



Responding to climate change in partnership with our Pacific Island neighbours

Patrons: Mrs Bonita Mabo and Most Rev Bishop Peter Ingham

In this issue of the PCP newsletter we reflect on the UN Climate Conference, COP 23, in Germany. We ask what outcomes it produced and discuss where to now for countries being affected by climate change.

The United Nations Conference on Climate Change, COP 23, Bonn, 6 - 17 Nov 2017

COP23 ended with 19 nations signing an agreement to stop using coal to generate power by 2030 but major coal producing nations, including Australia, the United States, India and Germany, did not join the new Global Alliance to Power Past Coal.

Developed nations failed to promise to deliver on their Paris carbon emission reduction targets – vital if the world is to stop a catastrophic rise in temperatures above 2 degrees Celsius.

“At COP23, political agreements did not sufficiently address the harsh climate reality that millions of poor and vulnerable people already face” said Wolfgang Jamann, CEO of CARE International. “CARE welcomes the negotiation progress in areas such as gender and agriculture as well as the attention to climate impacts. However, as global emissions continue to increase, we need countries to significantly step up their efforts in 2018 to shift away from this dangerous trajectory and to keep the within the 1.5°C limit.”

PCP delegate Jill Finnane’s reports that all countries “need to do more, much more, and in line with Article 14 of the Paris Agreement ‘in the light of equity’ the allocation of how much each nation needs to contribute to reducing carbon must be fair. It is sad that rich countries like Australia do not yet understand what a fair share means. We in Australia, need to educate our government and hold it to account so that it increases Australia’s commitments on the basis of our fair share.”

COP 23 – where next?

In December 2015 at the 21st UN Climate Summit, COP 21, leaders from 196 nations signed the Paris Agreement, committing their nations to reducing carbon emissions to help slow the rate of rising temperatures and slow climate change. Australia joined the agreement, pledging to limit our carbon emissions to contain temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the year 2100.

Yet, even if the Paris Agreement is implemented and the 196 nations meet the commitments they made in Paris, the world will still warm by at least 3 degrees Celsius, with devastating consequences. And, as has been demonstrated at COP 23, the political will to reduce carbon emissions, especially in Australia, has withered. Nineteen nations, including the United Kingdom and Canada, have agreed to stop using coal to generate power by 2030.

Australia, along with major coal-producing nations India and the United States, did not join the new Global Alliance to Power Past Coal. Australia and other coal producing nations need to do more and, in line with Article 14 of the Paris Agreement 'in the light of equity' the allocation of how much each nation contributes to reducing emissions must be fair.

Before COP 21, governments put forward voluntary pledges called INDC's or *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* to set each nation's carbon emission budgets or targets. The 2015 report *Fair Shares: A Civil Society Equity Review of the INDCs*, says the world is 0.85°C warmer than pre-industrial levels. Exceeding 1.5°C will entail unacceptable impacts for billions of people - we have introduced PCP supporters to just a few of those millions, people from Kiribati and Tuvalu, many times.

The Civil Society Review Group's analysis found that the pledged commitments of the U.S and E.U under the Paris Agreement amount to only one fifth of their respective fair shares. Its analysis showed further that to achieve their 'fair share' both the U.S. and the E.U. must 'substantially increase their domestic action to reduce emissions, and provide finance, technology and capacity to support more emissions reductions in developing countries.' It also found that all major developed countries (and that includes Australia) have not pledged their 'fair share.'

Interestingly, China's pledge under the Paris Agreement is greater than its 'fair share'. Nevertheless it must still considerably increase its commitments to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions if there is to be any chance of achieving a pathway to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The Paris Agreement provides for countries to increase their commitments. The term used is 'ratcheting mechanisms' or 'increasing ambition.' **2018 will be the first time countries will be put on the spot to ratchet up their commitments. To build trust and cooperation in that process the richer countries need to also take into account Loss and Damage.**

No developed nation can claim to be on track. We, in Australia, need to hold our government to account so that it increases Australia's commitments on the basis of our fair share.

The full report is available at: <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report>

The Pacific Calling Partnership is a signatory.



