

Peacebuilding Commission

Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in the Pacific Islands

31 May 2022

Chair's Summary

1. On 31 May, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima, convened an ambassadorial-level meeting on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in the Pacific Islands. The meeting featured screening of a virtual reality experience: Sea of Islands, developed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, with financial contribution of the Government of Japan. In her opening remarks, the Chair recalled that the last ambassadorial-level meeting on the region in 2020 recognized the role of the Pacific Islands Forum and other regional fora in supporting national peacebuilding efforts in the region. Recognizing climate change as the single greatest threat to livelihoods, security and well-being of the Pacific Islands countries, she noted that this meeting offers an opportunity to identify gaps in the existing national and regional efforts and explore opportunities to reinforce partnerships to strengthen the regional response to climate change, and the potential impact on the security architecture in the Pacific. She stressed that the Commission, at the request of the countries in the region, and in synergy with all relevant parts of the United Nations system, remains committed to support national and regional peacebuilding efforts in the region.
2. The Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, H.E. Mr. Satyendra Prasad, Permanent Representative of Fiji, underlined that the Pacific Islands Forum recognizes climate change as the single greatest threat to the wellbeing, security and livelihoods in the region. He described the cross-cutting and force-multiplying nature of the climate threat, which already undermines health, food security, development goals, disaster resilience, COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts, territorial integrity and social cohesion in the region. He expressed concern over the disproportionate effects of climate change for the disadvantaged, persons with disabilities as well as women and girls. Stressing the need for investment and coordination to ensure effective adaptation to the impacts of climate change, he briefed on ongoing efforts in the region, including the creation of inclusive and targeted finance mechanisms, such as the Pacific Resilience Facility, and the development of a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States. He highlighted the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund's project on climate security in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands, which is implemented by UNDP and IOM, in close partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum. He then stressed the need to further develop research and evidence-based knowledge products such as the Regional

Climate Security Assessment Framework. He expressed hope that this meeting provides another stepping-stone to address climate related security challenges in the region.

3. Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, UNDP, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja, noted that UNDP has ramped up its efforts to address the impacts of climate change in the Pacific. She noted that the Peacebuilding Fund project on climate security was designed around the intersection of human security and climate security, with a focus on people's safety and livelihood protection. She expressed concern about ocean warming, acidification, salinization of freshwater resources, the impact on agriculture by extreme weather events and rapidly declining fish stocks as well as the relocation of communities, all of which aggravate and amplify disputes over scarce resources. The strains on community cohesion and political stability cannot be underplayed, she emphasized. She stressed the need for National Adaptation Plans to be more ambitious in response to climate-related security risks, and to be fully funded with both public and private investments. She also underscored the importance to amplify the collective Pacific voice in relevant regional security fora. She called for supporting local knowledge, roles of local leaders and context sensitive approaches and strengthening state capacities, in order to address climate related security challenges.
4. The Climate Envoy for the Marshall Islands, Ms. Tina Stege, emphasized that the impact of climate change could threaten social cohesion, political stability and security in the region. She noted that it is urgent to identify, examine and monitor climate security risks, as well as to develop scalable solutions. Together with the mitigation efforts, she stressed the need to scale up adaptation including by building resilience protecting habitability which is affected by coastal erosion, drought and sea level rise. She informed about a planned consultation process at the local level for the development of National Adaptation Plan of Marshall Islands. She called on donors to streamline and simplify the processes to ensure access to resources and provide longer timeframes to funding cycles. She noted that one of the initial findings of the Peacebuilding Fund's project indicated that tensions could rise when the government is unable to respond in a timely manner to the needs of the communities. She underscored the need for political will to initiate action to address loss and damage, and called for effective multilateralism to preserve the rights of people in the Pacific.
5. Senior Advisor of the Pacific Community (SPC), Ms. Coral Pasisi, emphasized the direct link between climate change and security and highlighted the critical importance of giving voice to those directly impacted by climate change. She noted that it is very hard to reconcile the magnitude of the implications of climate change, including rapidly increasing frequency of extreme weather events, without any incremental and lasting ability to adapt. Describing how a category 5 cyclone wiped out Niue's critical infrastructure and countless homes and caused enormous economic and non-economic losses, she emphasized the critical security

ramifications of climate change on the Pacific region. While calling for rapid global decarbonisation, she stressed the need to stretch out and fortify the coping and resilience capacity of the Pacific region. She called for flexible, predictable and long-term funding, including climate finance, to build incremental capability and adaptive capacity at state level. She stated that climate finance, ODA, peace and security and other investment needs to be streamlined into country systems to reduce the high transaction costs. Stressing the need for effective partnerships, she called on partners to simplify consultations process to identify national and local priorities.

6. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, noted that the linkage between climate change and peacebuilding is both multifaceted and complex, particularly in the Pacific. She introduced DPPA's work in the region, together with national, regional and other UN partners, such as supporting climate sensitive peacebuilding actions through the PBF's regional project of 3.2 million USD. Other examples of DPPA's work include providing support for a new Pacific Island Forum Regional Risk Assessment Framework and helping to connect Small Islands Developing States in the Pacific and beyond with experts and the wider UN system, to build common understanding and responses to climate-security challenges. She noted that, at the virtual PBF donor visit to the Pacific which took place on 18 May, donors committed to further support efforts to address the adverse impacts of climate change on peacebuilding in the region and expressed the hope that the Commission could mobilize political commitment to support these efforts. Acknowledging the Pacific Islands' leadership both at the multilateral and local level, she called for collective action including necessary support to the region.
7. Before giving the floor to other member states, the Chair invited the Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on climate and security, H.E. Ms. Margo Reminisse Deiye, Permanent Representative of Nauru, to speak. Ms. Deiye emphasized that climate-induced disasters present the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the people in the Pacific. She noted that climate change has impacted the sustainable management of ocean resources, climate-related displacement, and growing inequalities. The Pacific, therefore, is confronted with multidimensional risks, raising the need to recognize the interlinkages between climate change, peacebuilding, human security, development, and human rights. She noted that adverse effects of climate change act as a risk multiplier and undermine the resilience of communities and stressed the crucial importance of recognising this multifaceted relationship between climate and peace for developing effective and sustainable responses. Calling for the Commission to assist the Group of Friends to communicate on the effects of climate change to peacebuilding to the Security Council, she stated that the Commission can, and must, play an important part to bring together member states and support the crucial work of the UN systems to build and sustain peace in the face of the climate crisis.

8. The members of the Commission welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They welcomed the Commission’s continuous engagements on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in the Pacific Islands. The vast majority of speakers called on the Commission to continue to address adverse effect of climate change on peacebuilding and to play a greater role in bringing together member states and relevant actors, and mobilizing support for regional and national efforts to address climate and peacebuilding related challenges.
- They echoed the concerns raised by Pacific Islands leaders that climate change presents the greatest threat to the wellbeing, security and livelihoods of the people in the Pacific, who are already affected by increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events and sea-level rise. They raised concern over climate-related displacement and competition over land and resources, which could aggravate tensions between communities and increase the risk of conflict. Stressing the linkage between climate change and peace and security, they recognized climate change as a risk multiplier and called for urgent and collective actions to address challenges posed by climate change to peacebuilding and development in the region.
- They underscored the importance of financing and unlocking climate finance, particularly from multilateral climate funds. They stressed the need to strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector, in support of the efforts in the region. Several countries underscored the challenges faced by the small island developing countries for accessing multilateral funding due to limited capacities and high transaction costs and called for simplification of the process to ensure access to the financing by the climate vulnerable countries.
- They underscored the importance of regional responses to address the adverse effects of climate change on peacebuilding, and reiterated an important role played by the Pacific Islands Forum and other regional fora in this regard.
- They stressed the need for inclusive approaches to peacebuilding and underscored the need to support and engage with local actors. They recognized that women are disproportionately affected by climate change and stressed the need to support and engage with women. They also underscored the important role of youth in addressing adverse effects of climate change. They called for support for local knowledge and tailored solutions developed by local communities as well as the strengthening of institutions and their capacities.
- They expressed their appreciation for the work of DPPA and its partners, including UNDP, in support of addressing the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in the region, including through the PBF projects.