

High Level Conference on Climate Change in the Pacific

Vanuatu, 4 March 2011

FINAL OUTCOME DOCUMENT

The Conference and its objectives

1. Leaders, ministers and senior officials from ministries of finance and ministries of environment of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)¹ participated in a High Level Conference organised by the European Union in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 4 March 2011. The Conference, supported by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and hosted by the Government of Vanuatu, was also attended by heads of regional organisations, development partners and EU representatives led by EU Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs.
2. Pacific Islands are not directly responsible for climate change but are among the countries and regions most affected by its impacts, as it is an existential threat in some cases and challenges progress towards achieving all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in all countries and territories. On that basis, the Conference recognised that they rightly deserve access to new and additional resources, to combat climate change and address its impacts, and that these resources should be provided in the most efficient way possible.
3. Addressing and financing climate change adaptation and mitigation is a policy coherence issue that goes beyond development assistance, as climate funds are not exclusively Official Development Assistance.
4. The Conference invited the Pacific, the EU and international partners to advance towards a more comprehensive, inclusive, coherent and result oriented strategy to address climate change challenges in the Pacific Region.
5. The Conference provided guidance for the implementation of the Joint Pacific-EU Initiative on Climate Change (Joint Initiative), launched by the Forum Secretariat and the European Commission (Strasbourg, December 2010), through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and agreement to develop a Plan for Action.
6. A draft Plan for Action was made available to all participants for broad consultation.

Pacific-EU partnership on climate change

7. The Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA), launched in 2007 by the European Commission, aims at strengthening dialogue and cooperation on climate change between the European Union and developing countries most vulnerable to climate change, in particular the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
8. The GCCA has effectively provided a platform both for political dialogue and exchange and for financial and technical cooperation between the EU and the Pacific Region.

¹ PICTs: The EU supports 15 Pacific ACP countries (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Niue, Samoa, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, FSM, RMI, and Timor Leste) and 4 Overseas Countries and Territories (New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, and Pitcairn).

9. The Pacific-EU shared agenda on climate change, outlined in the 2008 PIF-EU Declaration, establishes agreement on increased political dialogue, identifies key areas for action and expresses mutual commitments by the partners. The Joint Initiative builds on the 2008 Declaration, on subsequent guidance by Forum Leaders, and on other regional ministerial decision making processes, as well as on experience gained in policy dialogue and cooperation at country, regional and global levels.
10. The Joint Initiative will facilitate the allocation of a fair proportion of international climate change funding, including ‘fast start’ and long term funding, to PICTs, through more effective and coordinated delivery methods, helping to reinforce the absorption capacity of the Region. The Joint Initiative will also foster mutual understanding and facilitate coordination in the international debate.
11. Under the Joint Initiative, the European Union will continue to address climate change issues in the Pacific through the GCCA and other relevant channels backed by EU Member States.
12. The Conference pointed to the opportunities to share experiences in addressing climate change challenges and to build synergies between the Pacific ACP countries and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and encouraged the EU to support all efforts made in the Region to create a ‘whole Pacific’ approach to Climate Change.
13. The Conference welcomed new climate-change-related programmes in the Pacific presented by the EU, which include a new €2.5 million allocation under the GCCA for Samoa, a €4.3 million humanitarian aid allocation to support disaster preparedness, a €20 million EDF contribution to support a Regional Programme on Disaster Risk Reduction and a €12 million EDF allocation to be programmed by Pacific OCTs aiming at enhancing integrated management of coastal, terrestrial and marine environments. In addition, the Conference noted that the 10th EDF Mid-Term Review top-up for Pacific ACP countries (€16.16 million in all) could be used to address climate change.

Implementing the Joint Initiative: Key priorities for joint work on climate change

a) Building stronger political dialogue on climate change

14. The Conference underlined the importance of dialogue to build common approaches to climate change issues of shared concern and to facilitate mutual understanding and joint responses to climate change challenges.
15. The Conference recognised the efforts made by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to arrive at a joint position for small island states in the UNFCCC negotiations.
16. The Conference encouraged further coordination to bring out the specific dimension of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as they are particularly vulnerable to climate change and have the most limited capacity to compete for resources. This will help SIDS to influence changes in the way global funding architecture accommodates their particular constraints in future. The Green Climate Fund Transitional Committee (TC) provides an important opportunity in this respect for SIDS representative (Ambassador Elisaia) to feed into this process.

17. The Conference took note of the conclusions of the senior level policy dialogue on ‘aid effectiveness and climate change financing’ and ‘operational links between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation’, attached in annex.

