

PACNEWS

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FRANCE - CLIMATE CHANGE: UN NEWS CENTRE

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

COP21: on eve of UN climate conference, Ban says 'time for action is now'

PARIS, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (UN NEWS CENTRE) -----On the eve of the opening in Paris of the United Nations climate change conference, widely known as COP21, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is urging all countries and all sectors of society to act now to reach a new universal climate agreement.

"I'm reasonably optimistic and convinced that world leaders will adopt a very ambitious universal climate change agreement at this COP21," Ban told the UN News Centre in an interview on Sunday at the Parisian headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

"We've been working very hard, very long – the time for action is now. I have seen growing political momentum among Member States. They know that they have to take action."

Ahead of COP21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the UN entity organizing the conference – has already received some 180 voluntary climate action plans from countries. Formally called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, these will form the basis of the agreement expected to be reached.

As more and more INDCs were submitted, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said this shows nations are prepared to take meaningful action to address climate change. Many countries have also indicated they would like to see a mechanism in the agreement that will allow them to ramp up their ambition to reach the goal of limiting a global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

According to experts, a temperature rise beyond this level will cause irreversible damage to the planet by exacerbating droughts, floods, food and water shortages, affecting the most vulnerable countries first. Despite the scientific community acknowledging that the national pledges submitted so far will not limit global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius, Mr. Ban has underscored that a successful outcome at COP21 would allow the world to ultimately achieve this target.

Tomorrow, around 150 Heads of State and Government are expected at the opening event at the Paris-Le Bourget site, an 18 hectare conference centre north-east of the capital. This space will be the main venue

for the two-week meeting, with 32 "negotiating rooms," working areas for delegations, civil society and journalists, as well as many venues dedicated to side events.

Simultaneously, within the city borders, special events will be held – such as "an afternoon with Robert Redford" at UNESCO on 6 December, and the awarding of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Equator prize – often referred to as the Academy Awards of sustainable development – taking place at the renowned Théâtre Mogador.

At the conference, the interconnectivity between sustainable development and climate issues will be one of the overarching themes. In September, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is composed of 17 goals – the SDGs – to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

Asked how a new climate deal and these SDGs are linked, the UN Secretary-General said a strong climate agreement backed by action on the ground will help the world achieve the global goals "to make the world better and safer."

"Goal number 13 [focuses on] climate change but if we do not implement the climate change agreement, then all the remaining 16 goals will be affected. Not a single goal can be implemented in isolation," Ban explained.

"Science has made it plainly clear – that this climate change phenomenon is caused by human behaviour," he continued. "It's only natural that we human beings should change our behaviour in a sustainable way. We have to do it. We don't have any time to lose. That's why I am urging world leaders to demonstrate their moral and political leadership for humanity."

The UN News Centre asked the Secretary-General what makes him optimistic that, in a world full of disease, war and famine, world leaders can work together instead of in their own self-interest.

"[Climate change] doesn't care about national boundaries," he stated. "This is a global phenomenon and [leaders] understand that investing wisely in climate change will help their national economy boost. There are many countries who are investing in sustainable energy including solar energy. It's skyrocketing."

The UN climate conference will officially open Monday when the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laurent Fabius, is elected President of COP21. Negotiations towards a final agreement are expected to conclude on 11 December.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General today met with French President François Hollande to discuss the status of negotiations and identify key issues still under discussion. A readout issued by Ban's spokesperson said they agreed that "failure to reach an agreement was not an option and would have disastrous consequences."

The two leaders also exchanged views on the issue of counter-terrorism and shared their concern of a growing influence of Da'esh beyond Syria and Iraq.

In addition, Ban stood in solidarity today with the people of Paris who were unable to join a climate march, after it was cancelled last week due to security concerns.

Alongside scores of other people, he donated a pair of his "marching shoes" to be placed at the city's Place de la République near the scene of 20 November's terror attack, and where the climate march was due to start.

"As the world gathers in Paris to stand up for climate action, let us also stand in the shoes of all victims of terrorism, war and persecution – and respond with compassion," said a note he wrote and left at the scene.....PACNEWS

Pacific Voyage to COP 21 Paris

The following feature is a partnership between PACNEWS and SPREP as the world works towards a universal climate change agreement to be signed off at the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris in December this year.



FRANCE - COP21 SPECIAL: ISLANDS BUSINESS

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Tuvalu and Palau submit climate plans

By Samisoni Pareti, Editor in Chief, Islands Business Magazine in Paris amplifying the Pacific Voice at COP21

PARIS, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) ---- As world leaders began to arrive in the French capital to finalise a global agreement on climate change, almost all the independent islands of the Pacific have submitted their new climate action plan.

Known as Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, INDC for short, these plans outline among things carbon emission reduction targets each country is committed to. Two island nations, Tuvalu and Palau submitted their INDCs the last 48 hours, on the eve of the opening of the final rounds of climate change negotiations in Paris.

Up to Saturday, 28 November, 183 countries that are members of the UNFCCC have submitted their INDCs, including all 14 members of the Pacific Islands Forum, save Tonga. Marshall Islands was the first to submit their climate action plan, it was done on 21st July. Kiribati followed then Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Nauru, Cook Islands, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Tuvalu and Palau.

