



SUMMARY OF IRENA'S HIGH-LEVEL PACIFIC LEADERS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS: SATURDAY, 14 JANUARY 2012

The Pacific Leaders Meeting, a high-level meeting on renewable energy organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), was held on 13 January 2012, immediately preceding the second session of the IRENA Assembly, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The event gathered Heads of State, Ministers, agency Directors, and other high-level members of government of 11 Pacific Island States to discuss the acceleration of renewable energy uptake in the Pacific.

Pacific Islands face numerous socioeconomic challenges, many of which stem from energy scarcity, energy price volatility and climate change, which in turn stems largely from fossil fuel emissions. It has been recognized that diversifying energy production in the region, especially towards more widespread domestic use of renewable energy, can play an important role in alleviating many of these challenges by reducing dependence on imported, dirty fossil fuels.

This meeting followed up on a meeting that took place in Sydney, Australia, on 26-28 October 2011, called Accelerated Renewable Energy Deployment in Islands. This meeting gathered states, development partners, inter-governmental and regional organizations, as well as industry to identify specific needs and challenges in renewable energy technology deployment in the Pacific.

At the conclusion of the Pacific Leaders Meeting, participants adopted the Abu Dhabi Communiqué on Accelerating Renewable Energy Uptake for the Pacific Islands, which recognizes the vast, underutilized potential for renewable energy in the Pacific region, outlines necessary steps to realize this potential, and in this light, agrees to work jointly to establish an enabling environment for renewables in the region.

OPENING REMARKS

Adnan Amin, Director General, IRENA, welcomed dignitaries and delegates to the Pacific Leaders Meeting. Sultan Al Jaber, President of the First Session of the IRENA Assembly, stressed the significant energy production challenges faced by Pacific Islands and highlighted the need for improved energy access for their inhabitants. He then commended the region's ambition in making progress on these issues, as well as its leadership in the field of renewable energy uptake, using the examples of the Cook Islands' plan to have renewables make up 50% of its energy mix by 2015, and Tonga, which has a roadmap to reach 50% renewable energy in 2012. He noted the strong foundation IRENA has established to increase work on renewables at the national, regional, and international levels. He stressed that decisions taken at the upcoming session of the Assembly should lead to: strengthening of national renewable



Adnan Amin, Director General, IRENA, speaking at the reception following the Pacific Leaders Meeting

energy policies and programmes; closer collaboration with sub-regional entities; strategic partnerships with regional institutions and relevant inter-governmental bodies; and reinforcing international solidarity and partnerships to advance the cause of renewable energy. He closed by stressing opportunities for economic growth that renewable energy uptake can foster.

THE ROLE OF IRENA IN SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT IN THE PACIFIC REGION

Adnan Amin spoke about the role of IRENA in supporting renewable energy deployment in the Pacific region, welcomed the active participation of 11 Pacific Islands States, and thanked them for their support of IRENA's objectives. He said the presence of Heads of State and other leaders from the region confirmed the significance of renewables for their countries, as well as the recognition of the value of international cooperation. Amin then spoke of IRENA's 2011 work in the Pacific Island region, including cooperation on developing the Tonga Energy Road Map (TERM) and the Pacific Islands Forum Summit, which provided insights into regional and multilateral efforts to simultaneously achieve economic growth and sustainable development, which in turn influenced priorities for IRENA's involvement in the region. He closed by noting IRENA's publication of Renewable Energy Country Profiles for Africa and the Pacific.

Sultan Al Jaber then introduced Henry Puna, Prime Minister, Cook Islands, who chaired the remainder of the meeting. Puna expressed his gratitude to IRENA for organizing the Meeting, and reiterated Sultan Al Jaber's comment that with every challenge comes an opportunity, and that the world must focus on the opportunities.

