

Pacific Climate Change & Migration Project NEWSLETTER

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An Agreement for Humanity



History in the making: UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (centre) is flanked by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC (left), Laurent Fabius, President of COP 21 and French Foreign Minister (right) and French President Francois Hollande following the adoption of the Paris Agreement on 12 December, 2015.

The unprecedented call for climate justice echoed from all corners of the world and was brought inside the walls of negotiating rooms at COP21 in Paris last December. These pleas and demands – the result of long, arduous hours spent inside negotiating rooms at the COP21 Le Bourget conference venue – are now reflected in the pages of the Paris Agreement – even if the means to achieve them are yet to come.

Experts have said that the Paris Agreement “provides the opportunity to transform our way of life to one that is fairer and more sustainable.” The agreement establishes the need to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius and closer to 1.5C. It also compels countries to act urgently to increase the capacity of communities to cope with climate change and to uphold human dignity in the face of unmanageable climate impacts.

“I hear no objection in the room, I declare the Paris climate agreement adopted.” It was with these words, on Saturday, 12 December, 2015 that the President of COP21 and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius closed the fierce negotiations that had been underway for two weeks. A long standing ovation and shouts of joy filled the room where 195 countries had gathered to adopt the Paris Agreement, a historic commitment to combat climate change. The Paris Agreement, for the first time, brings all nations to a common cause based on their historic, current and future responsibilities.

The universal agreement’s main aim is to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The 1.5 degree Celsius limit is a significantly safer defence line against the worst impacts of a changing climate. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability to deal with the impacts of climate change.

To reach these ambitious and important goals, appropriate financial flows will be put in place, thus making stronger action by devel-

oping countries and the most vulnerable possible, in line with their own national objectives.

“The Paris Agreement allows each delegation and group of countries to go back home with their heads held high. Our collective effort is worth more than the sum of our individual effort. Our responsibility to history is immense,” said Laurent Fabius said.

The minister, his emotion showing as delegates started to rise to their feet, brought the final gavel down on the agreement to open and sustained acclamation across the plenary hall.

French President Francois Hollande told the assembled delegates: “You’ve done it, reached an ambitious agreement, a binding agreement, a universal agreement. Never will I be able to express more gratitude to a conference. You can be proud to stand before your children and grandchildren.”

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said: “We have entered a new era of global cooperation on one of the most complex issues ever to confront humanity. For the first time, every country in the world has pledged to curb emissions, strengthen resilience and join in common cause to take common climate action. This is a resounding success for multilateralism.”

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said: “One planet, one chance to get it right and we did it in Paris. We have made history together. It is an agreement of conviction. It is an agreement of solidarity with the most vulnerable. It is an agreement of long-term vision, for we have to turn this agreement into an engine of safe growth.”

“Successive generations will, I am sure, mark the 12 December 2015 as a date when cooperation, vision, responsibility, a shared humanity and a care for our world took centre stage,” she said.

Agreement captures essential elements to drive action forward

Agreement captures essential elements to drive action forward. The Paris Agreement and the outcomes of the COP21 conference cover all the crucial areas identified as essential for a landmark conclusion:

- Mitigation – reducing emissions fast enough to achieve the temperature goal
- A transparency system and global stock-take – accounting for climate action
- Adaptation – strengthening ability of countries to deal with climate impacts
- Loss and damage – strengthening ability to recover from climate impacts
- Support – including finance, for nations to build clean, resilient futures

As well as setting a long-term direction, countries will peak their emissions as soon as possible and continue to submit national climate action plans that detail their future objectives to address climate change.

This builds on the momentum of the unprecedented effort which has so far seen 188 countries contribute climate action plans to the new agreement, which will dramatically slow the pace of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The new agreement also establishes the principle that future national plans will be no less ambitious than existing ones, which means these 188 climate action plans provide a firm floor and foundation for higher ambition.

Countries will submit updated climate plans – called nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – every five years, thereby steadily increasing their ambition in the long-term.

