

## Hotting up in the Pacific: Collective cries ahead of the COP21 climate talks, Paris

Continuing to exist, despite difficult circumstances, is a situation common to many people in the Pacific faced with the realities of climate change; but mere survival is not a particularly appealing *long-term* prospect. “We want to live, not just survive”, says one activist, alarmed at being offered a life of climate-related hardship and endurance rather than one of God-given fullness.

Yet, consciences un-pricked, climate negotiators seem reluctant to look up from their self-interested party briefs, and fail to hear the cries of people trying to convey urgency to the situation.

The reality is politicians in Paris in December have to produce; this is the last chance for concerted global action and agreement...

And in a part of the world considered one of the global-warming hotspots, it is little wonder that climate change features highly on the Pacific agenda, even among its youngest members.



*'X-small'-sized campaigners*



### From Hibiscus to Paris: Hibiscus Festival, Suva, Fiji

In the Fijian capital, Suva, the third week of August marks the Hibiscus Festival, a jovial time of funfairs, torrential rain, squelching mud and un-dampened spirits\*. This year, however, there was a first, well actually a second – no, not dry weather – “Climate change – Communities adapting from the ridge to the reef” was the appointed theme for a second consecutive year.

"It is significant that the biggest festival in the country, and indeed the South Pacific, has felt the issue of climate change is truly important to be taken on as the theme for the second consecutive year," said the government's Director of Climate Change, Peter Emberson.



This year, the Climate Change Division (CCD) also had much to smile about, as the award for the festival's friendliest information booth went to its staff, who apparently beamed throughout the week-long rain. Luckily, on the last day, the weather stayed largely dry for the Hibiscus highlight - the Parade - when the streets of Suva fill with thousands of people, dozens deep, to watch the procession of floats. This year the honour of leading the Parade went to the radiant staff of the Climate Change Division and their families!

\* Climate change has yet to make an impact on this particular predictability

## Pacific Island Development Forum, Suva, Fiji

Hot on the heels of Hibiscus, and just down the road from the festival site, the third meeting of the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) attracted some big names to Suva, including the UN Special Envoy for Climate Change, Mary Robinson. The three days of discussions by the public and private sectors and civil society, under the banner of “Building Climate Resilient Green Blue Pacific Economies”, culminated in the issuing of the *Suva Declaration on Climate Change*. Extracts from the document include:



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### SUVA DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

We, the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Development Forum following open, transparent and inclusive discussions with stakeholders undertaken during the Pacific Islands Development Forum Third Annual Summit held in Suva, Fiji between 2-4 September 2015 declare that we:

1. Are gravely distressed that climate change poses irreversible loss and damage to our people, societies, livelihoods, and natural environments; creating existential threats to our very survival and other violations of human rights to entire Pacific Small Island Developing States;

*Extract from Page 1 of the declaration*

“...climate change is already resulting in forced displacement of island populations and the loss of land and territorial integrity...”

“the goal to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial levels is inadequate. [This] ‘guardrail’ concept is no longer safe for the survival of our Pacific Small Island Developing States.”

The PIDF calls on the international community “to limit global average temperature increase to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”.

## Fiji National Climate Change Summit, Levuka, Ovalau Island, Fiji

Co-incidentally the Fiji National Climate Change Summit was also celebrating its third birthday the week after the PIDF meeting. Attended by 300 participants, and promoting climate resilience through genuine community and stakeholder partnerships, the meeting had successful contributions from government, regional agencies, non-government organisations, and faith-based groups. The Pacific Conference of Churches ran a workshop on climate change and faith - a soul-searching examination of our response to the destruction of God’s good creation.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, Rear Admiral (Frank) Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, opened the Summit by stating the need for all countries, especially rich industrial countries, to help deliver a Paris agreement that is ‘fair, ambitious and binding’ – sentiments reiterated again in the Summit’s outcome statement.



*Climate Change chatting over morning tea.*

## Pacific Island Forum meeting, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

In the same week as the Fiji Climate Change Summit, the age-mature, 46<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) saw heads of state and government ministers from 16 nations of the region descend on Port Moresby for the annual, high-level gathering.



## Prayer Points:

- Pray for politicians and negotiators attending the COP21 climate talks that they will make ethical and just decisions, based on science, and not political interests.
- Pray that the outcome of the COP21 meeting is a fair, ambitious and legally-binding agreement.
- Pray for universal accord to limit global average temperature increase to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Pray for the voiceless, wherever they may be - people who suffer most and contribute least to climate change.
- Pray for climate justice and fairness – everyone has the right to a dignified existence.
- Give thanks for the commitment of climate-change advocates, in whatever guise, who boldly challenge the status quo, and give a voice to the voiceless in the Pacific and elsewhere.
- Pray that we open our ears to hear their cries. Climate change is a problem for everyone!

One of PIF's outputs, now rather predictability, was a three-page *Declaration on Climate-change Action*, in which the leaders expressed their grave concern that their nations were already facing adverse effects of climate change.

“Current average global temperature increase of 0.85° Celsius, and any further warming could push many countries beyond their capacity to adapt”. They also called for the inclusion in the Paris outcome of loss and damage as a critical and stand alone element for building resilience against climate change impacts.

## **Regional Church Leaders' meeting, Auckland**



Climate change, while not the sole focus of the recent regional meeting of representatives of the World Council of Churches, became the de-facto concern of those church leaders present, owing to its devastating impacts on the region. The church leaders released a Climate Change Statement, listing agreed priorities for climate justice at COP21:

- Provisions for resettlement/relocation for populations displaced by climate change.
- Establishment of a new convention or mechanism to safeguard the rights of people forced to flee beyond their national borders because of climate change.
- A framework of responsibility to take account of global interdependence, displaced populations, livelihoods for future generations, shared responsibility for the planet, public good, and address transitions to decarbonised economies, and
- Recognition of the grave distress and suffering to people, societies, livelihoods and existential threats to the survival of Pacific Small Island Developing States.

And in solidarity, **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS** across the **region**, always active in their support, are planning many high profile events and campaigns over the next couple of months...

“What do we want...?”  
“**CLIMATE JUSTICE!**”  
“When do we want it?”  
“**NOW**”  
“What do we want...?”  
“**CLIMATE JUSTICE...!**”



**Please help us amplify the Pacific voice,  
and support us in our conviction!**