The *Pacific Leaders Meeting Bulletin* is a publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) <info@iisd.ca>, publishers of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org>. This issue was written and edited by Aaron Leopold, Suzi Malan and Stefan Renckens. The Digital Editor is Brad Vincelette. The Editor is Leonie Gordon <leonie@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. Funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by Masdar. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate academic citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists (in HTML and PDF format) and can be found on the Linkages WWW-server at <http://www.iisd.ca/>. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, New York 10022, United States of America.

ON-GOING PROGRAMMES AND THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT OF PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Solomone Fifita, Deputy Director for Energy, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), opened by stating that only 30% of islands in the region have access to electricity, and that only 1.8% of the region is land. Fifita lamented frequent power outages as well as difficulties paying for oil imports in US dollars due to trade imbalances. He continued by discussing the importance of education and infrastructure development in the energy sector, and referred to some of the development challenges of the region, including: young populations; low adult literacy; non-communicable diseases; vulnerability to climate change; and geographic isolation. He closed by noting the many players interested in addressing energy needs through financial assistance and technology transfer, including: Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP); Pacific Island power agencies; the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); University of the South Pacific; the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP); Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF); the European Union; Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK); and IRENA.



Solomone Fifita, Deputy Director for Energy, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

PROPOSED IRENA ACTIVITIES AND WORK PROGRAMME

Dolf Gielen, Director of IRENA's Innovation and Technology Centre (IITC), provided an overview of IRENA's 2012 Work Programme, and its relevance for the Pacific Islands. He lauded the ambitious objectives of many countries, which he said have been made more achievable by increasing oil prices and decreasing costs of renewables. He emphasized IRENA's role as an advising agency on policy development. Gielen then described IRENA's activities to date and proposed activities for the Pacific region, giving special attention to the Scenarios and Strategies Programme, which develops roadmaps as a basis for policy development; the development of a database of all studies on energy potentials; and the IRENA-Pacific Capacity Building Initiative that will aim to develop



Sultan Al Jaber, President of the First Session of the IRENA Assembly

a sustainable market for small on- and off-grid systems. He emphasized the need for country-specific solutions and the importance of focusing on power generation and transportation. He then requested participants to comment on: the relevance and adequacy of the work programme from their perspective; whether the role of IRENA is sufficiently clear; and possible areas of collaboration with other partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT IN THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Lord Ma'afu, Minister of Lands, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, Tonga, indicated his support for IRENA's proposed work programme. He also stressed that the time to act is limited, and that IRENA should develop bilateral relations with each Pacific nation.

Foua Toloa, Head of Government, Tokelau, expressed support for IRENA's mid-term strategy. He emphasized the differences countries face in renewable energy development and deployment targets, and that strategies need to be tailored



Dolf Gielen, Director, IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre



Faamoetauloa Taito Faale Tumaalii, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa

to national circumstances. He closed by mentioning that by September 2012, 100% of Tokelau's electricity will be sourced from renewables.

Faamoetauloa Taito Faale Tumaalii, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa, lamented that transmission losses of up to 60% are hindering Samoa's efforts to become energy independent, and that the national grid is currently incapable of feeding decentralized renewable energy production into the power supply. Responding to Gielen's remark that IRENA is not a research and development institute or a bank, he inquired about the role of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development in this regard.

Chair Puna stated that transmission losses are an important regional issue, but are often exaggerated by utilities resisting change.

Jackson Ngiraingas, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Industries and Commerce, Palau, provided examples of infrastructural developments in his country that utilize solar power, such as hospitals, the Educational Department's buildings, and an airport terminal. He urged turning the outcomes of this and previous meetings into actions. In agreement with several other delegates, Ngiraingas highlighted the problem of acquiring funding. He expressed concern over the cost of renewable energy due to limited economies of scale possible in the region. He suggested governments initiate programs to develop technology and proposed that the meeting's Communiqué mention a roadmap to secure funding.

Halene Kupa Magatogia, Minister of Power and Energy, Niue, outlined several national renewables projects, indicating the high penetration of renewable energy in his country. He explained Niue's objective to have the majority of electricity generated by grid-connected solar power.