Climate action will also be taken forward in the period before 2020. Countries will continue to engage in a process on mitigation opportunities and will put added focus on adaptation opportunities. Additionally, they will work to define a clear roadmap on ratcheting up climate finance to USD 100 billion by 2020.

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, it will be deposited at the UN in New York and be opened for one year for signature on 22 April 2016 - Mother Earth Day.

The agreement will enter into force after 55 countries that account for at least 55% of global emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification.



"Keep your promise!" - Messages of hope and calls for action adorn a mini version of the Eiffel Tower at the COP21 conference venue at Le Bourget, Paris.



French President François Hollande (left) has a quiet word with COP21 President and French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius during the negotiations.

The Road through Paris: COP22, Marrakech 2016

The next meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP22) to the UNFCCC, following the landmark Paris COP21 meeting, will be held in the city of Marrakech, Morocco from 7-18 November, 2016.

Fleshing out top decisions struck in the French capital will be key at this meeting in Morocco. The issue of "loss and damage" will take centre stage, according to Bangladeshi expert Saleemul Huq. A two-year-old mechanism created to explore how developing countries can get climate aid in the event of extreme weather events was formally embedded in the Paris pact. The 20-person committee of the 'Warsaw International Mechanism' will

report back with suggestions for tackling displacement and migration, and broadening insurance programmes for vulnerable populations.



The Paris Agreement Through Pacific Eyes



One Voice: Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Hon. Enele Sopoaga joined other Pacific leaders in raising the Pacific's voice at COP21.

The Pacific's overriding reaction to the Paris Agreement has been quite positive with the outcome turning out to be more than expected for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). Much of this is owed to the outstanding leadership by the Pacific Islands, its consistent messaging and its very strong and compelling voice at the COP21 summit in Paris last December.

Pacific leaders, ministers, officials and partners who went to bat for the survival of their people and islands deserve all the acclamation seen in the media during the climate talks and following the adoption of the Paris Agreement on 12th December, 2015.

Perhaps the most mentioned is the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, even if it's only an ideal. The inclusion of a separate article on Loss and Damage is also seen as a victory even without the necessary details. There is a clear recognition of the special case of SIDS regarding adaptation and the green climate funds, even if it's still only "the next test", as Kiribati President Anote Tong puts it.

A closer look at some of the reactions from key Pacific leaders who played pivotal roles in Paris, one initially senses relief and exhaustion from the long hours and the pressures of an arduous and prickly negotiating process. The Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga who was appointed Pacific SIDS spokesperson in Paris, won global recognition for his doggedness and stamina on behalf of the SIDS. PM Sopoaga spoke of leaders putting their "feet down" and standing together in the "early hours and nights". He also spoke of how tiring it was and of the enormous pressure put on him and other Pacific negotiators by the larger countries.

In an interview with Radio New Zealand in January, he said that he was very pleased with the COP21 outcomes, saying those criticising the deal are misinformed. He also mentioned that the inclusion in the text of a stand-alone provision for loss and damage and the ambition of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees by the end of the century, is very significant.

Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama acknowledged the Paris Agreement as "a huge step forward for humanity in combatting climate change". But he was quick to signal the need to keep the pressure on and "remain clear-headed about the fact that the work was just beginning. "An agreement is only as good as its implementation, and it will be up to us to make sure that all nations live up to this agreement," he said.

An observer who was instrumental in winning global recognition as a power broker for his small island at COP21, said: "We have made history. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival."

The former Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands, Tony de Brum led a Coalition of Highly Ambitious Nations in Paris. However, it was long standing champion and former spokesperson for Pacific SIDS, President Anote Tong who observed: "The climate deal struck by 195 nations in Paris will fail to save low-lying island nations from being overcome by rising sea levels. The deal to limit temperature rises from global warming to 2°C is too little. I and other leaders from island states had called for the rise to be limited to 1.5°C at the most if we are to be given a chance of surviving. Even with 1.5 degrees, we would still have a problem. The next test is to see how committed wealthy countries are to providing the promised \$100bn to assist vulnerable nations suffering loss and damage from climate change," he told media after the Paris talks.

