

PACNEWS

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UN – CLIMATE CHANGE: REUTERS

PACNEWS 3: Tues 25 Sept 2007

Endangered islands sound climate change alarm

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 NEWYORK (Pacnews) ---- Small islands, home to five percent of the world's population, could disappear under rising oceans as the earth warms, delegates from 37 small island states warned on Monday, *reports Reuters*.

“As the proverbial canary in the coal mine, Small Island states have repeatedly raised the alarm bells of global warming over the last 15 years,” Solomon Islands foreign minister Patteson Oti told a news conference.

He said the Solomon Islands and members of the Alliance of Small Island States faced a future of more violent storms, depleted fish stocks, bleached coral reefs and even annihilation if the world fails to deal with climate change.

“Climate change is the symptom and not the disease,” said Mr Oti. “The disease is our unsustainable means of production, worsened by unsustainable patterns of consumption.”

The alliance comprises 37 UN members and six observers from all the oceans and major seas. The group is meeting on the sidelines of a U.N. conference on climate change to raise awareness and funds for island states' plight.

A landmark report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change this year said human activities such as burning fossil fuels and forests are very likely causing climate change that will lead to more deadly storms, heat waves, droughts and floods.... PNS (ENDS)

FIJI – NGO'S: RADAUS/FBC

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Activist to lobby UN

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 SUVA (Pacnews) ---- Fiji based director for the Pacific Centre for Political Integrity Angie Hefernan will also be travelling to attend the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to present the world body, officials and the media with a very different impression of Fiji from what Interim Prime Minister Commodore Frank Bainimarama will deliver.

Ms Hefernan told *Radio Australia's Pacific Beat programme* she wanted to make sure that Commodore Bainimarama's explanation of the coup and the way Fiji's being governed was challenged every step of the way.

Ms Hefernan said she was not going to New York to spoil the interim prime minister's trip but to make sure that the international community was told the truth and to inform the body of what the silent majority in Fiji were facing.

“We are going to represent the voices of thousands of people in Fiji whose voices have been silenced because of threats of

intimidation, threats of human rights abuse. It's also about telling the truth about what's going on in Fiji. I have nothing personal about the interim prime minister, whether he's on the flight or not is not an issue for me, we just have to wait and see what happens".

Ms Heffernan hoped she would not be placed on a travel ban this time.

"Well it will be up to the international community to see whether or not there is a freedom of movement in this country, whether or not as claimed by the interim regime that Fiji is back on the road to democracy if they continue to stop people from travelling freely within the country and out of the country".

Ms Heffernan has already set-up meetings with international affiliates, foreign government officials, Senior UN officials and also the Office of the International Human Rights in Washington...

Meanwhile, Fiji's interim foreign affairs minister and former military commander Ratu Epeli Nailatikau will act as Prime Minister until Commodore Bainimarama returns from New York...PNS (ENDS)

PNG – FOREST: THE NATIONAL

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PNG pushed to log its forests

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 PORT MORESBY (Pacnews) -----A Papua New Guinea's US-based consultant on climate change believes not enough is being offered as incentive to stop intensive logging in developing countries like PNG, *reports The National*.

Kevin Conrad told a foreign media organisation that instead of providing positive incentives to tropical nations to conserve their rainforests and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world indirectly gives "perverse incentives" to destroy them by demanding goods produced by intensive logging.

Mr Conrad, a close friend of PNG'S Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare was described in the article as "a leading environmental activist".

He said: "The Kyoto protocol does not give incentives to rainforest nations to protect their forests," Mr Conrad, special envoy of the environment and climate change permanent mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations, told IPS.

The Kyoto protocol is the international agreement that establishes how industrialised countries should reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by an average of 5% relative to 1990 levels. The treaty does not assign targets to developing nations.

One of the instruments of the Kyoto protocol was the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), an arrangement that allows industrialised countries with a GHG reduction commitment to invest in projects in developing countries that reduce emissions.

This counts towards the countries' domestic "clean" record. Conservation of rainforests was not included in such projects.

The article said between 1989 and 1995, global emissions as a result of deforestation, amounted to 5,000 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide, studies show.

"Instead of giving us incentives to protect our forests, the world gives countries like mine (PNG) incentives to destroy them," Mr Conrad said.

Coffee, soy beans, sugar, flowers and wood furniture, he said, can only be produced in developing countries through systematic deforestation.

"Tropical rainforest nations deserve to be treated equally. If we reduce deforestation, we must receive fair compensation for reductions."

Mr Conrad was not new to pursuing projects of mammoth scale such as climate change . . . PNS (ENDS)

Minimum wage study for CNMI and American Samoa underway

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 WASHINGTON (Pacnews) ----- A federal study is now underway to determine the impact of the recent minimum hikes on the economies of the CNMI and American Samoa, according to representatives Eni Faleomavaega.

Saipan Tribune reports Mr Faleomavaega has met with Ronald Bird, chief economist at the U.S. Labor Department's policy office, regarding the study

He quoted Bird as saying the U.S. Labour's Bureau of Statistics "had made tremendous progress in American Samoa" and had gathered data from the territory's tuna canneries, government, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Prompted by Mr Faleomavaega's report, the CNMI government contacted Mr Bird over the weekend.

CNMI Governor Beningo Fitial was expected to send a letter to Mr Bird to offer help in gathering data on the wage impact in the Commonwealth. The governor had tasked Richard A. Pierce, his special assistant for trade relations and economic affairs, as the CNMI point of contact.

