



## **Rich nations commit to help Pacific fight climate change**

By Online Editor

4:36 pm GMT+12, 11/09/2012, Cook Islands

The Pacific Islands have obtained commitments from developed countries to help them protect their marine environment, and stave off threats from climate change and rising sea levels.

At the Pacific Islands Forum last month United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced an investment of US\$25 million over five years to make coastal communities more resilient to extreme weather in the short-term and to rising sea levels over the longer-term.

And Australia announced an investment of AU\$58 million (just over US\$60 million), specifically to improve weather and sea-level data, both of which are essential for adaptation planning, in the forum countries.

“[Climate change] is real. It is one [issue] that the leaders of these nations speak about with great passion because all [the nations] are very low-lying lands and [they] are worried they're going to be swamped,” Clinton told reporters in Rarotonga.

“We understand very well the feelings the Pacific Island nations have about climate change and we stand behind our pledges in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to take prompt, substantial action to help vulnerable countries adapt.”

The US funds will go towards building more resilient infrastructure, drafting energy policies and setting up mechanisms by which small island states can access climate change funding.

The Polynesian Leaders Group — the Polynesian contingent of the Pacific Islands Forum — issued a statement after their meeting, calling it “morally unconscionable” that wealthy nations continue to derive energy from unclean sources, as island nations are disproportionately burdened by the effects of their consumption.

“As you know, in part because of the economy, US emissions are lower than they've been in 20 years but, look, we know we have more to do,” Clinton said.

Clinton reiterated that the US will stick to its commitment to curb greenhouse gas emissions by 17 per cent before 2020. The US carbon emissions comprise the lion's share of the global total.

The forum brought together 16 small island states in the South Pacific. Another 41 countries also sent delegates, including China, Russia and the US.

Pacific Island leaders also agreed to encourage gender equality in access to education and health, as well as to target support to women entrepreneurs. They requested that developed countries and donors increase financial and technical assistance for women's empowerment programmes.

**SOURCE: SCIDEV NET/PACNEWS**