



**Pacific SIDS Regional Preparatory Meeting  
16-18 August 2023  
Nuku'alofa, Tonga**

**Roundtable 3: Harnessing the Potential of the Pacific's Natural capital and pursuing nexus approaches**

**17 August 2023, 9:00am – 10:45am**

**Background Note**

**Introduction**

Climate Change has been recognised as the defining risk in the Pacific SIDS. Oceans are becoming more acidic, warmer, deoxygenated and global fish stocks are depleted due to climate change, overfishing and pollution. Biodiversity is being lost at unprecedented rate, accentuating inequality and jeopardizing progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. The need to address and reverse these trends are becoming ever more urgent. The Pacific SIDS have differing capacities to plan and respond to the challenges that they face. Several factors contribute to making the SIDS vulnerable to external and environmental shocks, such as natural disasters, climate change, sea level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, and loss of biodiversity. The Pacific SIDS are generally acknowledged to be some of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impact of climate change and related disasters. Several Pacific SIDS among the most at-risk countries.

Outside of Australia and New Zealand, oil in the Pacific makes up about 80 per cent of the total energy supply, of which 52 per cent is used for transport, 37 per cent for electricity generation and 12 per cent for other applications such as process heating. Renewable energy accounts for only 17 per cent of the total energy supply. So, Pacific region has increasingly shown a new set of ideas on creating opportunities to enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation and protecting oceans and environment, such as the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus approach, and sustainable energy transition, disaster risk reduction (e.g., Fossil fuel free Pacific, Early-warning systems, and Global Biodiversity Framework).

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This session will discuss the opportunities to address the interconnected climate-disaster issues in an effort to save the nature. The session will aim to deliver in the Pacific on supporting climate policies and their varying approaches, as well as the way forward.

### **Challenges and perspectives**

The world is already experiencing the severe impacts of climate change. It is becoming ever more evident that even a target of 1.5C (let alone 2C) may not be enough to keep away even worse climatic changes with detrimental impacts on human life and livelihoods. The PSIDS need to continue to insist on working towards a temperature rise of well under 1.5C, quickly moving away from fossil fuels and adopting renewable energy sources.

Pacific SIDS have been on the forefront of climate change negotiations and the global struggle to limit temperature rise. The devastating impact of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change are causing damage to economy as well the livelihoods of the people. The ESCAP Risk and Resilience portal estimates that across the Asia-Pacific region, the Pacific SIDS stand out with some of the highest disaster losses as percentage of their GDP. The estimated cost of adaptation is also the highest for the SIDS. As a share of GDP, the adaptation cost is recorded at 9.1 per cent in Vanuatu and 7.4 per cent in Tonga.

Although greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction should not be the key driver for sustainable energy development in the Pacific SIDS, increasingly disruptive climate change and natural disasters will have to be addressed by energy plans and investments. The energy framework should emphasise resilience to climate change, with flexibility to account for a range of uncertainties. The transition to renewable energy would also make these economies less dependent on expensive imported fossil fuels, stabilise prices of energy and energy dependent products, as well as contribute to the NDCs.

Energy access is best achieved through utilisation of solar energy, and for many of those who remain without electricity across the Pacific, the best access solution will be the installation of stand-alone solar home systems. In moving forward, a number of measures need to be in



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place including appropriate regulations, private sector involvement, incentives, community efforts, etc. to facilitate transition to renewable energy.

### **Recommendations for Action**

At the current rate, global efforts are highly unlikely to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of restricting global temperature rise to 1.5°C, or even 2°C, with powerful interests undermining efforts to reduce climate impacts. Yet, there are multiple ways to address these challenges and create opportunities, including:

- improve preparedness to reduce losses, as well as build the structures for better coordination in response efforts.
- make new infrastructure and water resource management more resilient, so as to minimise and prevent systemic and cascading risk.
- improve dryland crop production and using nature-based solutions such as increasing mangroves protection are also priority adaptation solutions.
- conduct rapid post-disaster needs assessments that could support formulation of a long-term recovery strategy and plan for its reconstruction by applying a standardised approach with innovative methodology and framework.
- Enhance strong regional action and shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, guided by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- Scale up regional action to address the biodiversity loss with the support of environmental NGOs.

### **Proposed Guiding Questions for the Discussions**

- How can we effectively address these new and emerging climate-oceans-disaster challenges in the Pacific region?



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- What are the key factors that will help increase policy action in safeguarding and protecting climate-oceans-disaster nexus at the national level?
- How can we undertake approaches to prepare policies for climate-oceans-disaster policies to support national efforts within the Pacific regional context?