PCP delegates from Kiribati and Tuvalu: Vasiti Tebamare, Kuata Taumaheke and Erietera Aram riding carbon neutral bikes in Bonn

Powering Past Coal Alliance Declaration

Nineteen countries and six states signed the initial declaration that argues for a coal phase down by 2030, and complete elimination by 2050. They hope to grow this alliance to over 50 signatories in the coming year. Here is a link to the declaration: <https://>

www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/canada-international-action/coal-phase-out/alliance-declaration.html

In 2015, the world gathered in Paris and committed to taking action to spur clean growth and avoid catastrophic climate change. Today, coal-fired power plants produce almost 40 percent of global electricity, making carbon pollution from coal a leading contributor to climate change.

To meet the Paris Agreement, the analysis shows that coal phase-out is needed by no later than 2030, in countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union, and by no later than 2050, in the rest of the world.

The cost of generating electricity from wind and solar power has plummeted: clean power is the low-cost option in a growing number of jurisdictions worldwide. Global investments in new renewable power now significantly surpass investments in new coal-fired electricity, and clean growth represents an opportunity worth trillions of dollars.

Countries moving toward low-carbon, climate-resilient economies are already seeing environmental, economic, and human-health benefits. Our coalition wants to help accelerate that transition.

Powering Past Coal brings together a diverse range of governments, businesses, and organisations, which are 'united in taking action to accelerate clean growth and climate protection through the rapid phase-out of traditional coal power.'. We commit to achieving that phase-out in a sustainable and economically inclusive way, while providing appropriate support for workers and communities.

The founding partners of the *Powering Past Coal* alliance we will work to grow the alliance to 50 partners by the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties to continue the momentum towards a safer climate, healthier people, and a cleaner economy.

Foundation signatories: Alberta, Angola, Austria, Belgium, British Columbia, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niue, Ontario, Portugal, Québec, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vancouver and Washington

PCP delegates from Kiribati and Tuvalu: Vasiti Tebamare, Kuata Taumaheke and Erietera Aram riding carbon neutral bikes in Bonn



Tuvalu Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga with Phil Glendenning at COP23



Phil Glendenning with Anote Tong, former President of Kiribati, at COP23
Pelenise Alofa, National Coordinator KiriCAN, at COP23

Despite long odds, woman is taking her 'David versus Goliath' battle worldwide

The PCP delegation in Bonn caught up with our good friend Pelenise Alofa, National coordinator for KiriCAN. Here we share an article from the *New York Times* November 8, 2017 which highlights her story.

"With the 2017 UN Climate Change Conference under way, Pelenise Alofa is gearing up for the latest opportunity to save her homeland, Kiribati. Kiribati, an island nation in the South Pacific, is one of eight low-lying island nations faced with an existential threat from global warming, due to the rising tides of climate change. Alofa, a longtime grassroots organizer and National Coordinator for Kiribati's Climate Action Network (KiriCAN) has long participated in the slow-moving politics of the U.N. climate negotiations, but she says, this time, the Pacific islanders are not taking no for an answer. This year's conference, known as COP23, is taking place in Bonn, Germany, and being presided over by the Pacific Island nation of Fiji. Alofa and her colleagues are referring to the COP23 as the "Pacific COP," adding that all the low-lying Pacific island nations like Kiribati are ready to lead the world on climate action and fight for their countries' survival. "It feels like David versus Goliath — the Pacific is so young and vulnerable, and of course, when it's finally our turn to host the COP, the biggest nation in the world has turned its back on us," Alofa says via Skype from her home in Kiribati, referring to President Donald Trump's June announcement of the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords "But we are eager to show that we are serious and that, the Pacific people, the people most affected by and vulnerable to climate change, can contribute and should lead the world in this fight."

Challenges in Kiribati

Kiribati, a country of 33 coral atolls strung across the equator, floats in the tight embrace of the Pacific Ocean on all sides. Most of the land is less than three meters above sea level, making its land and people extremely vulnerable to rising sea-levels. Parts of many of its atolls have already been submerged by seawater, and it is predicted by a UN report that Kiribati will be among the first nations to be rendered completely uninhabitable from climate change, as early as 2050.

In recent years, Alofa says, the climate-related catastrophes have accelerated in pace and severity. Kiribati regularly suffers from extreme weather events, from King Tides that penetrate the capitol's fresh water supply and flood its cities and markets, to torrential rains, like those stirred up by Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 hurricane that battered the South Pacific in 2015. Strong winds, devastating flooding, and monster hurricanes have become a terrifying part of daily life for the I-Kiribati people.

"Even a ripple from a big cyclone is something that we can't stand," Alofa explains. "In 2017, we've seen more of this danger, and we are braced for the storms and tides that lie ahead."