Overall though, the Paris Agreement is seen as a great achievement considering the realities of where the world is at, but it needs to be used urgently as an opportunity to ramp up ambition and aspiration. It challenges Pacific member states to "act jointly" including in their own "efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels" and to live up to expectations.

ESCAP-UNU studies on climate induced migration

The United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) presented the Pacific's first nationally representative household survey on climate change and migration at a side event at the COP21 climate talks in Paris on 2 December, 2015.

The survey, conducted by UNU-EHS and the European Union funded Pacific Climate Change and Migration project, covered 6,852 individuals representing 852 households in Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu.

More than 70 per cent of households in Kiribati and Tuvalu and 35 per cent of households in Nauru reported family members would migrate if climate stressors, such as droughts, sea-level rise or floods worsened. However, only about a quarter of households have the financial means to support migration, leaving many households "trapped" in worsening environmental conditions.

"The results from this unprecedented survey show us empirically what we already know," said Tuvalu's Prime Minister, Hon. Enele Sopoaga. "Pacific islanders are facing the brunt of climate change impacts and are increasingly finding themselves with few options."

Incremental sea level rise, saltwater intrusion and drought are impacting people's decisions to migrate, both internally and internationally, the extensive survey found.

"This issue is not only a Pacific issue; it is a global issue. All countries will be affected by people on the move in relation to climate change, whether they are origin, transit, or destination countries," said Dr. Koko Warner, Senior Expert at UNU-EHS.

The survey found that 10 per cent of people in Nauru and 15 per cent of people in Tuvalu have already migrated internationally between 2005 and 2015. Based on survey findings, researchers also modeled future migration scenarios. Assuming a medium climate change scenario (such as in the IPCC 5 Assessment Report's RCP 6, 2 degrees warming by 2100), by 2055 international migration trips for Kiribati and Tuvalu will increase by 35 per cent and 100 per cent respectively.

"For migration to help people adapt, it must be one of a wide array of choices that improve living conditions, not as a last resort," said Peter Craig-McQuaide, Head of EuropeAid's Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Unit.

"The survey found that remittances and more diversified income from migration could improve resilience to environmental stressors and the capacity to cope with future climate change impacts. However, for migration to be an option that improves people's lives rather than making them more vulnerable, countries need to account for human mobility in their domestic and regional policies to ensure that if people must move they can do so in safety and dignity," Mr. Craig-McQuaide said.



(L-R) Peter Craig-McQuaide (EuropeAid), Dr Koko Warner (UNU) and Sijia Yi (UNU) during the launch of the results of the surveys at a press conference in Paris. The surveys received excellent media traction with visibility in over 150 global, national and regional media outlets.



EU holds public screening of PCCM film in New Zealand

The Delegation of the European Union to New Zealand, in partnership with the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (NZIIA), organised a public event on climate change and its impacts on Pacific Island communities, in November 2015. The event included the screening of the film "The Land Beyond the Horizon", a documentary produced by the EU Pacific Climate Change and Migration (PCCM) project, in partnership with Fiji One TV. The film captures the stories of Pacific islanders whose lands and livelihoods are threatened by climate change.



Michalis Rokas, Charge de Affaires (EU Delegation to New Zealand) addresses the audience at the public screening of "The Land Beyond the Horizon."

CANCC “Pacific Rising” initiative

Leaders of five island nations that make up the Coalition of Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CANCC) announced on Wednesday the unveiling of “Pacific Rising” – an initiative they hope will secure the survival of their nations’ people.

“Pacific Rising” is being compared to the “Marshall Plan” that helped Europe survive the aftermath of World War II.

It is designed to help the people of Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Tokelau, and Tuvalu “stop a refugee crisis and save the lives and culture of their people before the full weight of disaster strikes.”

