

Speech: UK stands proud with Pacific as climate change advocates: Speech: Melanie Hopkins at CAPP reception in Suva

Bula vinaka

I am delighted to be here tonight to support the Climate Action Pacific Partnership Conference 2019 under the theme of “Decarbonise and Build Resilience: the Call from the Pacific” and commend the Prime Minister of Government of Fiji Honourable Josia Voreqe Bainimarama for hosting this event.

The United Kingdom is proud to stand side by side with the Pacific as global advocates for tackling climate change. At home, we were the first country to introduce legally binding climate emissions targets through the 2008 Climate Change Act. Since 1990, the UK has reduced emissions by 42% whilst still growing our economy by 72% – we have decarbonised our economy at the fastest rate of any G20 country. Last week the UK enjoyed its first coal free week since 1880. By 2025 we will be able to fully operate Britain’s electricity system with zero carbon. Internationally, we are also one of the world’s largest funders of international climate finance and have committed over £5.8bn from 2016-2020 on international climate finance.

This week sees the visit of the UN Secretary General – a historic first for this region. We recognise the particular leadership of the Pacific Islands including Marshall Islands’ chair of the High Ambition Coalition, Fiji’s COP 23 Presidency or Palau’s hosting of the 2020 Our Oceans Conference. At regional level, we recognise the ground breaking Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific which calls for climate resilience to be integrated into all aspects of national and local policy.

Across the region, Pacific leaders have called time and time again for increased ambition in implementing the Paris Agreement. We know that if we continue on the current trajectory, we will not achieve the radical change required. The UK has therefore offered to host COP26 in 2020 and will be committed, ambitious and effective hosts. We also welcome interest from others and a final decision will be adopted at COP25 in Chile in December 2019.

This morning, we heard the Environment Minister of Chile talk of the “Blue COP” – we very much recognise the oceans-policy nexus. As members of the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, we also recognise that blue carbon ecosystems are vital for carbon sequestration, coastal resilience and sustainable aquaculture. We are proud to jointly lead the marine plastics Working Group of the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance with Vanuatu. Seven countries in the Pacific have already joined this Alliance since it was

launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting last year, and we hope that other Pacific countries will also come forward. One of the most important ways we can support our oceans is to provide ecological resilience through Marine Protected Areas – this is why we want to treble the target for MPAs globally to 30% by 2030.

The UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit, this September, is a critical moment to accelerate global climate ambition – on cutting emissions, building resilience and adaptation, and mobilising finance. We are fully committed to ensuring the Summit is a success. That is why the Prime Minister has accepted the UNSG's invitation to co-lead on climate resilience and adaptation with Egypt, in partnership with Malawi, Bangladesh, the Netherlands and UNDP.

We are keen to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including in the Pacific, to bring commitments to the Summit that will drive truly transformational change.

Globally, 21% of climate finance is devoted to adaptation; that is not enough. As the UK, we aim for a 50:50 split in our £5.8bn in climate finance from 2015-2020. Through our work on the Summit, we will be also asking others to invest more in building climate resilience internationally.

Last December, Pacific Island countries, the Pacific Island Forum, the British and New Zealand Governments came together with leading private sector, civil society and academic representatives at Wilton Park in the British countryside to discuss resilience and adaptation. For the UK, this helped drive our thinking on a resilience and adaptation pact which we hope will be launched at the Summit. Alongside this pact, we will seek to secure concrete commitments from governments on a number of areas raised by Pacific Island Governments at Wilton Park. Current priorities include:

- Greater investment in early warning data and systems
- Expansion of risk finance and insurance mechanisms to enable early response and create greater incentives for risk management by the private sector
- Building technical and institutional capacity for locally led adaptation
- Restoring ecosystems, supporting sustainable agriculture and food security

In closing, I would like to congratulate the Pacific Leaders for your leadership and underline the UK's continued offer of partnership to reach our shared, global ambitions on tackling climate change and protecting the planet's oceans.

Thank you and vinaka vakalevu.