As the national coordinator of KiriCAN, an Kiribati-based environmental justice organization, Alofa confronts these challenges head-on through grassroots organizing across Kiribati's islands. For years, KiriCAN has mobilized a coalition

of I-Kiribati activists, primarily women and youth-groups, to lead their communities on issues of environmental justice. The KiriCan network of I-Kiribati volunteers provide rapid-response services to their communities facing danger or property damage from the storms, while also engaging in localized awareness and lobbying efforts. At the international level, KiriCAN has enlisted partners from across the globe to finance adaptation programs and provide technical expertise to their I-Kiribati counterparts on the ground.

These efforts also include student-to-student outreach, partnering the I-Kiribati youth with European universities. The initiatives range from properly documenting Kiribati's rich history and traditions to establishing localized waste management systems.

"We're always trying to fill the gap between community and government," Alofa says proudly. "We're really a network so we try to get people involved in any way that they can contribute. We need all hands on deck!"

Turning the tide

Alofa has traveled far beyond the islands of the Pacific in her struggle for climate justice. In recent years, she has testified to U.N. bodies and led indigenous contingents at historic citizen-led events, like the People's Climate March in New York City. In 2015, she illustrated her people's plight for an audience of 2,500 allies at the Women in the World Summit.

Sharing a stage with Native Alaskan Patricia Cochran, whose region endures similar devastation as well as Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, Alofa teared up when she spoke of the I-Kiribati people made homeless from climate change and described stories of women rebuilding simple sandbag seawalls in fear of the next big wave sweeping their families out to sea.

"And that's the life of our people. Disaster comes, and they continue to live the same way," concluded Alofa, wiping her eyes.

Message to Trump

Aside from KiriCAN's efforts and Alofa's tireless advocacy, the future of Kiribati relies on worldwide collaboration — a dependency recently complicated by Trump's threat of U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord.

Alofa says she is heartbroken that Trump denied America's role in fighting climate change. She added that none of the climate agreements have been strict enough to save her country, but that "every step is a small victory for the people and planet, and Trump just took a giant leap backwards."

"Just when we finally reached this point of global consensus, he rips a hole in the entire negotiation," Alofa says, distraught. "So there's no future for Kiribati? For all of us? Everything is just black. If America doesn't lead, we're not getting anywhere. It has to be America."

Alofa claims the real motive for Trump's climate change denial is his unwillingness

to evolve America's economic and industrial development. "The U.S. wants to grow, we all want to grow, but he's putting short-term economic gains before the survival of the entire planet ... When America already has the technological solutions!"

Following the natural disasters in the U.S. this fall, Alofa hopes Trump has been awakened to the dire impacts of climate change, reminded that these disasters affect not only the small Pacific islands, but his constituents as well.

"My heart breaks when I see the images of [the natural disasters in] the United States because we know how frightening these climate disasters can be, how much they hurt your homes and communities," Alofa reflects, adding that "all Pacific islanders stand in solidarity with the American families and communities impacted by these devastating hurricanes."

Intimidated and motivated by the great power of the U.S., Alofa invites the American Delegation and even President Trump to meet with the Pacific Delegation at the COP23. While she outlines the many ways the U.S. could make a difference in the futures of countries like Kiribati — from contributing technology, expertise and funding to adaptation and reclamations efforts on the islands, she insists Kiribati and the Pacific Islanders have much to offer the international community.

"In the Pacific, we have done so much with such few resources. And many of these efforts can be scaled or applied at low cost to many other developing countries around the world," Alofa describes. "These victories, combined with the developed world's innovations — imagine! Let's let Kiribati be a model for the world of sustainable development."

Armed with this energy, vision, and solidarity with communities impacted by climate change around the globe, Alofa and other delegations from the Pacific and other frontline nations will face Goliath this month. Despite the odds, Alofa is as determined as she is inspired: this is the Pacific's COP.

"Our people and our culture deserve to be saved, preserved in their homeland and waters where they've lived forever," Alofa concludes. "I really believe in the human spirit, that everyone in their heart has the space for compassion and love for other people. We will approach the COP23 with faith in the strength of international solidarity with these good people."

Below, watch Alofa's appearance on the Women in the World stage as part of a panel moderated by ABC News correspondent JuJu Chang.

By Anna Therese Day and Xiani Zhong

<https://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2017/11/08/despite-long-odds-woman-is-taking-her-david-versus-goliath-battle-worldwide/>



Pelenise Alofa, National Coordinator KiriCAN, at COP23



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