Sprent Dabwido, President, Nauru, suggested that considering the variety of challenges and goals of each Pacific Island country, IRENA should set country-specific goals and recommendations, and provide avenues for information exchange. In addition, he suggested an IRENA regional office for the Pacific with desk offices for each country. He highlighted Nauru's plan of 50% renewable energy by 2015, yet indicated its limited capacity and resources to achieve this. He requested IRENA mobilize technical experts to develop a roadmap to reach the 2015 targets. Regarding cooperation with the private sector, he expressed hope for IRENA's support of



Chair Henry Puna, Prime Minister, Cook Islands

such programs and mentioned the need for IRENA's partners to provide funding given the limited possibilities of his country's private sector in this regard.

Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji, lamented the costs of energy imports facing his country and the lack of existing financial institutions in Pacific Island countries, where the high cost of finance inflates final costs of energy deployment. He said for these reasons, developing a meaningful relationship with IRENA is imperative for his country. He then stressed the need for better up-to-date information on renewable energy technologies, and recommended that IRENA design strategies to consolidate data on petroleum and energy use, and develop strategies for action on energy security.

Chair Puna emphasized the need for appropriate solutions that recognize the unique needs and characteristics of countries.

Atatoa Herman, Associate Minister of the Environment, Cook Islands, commended the acceleration of deployment of renewable energy in the Pacific, highlighted the need for adequate political will to achieve renewable energy goals, as well as financing and capacity building to achieve these targets. He concluded by noting the need to further develop a bilateral relationship with IRENA.



Halene Kupa Magatogia, Minister of Power and Energy, Niue



Foua Toloa, Head of Government, Tokelau



Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji

Chair Puna closed the session by reminding participants of the immediacy of climate change predictions, which require further acceleration of renewable energy technology development.

CLOSING SESSION

Adnan Amin concluded the meeting by thanking leaders for their commitment and passion for renewable energy. He said that the meeting had made an important contribution to understanding the needs of Pacific Island States, including: the need for tailored approaches for specific energy needs; the importance of developing roadmaps; the need for readily available financing; the constraints of concessional funding; and the high costs of start-up capital.

Amin then announced a proposed Pacific Islands meeting, in partnership with Japan, in May 2012, that intends to address: grid stability; technology transfer to reduce power and transmission; and constraints of current power storage options. He referred to island nations in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean that have indicated similar needs to those faced in the Pacific, and that best practices should be shared via a forum where energy issues can be explored jointly. Amin stressed the need to deviate from cumbersome bureaucracies and commit to lean organizations that can be fast and flexible. He then announced the adoption of the Abu Dhabi Communiqué on Accelerating Renewable Energy Uptake for the Pacific Islands, which he said is an aspirational document that clarifies key areas for collaboration, and recognizes the diversity of island countries and their needs. Amin closed the meeting at 6:27pm.

ABU DHABI COMMUNIQUÉ ON ACCELERATING RENEWABLE ENERGY UPTAKE FOR THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The Abu Dhabi Communiqué on Accelerating Renewable Energy Uptake for the Pacific Islands recognizes the vast, underutilized potential for renewable energy in the Pacific region, outlines necessary steps to realize this potential, and in this light, agrees to work jointly to establish an enabling environment for renewables in the region. It states that participant countries and territories will engage with IRENA to map the readiness of countries to adopt and attract renewable energy by ascertaining opportunities and identifying pathways to close gaps. The Communiqué further lists areas in which the participant countries and territories will support IRENA in implementing activities in the Pacific region, including: a platform to provide easily accessible, up to date and accurate information on renewable energy technologies; involving utilities in assessing grid stability issues; fostering a sustainable renewable energy market; capacity building initiatives with the particular focus to strengthen public institutions; and assessing the renewable energy, land use, and water resources nexus.

