



## Tonga, Cook Islands and Vanuatu turn to renewable energy

By Online Editor

7:19 pm GMT+12, 22/07/2011, Samoa



*By Makereta Komai in Apia, Samoa for PACNEWS*

Tonga and Cook Islands are two Pacific Island countries successfully turning to renewable energy for their fuel supplies.

And Tonga is optimistic that it will realise its 50 percent electricity generation from renewal energy by next year.

Its director of environment, Asipeli Palaki told the Open Forum on Green Growth underway in Apia that his government was on target with commitments in its Energy Roadmap.

“Tonga depends almost 100 percent on imported fuel for its energy needs. The Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM) 2010-2020 was put in place after a severe rise in the cost of petroleum in 2008, said Palaki.

The Energy Roadmap is a mitigation strategy to reduce the island Kingdom's vulnerability to oil price shocks.

To date, Tonga's Energy Roadmap has attracted funding from numerous donors like the World Bank, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Australia and New Zealand.

The energy plan is dedicated to providing sustainable electrification projects for most of Tonga's rural communities, said Palaki.

In Cook Islands, the government, led by its Prime Minister, Henry Puna has committed itself to 50 percent renewable energy by 2015.

"It's an ambitious target but with the leadership of the Prime Minister, Cook Islands will easily achieve that target by 2015, said a senior government official who spoke on behalf of the Prime Minister.

In the past, previous governments have not matched words with action but the current PM has taken on renewable energy under his portfolio to show political leadership at the highest level.

"We now have a roadmap for renewable energy which includes restructuring of institutional arrangement, adjustments to our legislative and regulatory laws and community education.

"We use the principle of one team, many players in integrating renewable energy unto society and the economy, said the Cook Islands official.

In Vanuatu, the country is experimenting on a small scale with wind power, solar energy and biogas and bio-fuel, said environment official, Trinison Tarivonda.

"Solar energy has been going on several years now and this is serving the electricity needs of about 10 percent of the population. Wind energy is being trialled in six islands and hopefully this will get off the ground too.

"In the island of Santo, we are using coconut to provide electricity to about 200 households. Some of the constraints in renewal energy projects, Tarivonda said are the high maintenance costs, lack of funds to start projects and lack of expertise.

These are some issues the open forum on Green Growth hopes to capture and reflect in its outcomes document that will be part of the Pacific's position to Rio+20 next year.

***PACNEWS coverage of the Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting is kindly made possible with funding from the UN ESCAP Pacific Office in Fiji.***