The impact study is required by the U.S. wage law, which imposed federal minimum wage rates to the CNMI and American Samoa effective 25 July 2007. The report will be critical in determining whether the CNMI and American Samoa will be subject to escalator clauses which require minimum wages to be raised annually by 50 cents beginning 25 May 2008.

According to Mr Faleomavaega, Mr Bird's team will begin analysing data next month. Bird expects to have draft report for internal review in early November. The report is due to the U.S. Congress in January 2008.

Mr Bird is working with three other economists on the study.

"Having met with Dr. Bird on July 25, 2007 and again today, I can say without reservation that American Samoa and CNMI can be confident that the U.S. Department of Labor will issue an objective and solid report. I have every confidence in Dr. Bird and his team," Mr Faleomavaega said.

He reiterated his support for a one-time increase of 50 cents per hour. "But I do not, have not, and will not support escalator clauses, our annual increases, forced upon us without the benefit of knowing whether or not our economy can sustain the increase," he said.
PNS (ENDS)

FIJI – POLL CHIEF: F/LIVE

PACNEWS 3: Tues 25 Sept 2007

Australia helps in poll chief search

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 SUVA (Pacnews) -----The Australian Government has now engaged local authorities to search for a new Supervisor of Elections in Fiji, *reports Fiji Live*.

The Australian High Commission in Fiji has confirmed that talks have begun in earnest.

In a statement, the Commission said it is the one key position, which needs to be filled if Fiji is to move closer to general election.

The Commission confirmed discussions have already begun with the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional Offices Commission, the PSC and the Electoral Commission.

Apart from finding international candidates, Australia and other donors have agreed to top-up the salary of the candidate.

The Commission also expects clear advice on the selection criteria in further meetings with the Constitutional Offices Commission later this week.

Interim Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum says the British High Commission is also helping in the search...PNS (ENDS)

PACNEWS DIGEST

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Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative concerned with imposition of Public Emergency Regulation in Fiji

25 SEPTEMBER 2007 NEW DELHI (Pacnews) ----- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is concerned that events in Fiji continue to call into question the return to the rule of law and democracy in the country. Fiji has suffered four coups in the last 20 years; most recently during December 2006, when military chief Commodore Frank Bainimarama spearheaded the Pacific Island nation's latest coup, which continues to draw international attention.

Fiji had been previously subject to emergency laws that dramatically impacted on the basic rights of Fijians, after a state of emergency was announced on 5 December 2006. These emergency laws significantly restricted constitutional provisions for freedom of expression and assembly, and the right to privacy, were subject to the military's interpretation and left people without recourse to the courts.

The military government arbitrarily detained, and sometimes abused, coup opponents, conducted searches without warrants, engaged in intimidation of the media, and restricted the right to peaceful assembly. The re-imposition of the Public Emergency Decree on 7 September 2007, along with the recent findings of the Fiji's Human Rights Director, Shaista Shameem, in her report to the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, stating that the December 2006 coup was a legitimate exercise of the President's "sovereign power under section 86 of the Constitution", makes it difficult to see the development of an environment favourable for the reinstatement of democracy. This concern, coupled with the President's announcement on 18 January 2007 of "full and unconditional immunity" to the Armed Forces involved in the coup, has continued to jeopardise the protection of human rights in Fiji along with the rule of law.

International concern is mounting as Fiji's interim authorities appear to be backtracking from their commitments to return Fiji to democratic and constitutional rule within forecast timeframes. Evidence of such backtracking is demonstrated in reported statements by Fiji's Military Council that neither Mr Laisenia Qarase, the deposed Prime Minister, nor the main opposition party, Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), will be allowed to contest the next elections. In the last week, the Interim Prime Minister has also made statements advising certain vocal civil society and human rights activists to "shut their mouths", in a clear signal of the interim government's intention to prevent free discussion and debate.

Meanwhile, all the institutions and mechanisms of democracy remain in place within Fiji. They currently do not function as a result of the military suppression – demonstrating the inappropriateness of considering the interim government's long-term rule as a positive way to advance democratic process. In its strong ideological disposition towards regarding itself as the 'Platonic guardian' of the national interest, the interim regime has, in an effort to ensure its own *homo politicus*, stepped even further away from its stated concerns for the protection of human rights, rule of law and democracy.

Fiji is currently on the agenda of the Commonwealth's human rights watchdog, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) is due to meet on 29 September 2007. CHRI has called on CMAG, through written submissions, to urge the interim government to take all possible steps to ensure the return of the rule of law in Fiji. The first step is the withdrawal of the Public Emergency Decree, along with action to ensure that a date is set for free and fair elections.

CHRI has also called on CMAG to ensure the interim government immediately and publicly makes a commitment to respect fundamental human rights; to allow an independent investigation into allegations of arbitrary detentions, beatings, and harassment by the military; and to encourage all authorities to uphold and protect the independence of the judiciary and the media.

Finally, CHRI has encouraged CMAG to urge the interim authorities to cease the suppression of alternate voices, whether by threat or otherwise, of all Fiji-based human rights defenders, and human rights organisations, who are working peacefully for the promotion and protection of human rights standards within Fiji.

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Don McKinnon, speaking at a celebration of CHRI's 20th anniversary in London last week said that "unconstitutional overthrow of elected governments, and prolonged rule by emergency decree" was one of the most significant human rights challenges that he had faced in his time as Secretary General. Fiji is currently facing this challenge; it is

critical that the interim government take substantive steps to return Fiji to its people and to allow Fiji's democratic institutions to function.PNS (ENDS)

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