

Speech: UK support for Pacific Islands on climate change

Remarks as delivered today (4 September) by the Rt Hon Mark Field MP, Minister for Asia and the Pacific, at the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Dialogue Session with Dialogue Partners, hosted and chaired by H.E. Hon Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru.

Introduction

Climate change affects us all, but few are threatened as tangibly and gravely as the people of the Pacific. Mr President, you captured the attention of the Commonwealth Summit with your powerful portrayal of the many challenges that Nauru faces from the rising sea; from ocean acidification to the costs of relocating infrastructure.

As my Prime Minister, Theresa May, has said, there is a clear moral imperative for developed economies to help those who stand to lose the most as a result of climate change.

We must work together to find durable solutions. And that is what we are doing.

In December I spoke at the United Nations Security Council in New York making the case – now receiving extensive support internationally – that climate change is a risk to global security.

The 2019 UN Secretary General's Climate Summit will focus global attention on the threats posed by our changing climate, and how we overcome them. As a permanent member of the Security Council, we wholeheartedly support this agenda.

Before that, the Wilton Park Forum in the UK in December, entitled "Navigating Pacific Futures", will raise global awareness of the impact of climate change in the Pacific. This conference – which we will co-host with our New Zealand friends – will be a valuable opportunity for the voices of the Pacific to be heard. I would hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend.

UK climate support

The United Kingdom is among the largest contributors of international climate finance, especially through multilateral channels such as the World Bank and Green Climate Fund.

We are giving developing countries over £5.5 billion between 2016 and 2020 to help them mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change.

We work directly with many Pacific states, for example giving £1.2m to the

Nationally Determined Contributions Hub in Suva to help you implement your Paris commitments.

We are a long-time supporter of the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, and Mr President, we are also backing your new Group of Friends on Climate Security.

We are also pushing for a transformation in how climate change risk and adaptation is addressed globally. We will use our role leading on Climate Resilience at the 2019 UN Climate Summit to advance this. Meanwhile we shall continue to promote two Commonwealth initiatives – the Marine Economic Programme and the Clean Oceans Alliance.

Conclusion

Mr President. One does not have to travel to a small island state to understand your vulnerability to rising sea levels, but being here really brings home what it means in practice.

Climate security will be an increasingly important part of our work together, as the UK doubles its diplomatic presence in the region by opening High Commissions in Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

I want you, and the people of the Pacific to know that – in the United Kingdom – you have a partner committed to building resilience to climate change, committed to addressing climate-related security risks, and committed to helping the countries of the Pacific adapt to the climate challenges ahead.