

“As small island Pacific countries, we are no longer protected by our isolation,” said Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, the Prime Minister of Samoa, adding: “Climate change, like other global challenges, cross borders seamlessly. It has no respect for sovereignty and does not discriminate countries between rich or poor.”

“Its dire consequences are real including [for] those who remain in denial,” he underscored, urging global leaders to collectively prioritize the implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

Also in his address, Prime Minister Malielegaoi, spoke of the importance of the [2030 Agenda](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and highlighted that, for small island development States, the 2014 ‘Samoa Pathway’ is their sustainable development roadmap which highlights their key tasks and priorities and links closely with the 2030 Agenda.

The Samoa leader also noted the escalating crisis in the Korean Peninsula and called for visionary leadership to ensure that peace is given a chance. Concluding his remarks, he also informed the General Assembly of the Summit of Leaders of discussions and outcomes at the Pacific Island Forum, which Samoa hosted earlier this year.

[Full statement available here](#)



President Tommy Esang Remengesau, Jr. of the Republic of Palau addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also addressing the general debate today, Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., the President of Palau, said the natural disasters wreaking havoc across many parts of the world are a “harbinger of wars to come on a hotter planet,” underscoring the need to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement.

“Palau in the Pacific have experienced, first hand, the impact of climate extremes,” he said, adding: “[Climate change impact] is a ticking time-bomb – no one knows when or where the next disaster will strike – but we are a keenly aware that it can wipe out years of progress in a span of hours.”

Noting the importance of expanding cooperation with all stakeholders, including with the private, public and non-profit sector, to address the complex challenges facing the planet, he added that UN is the crucial link that can bring global efforts together, and that concerted and united efforts are also crucial to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Concluding his address, President Remengesau also spoke of the need of strong multilateral efforts, within the UN framework, to resolve challenges ranging from international peace and security, global terrorism, large-scale migration and many other difficult issues.

For the success of such efforts, the UN system must be strengthened so that all its Member States can believe in the fairness and effectiveness of the overall international negotiation and dispute resolution process.



Prime Minister Enele Sosene Sopoaga of Tuvalu addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Joining the Pacific leaders expressing concern over the threat posed by climate change, Enele Sosene Sopoaga, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, also underscored the importance of the Paris Agreement, especially for the tens of millions living in low-lying islands and coastal areas around the world.

"The Paris Agreement is our common hope of a decent life on a sustainable planet. For Tuvalu, it is our hope of security and survival," said the Prime Minister, noting however, that the hope, is however, "dimmed with the announcement by the United States that it will abandon the Agreement."

In his remarks, the Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda and referring to challenges within his country in its implementation, thanked the international community for their help in overcoming them.

He also expressed his country's support for a 'global pact on the environment,' explaining that it would be an international legally binding agreement on the protection of rights to a safe and clean environment.

"We are but on one canoe for humanity, no one country must jump ship! We either must paddle together to keep us afloat and safe. Or allow the canoe to sink, and we all drown. It is our hope, that with this 'Global Pact' and the Paris Agreement, the canoe, we can save Tuvalu, and if we can save Tuvalu we can save the world."

[Full statement available here](#)



Prime Minister Charlot Salwai Tabimasmamas of the Republic of Vanuatu addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also delivering his address before the General Assembly, Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu stated that the United Nations offered the “best hope and catalyst” for addressing global challenges including those related to peace and security, as well as the environment problems.

In particular, he said that as the impact of climate change continues to grow unabated, world leaders must consider a legal framework to address the issue of climate change refugees, who would be left stranded once their homes and lands disappear.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister also called on Security Council to move beyond political interests of its members and to find compromise solutions. He also said that his country supports Security Council reforms to accord fairer regional representation.

Further in his address, Prime Minister Tabimasmas underscored the importance of implementation of the Paris Agreement and he urged the United States to reconsider its decision on the Agreement and to support its full implementation.

Turning to crisis emanating from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea nuclear weapons development programme, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his country’s commitment to denuclearization of the Pacific region and welcomed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

[Full statement \(in French\) available here](#)