



Survival of small islands hinges on climate negotiations in Paris

Press Release

Paris, 1 December 2015 - Small island leaders and development partners met this morning in Paris at a side event organized by UN-OHRLLS on the margins of COP21. Heads of state and government and development partners stressed the need for an agreement in Paris that adequately reflects the special circumstances of small island developing states.

The Meeting was hosted by Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Heads of State and Government attended from countries including Bahamas, Barbados, The Cook Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Sweden, Tuvalu. Many ministers from other island countries and development partners including the Minister of State for Development of the host country France also attended.

“We must leave no one behind and act collectively to protect and preserve the small islands for future generations” said Gyan Chandra Acharya “SIDS are on the front line of rising sea levels, they are a barometer for the climate change effects to come. The world has a responsibility to listen to island voices and act now before it is too late”

The need for financial as well as technical assistance was emphasized at the event in addition to global partnerships for adaptation and capacity building. Leaders called for an effective and regular mandatory review process, which ensures that commitments made in Paris are on track, they also stressed the need for loss and damage to be a stand alone element of any agreement.

Backed by overwhelming scientific evidence, small island leaders have emerged as the moral voice of the climate challenge, strongly advocating for a climate agreement in Paris which limits temperature increase to 1.5 degrees. In some cases their very survival depends on an ambitious outcome from the COP21 negotiations.

The event saw SIDS articulate ambitious and bold commitments to urgently reduce their green house gas emissions and transformation of the energy sector to renewables in the near future.

“The special circumstances of SIDS must be explicitly recognised in the Paris Agreement, as they have been in the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway” Said Perry G. Christie Prime Minister of the Bahamas. “The Agreement should allow for the flexibility needed to overcome limited human, financial and technical capacities.”

Development partners at the event acknowledged the difficulties that islands have experienced in accessing finances for adaptation and highlighted that they would like to do more to assist in the future.

Many development institutions including World Bank, Global Environment Facility and Carbon War Room also participated.

Small island countries are highly prone to the adverse effects of climate change including extreme weather, drought, floods and sea-level rise. Given their location they are among the most vulnerable nations in the world in relation to the intensity and frequency of natural and environmental disasters and their increasing impact. SIDS face disproportionately high economic, social, environmental consequences and burdensome reconstruction challenges. An extreme weather event may only last for a few hours, but the impact can wipe out years of development gains.

Further Information:

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SIDS in Numbers – Climate Publication - unohrlls.org/sids-in-numbers-climate-change-edition-2015/

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