“Pacific Rising” will work on three fronts “to preserve lives, livelihoods, and culture” by developing technology, including investment in renewable energy, Internet access, and as-yet undefined systems for raising coastal elevation and shoreline protection. It will also assist in fostering enterprise, by building partnerships for sustainable business initiatives at local and national levels to bolster the resilience of island economies in transition. Preserving culture through education, training, health and maintaining cultural heritage amid a possible mass migration of people is encouraging.



UN Special Envoy on Climate Change Mary Robinson, His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco, President of Kiribati Anote Tong, former Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Tony de Brum and Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, Francois Martel at the launch of the “Pacific Rising” initiative in Paris.

COP21 side event on science-based climate information

“Climate change is an issue of survival,” Kiribati President Anote Tong told a United Nations side event co-sponsored by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on 4 December, 2015 in Paris.

“Relocation must be part of our adaptation strategy, adaptation beyond our borders. The government is also trying to educate and train people to make them more competitive and mobile on the international market,” President Tong said. He said the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had provided ample evidence that “something is terribly wrong and yet the world continues to oscillate and we continue to ignore what the science is telling us and what we are witnessing with our own lives,” he said told participants at the side event on science-based climate information.

The event featured presentations from U.N. Special Envoy for Climate Change H.E. John Kofi Agyekum Kufuor, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Hoesung Lee, WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud, UNESCO IOC Executive Secretary Vladimir Ryabinin, UNFCCC Director for Strategy Haldor Thorgeirsson, and Director of the Environment and Climate Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Margarita Astralaga.

“It’s a challenge to the entire planet and not even the most developed country is exempt. We need a very comprehensive global effort. Without science we won’t make a dent so scientific information is crucial,” Mr Kufuor, a former President of Ghana said.

Hoesung Lee, who was recently elected IPCC chair, said

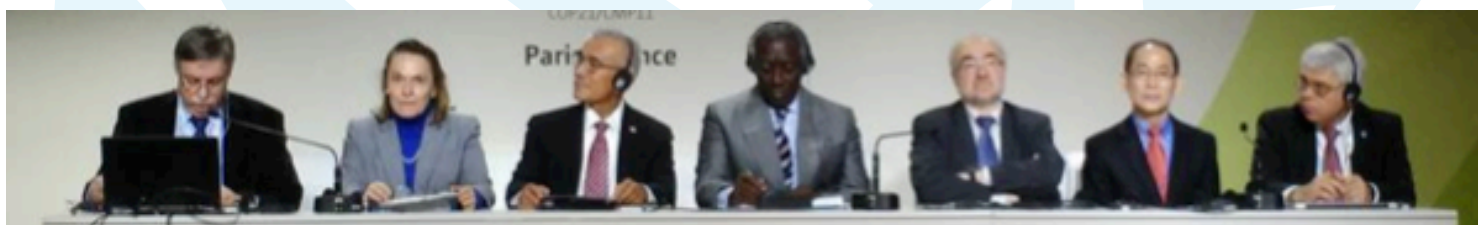
ahead of the Sixth Assessment Report, the IPCC would seek to become more geographically balanced with a greater focus on developing country scientists and regional and local impacts. He said there would also be greater attention, after COP21, to possible solutions for dealing with climate change. The IPCC would improve the way it communicates to translate the complexity of science into language understood by everybody. “This does not mean dumbing down the language. Scientific accuracy and rigour will always be the hallmark of the IPCC,” he said.

“We are at a historic period of life on this planet. We as a human race are modifying life on the planet within the space of a couple of generations,” said WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud. “Thanks to the science of the IPCC, we know what’s going on now but what will the consequences in the future be,” he said.

WMO would continue to inform negotiators at climate change talks of the science, he said. “Negotiators no longer have an excuse for not making decisions.”

Vladimir Ryabinin, of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, said the oceans played a crucial role in the climate and in socio-economic development. More than 90 percent of heat from greenhouse gases is absorbed by the oceans.

