

Session Report Cover Sheet

SESSION CODE: CLIM-OP (Second Part on Water in Small Island Countries)	
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DATE: 16 March, 2003	Session Title: Water and Climate: Part on Water in Small Island Countries
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Session Report

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1. Key Issues

Small island states are highly vulnerable to climate variability and change due to their small size, remoteness, geographical exposure to cyclonic rainfall, winds and tidal surges, as well as El Nino related droughts, and their limited human and financial resources.

Their small size and natural storage provides little natural buffering to climatic extremes, whilst their small socio-economic resources restrict their natural capacity to cope with and adapt to such climate variability and change.

“Altogether, our small island countries contribute less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming and climate change. However, because the adaptive capability of our human systems is generally low and vulnerability high, our small countries are likely to be among the countries most impacted by global climate change...all available evidence confirms that intra-regional and inter-regional approaches will yield more sustainable results.” The Honorable Felix Finisterre, Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, St. Lucia, Kyoto, March 16, 2003.

“We are highly vulnerable to changes in the climate, because our islands have relatively little natural buffering to offset these changes and hence we feel their effects with almost instantaneous effect. Our lack of natural water storage means we are susceptible to drought, our lack of height means we are susceptible to storm surges and waves, our lack of land means that we are susceptible to flooding...I hope that with the launch of the Joint Caribbean-Pacific Programme for Action on Water and Climate, as well as the Pacific Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Water Management, plus the Portfolio of Water Actions being prepared here in Kyoto, we have ourselves created the catalysts we need to implement the priority actions that face small island countries throughout the world...” The Honorable Fielekapa, Minister of Lands, Surveys and Natural Resources, Kingdom of Tonga, Kyoto, March 16, 2003.

2. Actions

The Pacific-Caribbean Joint Programme for Action on Water and Climate (JPfA) was officially launched during the session. The JPfA consists of 22 action elements, common to both the Pacific and Caribbean regional consultation outcomes.

The JPfA consists of four collaborative areas: research, advocacy and awareness, capacity building and governance.

Immediate priority actions were identified as: water resources assessment, water governance, integrated water resources management, water demand management and water quality.

3. Commitments

The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (the two regional organizations mandated to support 36 countries on water issues) demonstrated their commitment to inter-regional South-South collaboration through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on the future implementation of the JpfA.

4. Recommendations

Recognizing the importance of the dialogue on water and climate for small island countries the session made the following recommendations:

- Strengthen capacity of small island countries to conduct water resource assessment and monitoring, inter alia using the model outlined in the Pacific and Caribbean Hydrological Cycle Observation System (HYCOS) proposals;
- Support capacity development to enhance the application of climate information to cope with climate variability and change;
- Change the paradigm for disaster response to hazard assessment and risk management, particularly in integrated water resource management.