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Ban and Pacific leaders urge ‘ambitious’ reduction of greenhouse gas emissions



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks in New Zealand

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon and the leaders of Pacific island nations today called for urgent international action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stressing that climate change remains one of the greatest threats to the security, well-being and livelihoods of the peoples of the region.

They “emphasized the need for an ambitious reduction of greenhouse gas emissions sufficient to enable the survival and viability of all Pacific small island developing States (SIDS),” said a [joint statement](#) issued by the Secretary-General and the leaders attending the Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland, New Zealand.

During their meeting, Mr. Ban – the first UN chief to attend the annual gathering – and the leaders discussed key challenges facing the region, including climate change, poverty and unemployment, and stressed the role of the UN in assisting Pacific island countries to address them.

Mr. Ban got a first-hand look at the impact of rising sea levels on a visit to the low-lying island nation of Kiribati prior to arriving in Auckland. He described Kiribati as being at the “front of the frontlines” on climate change, stating that “the high tide shows that it is high time to act.”

He noted that even the simple act of travelling to the region from New York has given him a better understanding of the challenges faced by its inhabitants.

“The trip required flights of many hours, across thousands of miles. The vast distances between you and your neighbours dwarf those of any other region, creating obstacles in getting your goods to market and enjoying other economies of scale,” he said during a special interactive dialogue with Pacific leaders.

During his visit to the region, which also includes stops in Australia and the Solomon Islands, the Secretary-General has been highlighting the need for urgent international action to reduce emissions of the harmful greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

In addition, he has been underlining the need to make climate change adaptation funding available to finance the implementation of critical programmes to tackle the impact of climate change on communities there.

Mr. Ban and the Pacific island leaders also stressed the importance of ensuring sustainable development, management and conservation of the region’s resources, including oceans, coastal and fisheries resources, and of enabling Pacific SIDS to “enjoy a greater share of the benefits derived from those resources.”

He told leaders that his “top priority” going forward will be sustainable development. “Our challenge is to connect the dots among all the relevant challenges – climate change, energy security, food security, water security, infectious and non-communicable diseases, gender empowerment, and more...

“All these issues are connected. We must look at them in a comprehensive, integrated way.”

Mr. Ban also met separately with individual leaders on the margins of the forum, including [President Marcus Stephen of Nauru](#) and the [New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully](#), with whom he discussed issues such as the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) and various regional topics.

Later in the day, the Secretary-General travelled back to Australia for the last part of his visit to the Pacific. He attended a reception in Sydney hosted by the Governor of New South Wales, during which he praised Australia for its role over many decades in women’s empowerment, and urged the country to continue to reach out to partner States in the Pacific to stamp out violence against women.

“Government officials are critical to ending gender-based violence,” [said](#) Mr. Ban. “But if a man is beating his wife, the best person to address the problem may be his local minister. If a girl thinks she is inferior to a boy, the best person to help may be her teacher. On this problem like on so many others, we need to come together as one society, one world.”

He also lauded Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children as “one of the most forward-looking in the world.”

On Thursday the Secretary-General will be speaking at the University of Sydney and then heading to the capital, Canberra, to meet Governor-General Quentin Bryce as well as join young schoolchildren to plant trees in the National Arboretum.

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