Sustained ocean observations and research are a must to inform policy making and adaptation, he said. “The ocean is not only the victim, but also part of the solution and must be part of the conversation,” he said.



Kiribati President, His Excellency Anote Tong (third from left) was part of an inter-governmental panel on climate change at COP21.

UN high level panel spotlights human mobility, climate change and migration

Human mobility, in the context of climate change and migration, was the focus of a high level panel discussion on 10 December, 2015 held in the margins of the Paris COP21 climate summit.

UNESCAP joined the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UN agencies (UNCCD, UNESCO, UNCHR, UNU, UNOCHA, ILO) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in the high level "One UN" side event which featured several distinguished speakers including William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM; Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet; Volker Turk, UN Assistant High Commissioner; Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary, UNCCD; Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary General, UNOCHA, Jan Egeland, Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council and Seb Dance, European Parliament MP.

In opening the panel discussion, William Lacy Swing said that it was extremely pleasing to see that the COP21 text contained references to migrants and that climate mobility was part of two decisions taken during the COP21 summit in Paris.

Nicolas Hulot called for immediate solidarity with people suffering from climate change saying: "Climate change is the ultimate injustice in a world laden with injustice. It affects women, men and children who are not responsible for it."

Pointing out that conflict was not the only driver of displacement, Volker Turk said that weather changes and issues concerning food and water resources were also breeding grounds for social conflict and also contributed to people fleeing from environmental degradation and other hazards.

"Protection and human rights need to be central to the response to climate change. We need to listen to community responses and protection must be central to this," he said.

UNOCHA's Kyung-wha Kang called for legal frameworks and policies to be put in place to ensure the protection of climate migrants. "We [also] need to mitigate the consequences of climate change to [try to] avoid displacement," she stressed.

Jan Egeland encouraged those in Northern countries to "look in the mirror" saying, "we who caused climate change must do something to change it. We need to look at building defence systems for those who don't want to flee their countries. We have to work together to build hope and a future for those exposed to extreme weather conditions."



Nicolas Hulot, Special Envoy of the French President for the Protection of the Planet called for immediate solidarity with people suffering from climate change.



Protesters outside the Le Bourget conference venue at COP21.

ESCAP, SPREP Partner in COP21 Side Event on Building Resilience

UNESCAP partnered with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), to hold a joint side event on “building a resilient Pacific through effective weather, climate and early warning systems.” The event was held on 9 December, 2015 in the margins of the COP21 climate conference at Le Bourget in Paris. Speaking on a panel at the event, UNESCAP Executive Secretary, Dr Shamshad Akthar said: “Pacific SIDS are exposed to many climate-related disaster risks, such as tropical cyclones, storm surges, drought and coastal zone flooding. Despite these risks, coastal areas continue to attract people and are growing more rapidly than those further inland, putting additional people at risk to coastal hazards.

“Since 2005, SIDS in Asia-Pacific have recorded damage of around \$500 million, and seen 830,000 people affected by natural disasters. Fatalities and losses in SIDS are small in absolute numbers, but each disaster typically affects a high proportion of their populations and their economic activity.

“SIDS have recorded damage that surpasses their GDP, as was the case in Samoa in the early 1990s and in Vanuatu in 1985. In Vanuatu, cyclone Pam in 2015 caused damage and losses equivalent to 64% of GDP,” Dr Akthar said.

She highlighted that the rapid and long term impacts of climate change are making this situation far worse. “The discourse on Pacific island sustainable development has rightly shifted from addressing vulnerability to building resilience,” she said.

Discussing ESCAP's work in partnership with the UN University, Dr Akthar said that the EU-supported Pacific Climate

Change and Migration project, implemented by ESCAP, ILO and UNDP, had conducted household surveys on climate induced migration in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru.

“The surveys found that people in Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu are already experiencing climate change impacts. These include more intense storms, sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, and drought. Most households in all three countries have been impacted by climate change over the past 10 years - 94% in Kiribati, 97% in Tuvalu and 74% in Nauru.