b) Making cooperation on climate change more effective

18. The Conference highlighted the importance of country-led mainstreaming of climate change adaptation across all sectors with a ‘whole government’ and ‘whole country’ approach in order to achieve sustainable results on the ground in Pacific communities.
19. The Conference welcomed the senior level training on mainstreaming of climate change in countries’ development strategies and encouraged the PICTs, the EU and development partners to support mainstreaming efforts at country level.
20. Improving resource delivery modalities and coordination, promoting climate-change-responsive policy-based funding (sector-wide approaches, budget support whenever possible and others), using country systems, supporting regional mechanisms where they can add value, developing public-private partnerships and involving a wide range of stakeholders as well as the private sector are key in this respect.
21. The Conference also emphasised the importance of strengthening institutions and capacity to adapt to climate change and to move towards low-emission development. The Conference encouraged partners to continue supporting PICTs’ own efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to further assist them in developing and implementing low-emission and low-carbon development strategies.
22. The Conference underlined the importance of building strong, resilient economies as an essential means of mobilising additional resources for adaptation measures. It recognised the green growth potential of investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and the potential of this kind of project to alleviate the financial burden caused by relying on imported fossil fuels.
23. The Conference also highlighted the value of sharing experiences between PICTs and encouraged all partners to examine the best way to promote this throughout the Region.
24. The Conference recalled the importance of coordinated action to comprehensively address the wide range of climate change challenges in the Region, taking into account the diversity within the Region, and in particular noting the special needs of Smaller Islands States, and invited partners to facilitate synergies and complementarities when supporting PICTs at both national and regional levels.
25. The Conference invited partners to maximise synergies and interaction between biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, so as to make societies more resilient to natural disasters in the Pacific. The Conference agreed to work towards merging the two relevant regional frameworks for action, namely the Pacific Islands Framework for Action in Climate Change and the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action and to encourage complementary processes at the national level.

26. PICTs often lack resources and capacity to develop successful strategies and proposals to benefit from existing global climate funds and support mechanisms, which are not always adapted to the Pacific context. Improved access to international funding needs to be supported through cooperation, capacity building and technical support programmes.
27. The Conference acknowledged the need to explore the possibility to define tailor-made financing modalities and responses to climate change that take into account the different levels of threats that PICTS are facing, different levels of capacity, different circumstances and other particularities.
28. The Conference calls on Pacific, EU and development partners to effectively promote, support, develop and use ecosystem-based approaches to address climate change, as these have great potential for adaptation and mitigation and allow cost-effective measures based on existing local resources. Pacific small community projects are often very effective and inexpensive but often do not have access to resources.
29. The Conference acknowledged the importance of donors providing climate change financing that is more aligned with the structural and long-term nature of climate change. Such support should in particular have the following characteristics: be long-term, adequate, predictable, flexible, focused on country priorities (need-driven, not fund-driven), and use country systems. In that respect, the Conference welcomed the use of modalities such as budget support and discussed alternative approaches such as the Tuvalu Trust Fund. The Conference stressed the need for harmonisation of the requirements set by various donors for access to budget support.
30. The Conference concluded on the necessity to build a Pacific-wide strategy to address Climate Change at national, regional and international level and to analyse the needs and costs attached to these different terms.
31. The Conference welcomed the continued efforts of PICTs to reinforce coordination structures around climate change, to strengthen Public Finance Management and monitoring systems and to provide clear guidance to development partners on national priorities: ownership and leadership are key to promoting country-led implementation. The Conference noted that such efforts were important to ensure transparency and accountability on the use of climate change financing, in particular with modalities such as budget support. It further insisted on the importance of making these important topics part of the policy dialogue.
32. The Conference underlined the need to better assess the impacts of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Monitoring and measuring the performance of financing mechanisms on climate change should not only focus on how effectively resources can be accessed but also on how effectively the resources are delivering results. In that regard, the Conference particularly welcomed the efforts Regional organisations are starting to make to strengthen monitoring systems on climate change.
33. The Conference also agreed on the importance of improving the availability and sharing of relevant scientific data among national, regional and international organisations to better inform decision-making. It recognised the added value of

Regional Organisations in this regard and the need to enhance their capacity to help PICTs address their common challenges.

c) Mobilising international efforts on climate change around the Pacific

34. The Conference underlined the importance of developing a communication strategy to raise awareness on Pacific climate change issues at global level and mobilise international support and welcomed efforts by Pacific Regional Organisations in developing this work further.
35. The European Commission is committed to making its support to Pacific Climate Change efforts effective and in line with that of other donor countries. It will support Pacific island countries in their efforts at international level to secure and access acceptable and sustainable global funding for climate change impacts and for adaptation.
36. Swift supply of 'fast start' financial assistance to developing countries is essential to addressing the urgent need in recipient countries' capacity development to address climate change. In this context, the Commission is engaging actively with EU Member States to identify suitable options for them to contribute to the Joint Initiative.

d) Follow up and monitoring

37. The Conference agreed that the Plan for Action should be a living document, to be finalised through a consultative process. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat agreed to collect comments from its members and from CROP (Council of Regional Organisation of the Pacific) agencies with a view to finalising the Plan for Action and to presenting it for endorsement at the EU-PIF ministerial meeting later in the year. The CROP Executives Sub-Committee on Climate Change and the EU will regularly inform their respective members of progress made and constraints faced in its implementation.
38. The Plan for Action will be reviewed substantively in 2014 to integrate the EU financial perspectives 2014-2020 and the programming cycle for the cooperation between the EU and Pacific Countries and Territories starting that year.

Way forward — towards a renewed commitment to high impact development cooperation in the Pacific

39. The Conference invited Pacific and EU partners to strengthen their commitment to high-impact development cooperation aimed at addressing climate change challenges, reducing poverty, and achieving all MDGs. This requires resources, political will, country leadership and ongoing, sufficient support from development partners.