

Meeting Seeks Progress on Basic Water and Sanitation Goals in the Pacific

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 02 July 2013 09:02 - Last Updated Friday, 05 July 2013 09:04



The Pacific Regional Consultations on Water and Sanitation are being held at the Tanoa International Hotel, Monday 01-03 July 2013. Countries will be discussing how to progress action on the recent Statement by Pacific Heads of State and Heads of Delegations participating in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 19-20 May, 2013.

Michael Pettersen, Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC), says the Chiang Mai Statement highlights the concern of Pacific Leaders that the whole Pacific region is struggling to meet its Millennium Development Goals relating to water and sanitation.

"This Statement recognises that sustainable water supply and safe sanitation underpins the very feasibility of Pacific Island Countries. It is clear that national and international development goals are unlikely to be met without increased advocacy and financial support for water and sanitation, which will require renewed leadership and investment at the national, regional and international level," he says.

Mr. Pettersen noted that efforts to improve water and sanitation in the Pacific region are not keeping up with the significant and growing impacts of population growth, urbanization, natural disasters and climate change.

"This weeks' consultation meeting is designed to help Pacific Island Countries support the

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development of a revised framework for Water and Sanitation for the region building on work already established through the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management which has been in place for the last ten years.

Mr Malakai Finau, the Director of the Fiji Mineral Resources Department and Chair of the Meeting, says one of the main objectives of the consultation is to increase understanding of the current status and future needs and prospects of the water and sanitation sector in Pacific Island countries and territories.

“This meeting is being held to coincide with the 2013 Joint Meeting of the Pacific Platform for DRM and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable. This will provide us with a useful opportunity to discuss the development of the revised Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management with these other critical sectors,” he says.

Mr. Finau acknowledged the pivotal role that water and sanitation plays in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in the Pacific and the need for strengthened national coordination frameworks to enable an integrated approach between these areas.

Outcomes of the consultations will be provided as contributions to the 2013 Joint Meeting of the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable.

Water and sanitation is at the very front line of disaster response and risk management. Globally, more than 90% of natural disasters are water related, and recent years have seen the region face a number of serious floods and droughts, with significant impacts on national economies. The water sector has an important role in helping build the resilience of communities through better anticipation and response to water related disasters, and the maintenance of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene during times of adversity.

Water is the primary medium through which climate change will impact on Pacific communities, and building the capacity to maintain and protect fragile drinking water supplies is key to successful climate change adaptation. By better responding to today's climate variability, Pacific communities will be far better prepared for the climate challenges of the future.

For more information contact:

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Message from Chiang Mai: Acting to Achieve Universal Access to Water and Sanitation in Pacific Island Countries

Statement by Pacific Heads of State and Heads of Delegations participating in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

We, the Pacific Island Country Heads of State and Heads of Delegations to the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit support and endorse the findings and commitments of the Chiang Mai Declaration and, in further support of these, and in acknowledgement of the special challenges faced by Pacific Island Countries:

1.

Acknowledge that our Pacific region is vast and diverse, consisting of volcanic islands and low-lying atolls spread across thousands of kilometres of ocean, and home to remote rural communities and rapidly growing urban populations.

1.

Acknowledge that, despite our great diversity, we share the common important challenge of managing and protecting our limited and fragile water resources, and achieving and safeguarding the fundamental human right of all of our citizens to safe drinking water and sanitation.

1.

Acknowledge the significant progress made by Pacific Island Countries in recent years, especially through the application of locally based and participative *Integrated Water Resource Management*

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solutions that respond directly to the issues and challenges facing Pacific communities, and provide models for replication at a national and regional level.

1.

Note with concern that, in general, these good efforts are not keeping up with the significant and growing impacts of population growth, urbanization, natural disasters and climate change, and that the Pacific region as a whole is making inadequate progress towards meeting international development goals for water and sanitation.

1.

Recognise that sustainable water supply and safe sanitation underpins the very feasibility of Pacific Island Countries, and that our national and international development goals are unlikely to be met without increased advocacy and financial support for water and sanitation, which will require renewed leadership and investment at the national, regional and international level.

1.

Recognise the critical role that regional collaboration plays in the Pacific to enable the sharing and replication of successful approaches and the building of capacity across our region, and the need for sustained support from development partners to strengthen the effectiveness of this collaboration across the Pacific region.

1.

Recognise that throughout much of the Pacific, water and sanitation are primarily managed at a household and community level, and building capacity and awareness of safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices at this level can be the most effective way of achieving water security and reducing the incidence of water borne disease.

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1.

Acknowledge the important role that the *Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management*

has played to date, and

support

the review and revision of the plan to provide an effective regional framework for the decade to come.

1.

Acknowledge the pivotal role that water and sanitation plays in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, and

undertake to strengthen national coordination frameworks that enable the integrated management of our efforts in water and sanitation, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

1.

Support the development and implementation of national strategic plans for water and sanitation to mobilise and prioritise national budgets and international assistance, enable integrated cross-sectoral cooperation, and accurately track investments and results.

1.

Recognise that capacity constraints continue to hinder progress in securing safe water and sanitation across the Pacific, and **support** the need to develop and maintain core national capacity in the sector, supported by effective technical backstopping at a regional level.

1.

Recognise that inadequate knowledge of water resources is a constraint common to all Pacific Island Countries, and that concerted efforts are required to improve the collection, management, analysis, availability and effective use of water resource information to enable

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better management of scarce water resources, the establishment of early warning systems, and more effective adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

1.

Acknowledge that the ability of Pacific Island Countries to provide and maintain safe water supply and sanitation is dependent on the financial sustainability of those services, and sector reforms are required to enable appropriate and sustainable cost recovery mechanisms to be implemented.

1.

Acknowledge the particular relevance of the “*ridge to reef*” approach to the resilience of Pacific Island Countries, and **support** better linkages between the governance of water, land and coastal resources and the maintenance of important habitats and environmental services.

1.

Request, therefore, that other stakeholders including international partners recognize and support Pacific efforts in increasing access to safe water and sanitation through increased and sustained resourcing to target priority needs.

1.

Extend our thanks and appreciation to the Government of Thailand, Summit organisers and supporting partners for hosting the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit and providing this unique opportunity for Pacific Island Countries to share our common challenges and successes.