

## Pacific Ocean islands use General Assembly to appeal for assistance on climate change



Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, addresses General Assembly

25 September 2010 – Three Pacific Ocean countries today appealed to United Nations Member States to act fast to combat climate change and start mobilizing the resources needed to mitigate the effects of global warming, especially in small island developing States that are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels.

“Those most vulnerable and those willing to confront the challenges facing us must take leadership in this process by putting forward our own agreement spelling real and ambitious commitments and actions to address climate change – we urge others to follow,” **said** President Iroj Jurelang Zedkaia of the Marshall Islands during the third day of the General Assembly’s high-level debate.

He called for “shovel-ready” climate change adaptation measures that will help small island developing States conserve water and other resources and protect their infrastructure.

“It should be a matter of serious concern to the Secretary-General that we are actively contemplating risks to our territorial integrity and UN membership, that we are considering options to safeguard our population’s political rights if our land – and our thin water table – becomes unusable in the face of rising seas,” Mr. Zedkaia said.

He also said that overfishing in the Pacific had strangled the Marshall Islands’ development and urged regional fisheries management organizations and UN agencies to identify strategies to assist the islands to realize greater share of benefits from the resource, especially Pacific tuna fishing.

Echoing the same message, the Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia, Alik L. Alik, **said** delays in adopting a comprehensive and legally-binding agreement to avert global climate disaster was inexcusable.

“In Micronesia, we are deeply disappointed in the glacial progress at the negotiating sessions and climate change meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**), said Mr. Alik.

“At the same time, we are growing increasingly alarmed by the prospect of lowering ambitions for the meeting in Cancun, Mexico, later this year,” he added.

He said the incidence of illegal unreported and unregulated fishing in the Pacific remains of great concern.

“We do maintain high expectations that through the support of the international community we can combat this illegal activity that threatens the sustainability of our fish stocks and deprives our people of the potential economic benefits,” Mr. Alik said.

Kiribati's President Anote Tong **told** the high-level debate that coastal erosion in heavily populated areas in his country is occurring at a rate that exceeded the Government's capacity to respond, adding that lack of resources is exacerbating the problem.

"Long before our islands are inundated by the rising seas, they will become uninhabitable as freshwater aquifers are contaminated by saltwater intrusion from rising tides," Mr. Tong said.

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