“Climate change is already affecting migration patterns in Kiribati and Tuvalu with 23% of migrants in Kiribati and 8% in Tuvalu naming climate stressors as the primary motivation for migration.

“More than 70% of households in Kiribati and Tuvalu felt that migration would be a likely response if droughts, sea level rise or floods worsened; however, only a quarter of households across Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu believe that their households will have the financial means to migrate,” Dr Akthar explained.

On ESCAP's work in disaster risk reduction she said: “Our shared challenge now is to support the implementation of the climate change and disaster risk reduction priorities as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - and to operationalize these frameworks at the local, national and regional levels through partnerships. “It is especially important to ensure that, through these frameworks, we deliver regional cooperative and innovative solutions to enable countries, especially those most affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, to build resilience, ensure more inclusive growth and protect their invaluable environments.”



“Since 2005, SIDS in Asia-Pacific have recorded damage of around \$500 million and seen 830,000 people affected by natural disasters”, the ESCAP Executive Secretary Dr Shamshad Akthar said.

“We the Pacific”: Amplifying the Pacific’s voice at COP21

The Pacific Islands made their voice loud and clear at the “We the Pacific” dialogue forum in Paris, held in the margins of the COP21 climate talks in Le Bourget on 1 December, 2015.

Coordinated by the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), the Pacific Island Climate Action Network (PICAN) and supported by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the event brought together the President of Kiribati, Anote Tong; Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoaga, Secretary General of the PIDF Francois Martel, Minister of National Disaster Management in Fiji, Inia Seruiratu and Talissa Koteka who represented the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

Speaking to a packed room at the AOSIS (Alliance of Small Islands States) Pavilion, the high level panel shared their messages which were also spelled out in the Suva Declaration adopted following the Third Pacific Island Development Forum held in Fiji last September.

“I know there is a debate of whether it should be 1.5 or 2 degrees but for those of us who have a great deal to lose are calling for global warming to be reduced to below 1.5 degrees,” said President Tong said.

“There are some aspects of the climate change negotiations that are simply not negotiable. I need to go back and tell my people that I have a solution to your problems, you will no longer lose your homes.”

This was reinforced by Tuvalu Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga, a former diplomat and his nation’s chief negotiator on climate

change, who said: “The current 2 degrees target is to save the economies of rich nations and is less ambitious. The Pacific cannot accept that.”

Talissa Koteka, representing the Cook Islands Prime Minister said emissions from the Pacific islands are negligible and while the Pacific had not caused climate change problems, they are the victims of its effects.

“I believe that we can and are taking a leadership role in coming up with solutions, however, these solutions will not amount to the total sum of contributing to the good of our world, if the collective will of the world is lacking,” she said.



“My COP of Tree” - Messages calling for global action against climate change are posted on country flags on a mural at the entrance to the COP21 “Blue Zone” at the conference venue in Le Bourget.

President Obama Meets Leaders of Small Island States

President Barack Obama underscored the impact of climate change on the world’s most vulnerable countries in a meeting with the heads of state of small island countries in Paris on 1 December, 2015.

The 40-odd countries in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) negotiating group at last December’s COP 21 climate conference face rising sea levels that threaten to submerge their countries.

The meeting with President Obama, attended by the leaders of Barbados, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and the Marshall Islands, among others, was intended to elevate their role in the Paris negotiations. AOSIS countries were pushing at the Paris conference for more ambitious action to stem greenhouse gas emissions. Current projections suggest that some countries may completely disappear within decades, should action fail to be taken.

“These nations are not the most populous nations, they don’t have big armies,” Obama said. “But they have a right

to dignity and sense of place.”

Obama also said he had a special connection to the island countries given his time in Hawaii and Indonesia as a child: “I’m an island boy,” he said.



“Island Boy”: President Barack Obama met leaders of Small Island Developing States at the start of the COP21 climate talks in Paris.

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