Most of the island leaders were in Paris at the beginning of the week to attend the French Oceania Summit with French President, Francois Hollande, which was held at the Elysee Palace on Thursday. President Hollande left one hour after attending the Summit to fly to meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin, busy putting a coalition to fight the ISI in Syria.

Pacific leaders who are members of the Commonwealth grouping – eleven in total including Australia and New Zealand -- left for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta on Thursday night in an aircraft chartered by the French Government. They all met up with President Hollande again at this Mediterranean island nation who was there to lobby for the Commonwealth's support for the fight against terrorist attacks in his country. Most Pacific leaders return to Paris on Sunday, before the start of COP21 on Monday.

UNFCCC in a media statement it released on Friday quoted its Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres as encouraging countries to come forward with their INDCs as soon as they are able, as this underlines their commitment and support towards a successful outcome in Paris.

This Paris agreement, the UNFCCC statement adds will come into effect in 2020, empowering all countries to act to prevent global temperatures rising above 2 degrees Celcius, and to reap the many opportunities that arise from a necessary global transformation to clean and sustainable development.

At the French Oceania Summit held at the Elysee Palace in Paris, the need for member countries to submit their INDC earned a paragraph in the five-page summit declaration.

No figure on the temperature rise target was mentioned in the document, neither a 2 degrees Celcius nor a 1.5 degrees. Island officials who attended the summit said a draft declaration circulated by the French had suggested a 2 degrees target, but the proposal didn't get the support of the island leaders.

Solomons' Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Collin Beck told us in Paris that Pacific island nations will accept nothing more than the 1.5 degrees or lower target.

"If we don't get Paris right, Paris is the beginning of the end for many of the vulnerable countries so the issue of global temperature below 1.5 is the heart and soul of the whole convention," said Ambassador Beck.

"So I think it is important that we get the temperature right, most importantly and critically this is our last chance, if we don't get an agreement now then the window will more or less close shut on us. The urgency of getting an agreement, comprehensive and ambitious to guide the survival of SIDS is critical now. It's now or never."

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change is hosted in Paris, France from 30 November to 11 December, 2015 - #4Paclands.....PACNEWS

FRANCE - COP21 SPECIAL: USP/SPREP

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Human Rights and Climate Change Law – Special Issue of the Journal of South Pacific Law

PARIS, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (USP/SPREP) ----Ahead of the two weeks of negotiations expected to result in a climate agreement to decide the fate of Pacific island countries, a publication is to be released that links human rights obligations with those under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

A Special Issue of the Journal of South Pacific Law, produced by the School of Law of the University of the South Pacific in Port Vila, Vanuatu, includes papers that explain how human rights obligations reinforce existing obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

"Pacific Island countries are at the forefront of climate change. The adverse effects of climate change already affect a range of human rights of individuals and communities in the region," said Dr Margaretha Wewerinke of the School of Law, USP in Vanuatu, who co-edited the Special Issue.

"These rights are enshrined in a range of treaties and conventions that create legally binding obligations for all countries—including an obligation to cooperate with other countries to realise human rights."

A preview of the Special Issue is launched ahead of the opening plenary of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform of Action (ADP) during the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. The ADP is the body tasked with the development of the new climate change agreement to be agreed upon by 11 December, 2015.

"Ensuring Consistency with Existing International Law of another Climate Change Agreement" written by Dr. Curtis Doebbler, this contribution is an in-depth analysis of the ADP current negotiation text and the numerous options it contains.

The Special Issue also includes an article by Calvy Aonima and Shivanal Kumar, who analyse the potential for a reparation claim by Vanuatu for damages resulting from Cyclone Pam. This contribution focuses on the UNFCCC as a legal basis for this claim.

A contribution by Fitolagi Fa'anunu analyses how the UNFCCC and international human rights law could be used as a basis to claim reparations for damages resulting from Category 4 Cyclone Ian that struck Tonga in 2014.

Another contribution to the Special Issue is a commentary by Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), which discusses the role of WHO in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

"We will be launching this Special Issue in the margins of the COP21 in Paris but wanted to share the contribution by Dr. Doebbler that reviews the current ADP text as a preview, as it's very timely" said Ms. Fitolagi Fa'anunu, a postgraduate student of the USP, also a co-editor of the Special Issue.

"We believe the contributions to the Special Issue will provide an incisive view into the added value of existing international law to Pacific Island leaders, negotiators and communities—within and outside the ongoing climate change negotiations."

Details of the launch of the "Special Issue of the Journal of South Pacific Law on Human Rights and Climate Change Law", produced by the School of Law of the University of the South Pacific in Port Vila, Vanuatu will be released early this week.....PACNEWS

PAC - TUNA INDUSTRY: FIJI TV

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Explosion in use of 'FAD' fishing gear raising environmental concerns

By Cheerieann Wilson in Bali, Indonesia

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (FIJI TV) ----A huge increase in the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) by tuna fleets working in the Pacific is worrying environmentalists and the 8 Pacific nations that are party to the Nauru agreement (PNA).

Fish Aggregating Devices are floating objects that attract schools of fish and make tuna easier to catch.

Environmentalists warn they are creating a growing problem of marine debris and inadvertently kill threatened species such as sharks and turtles.

In the past year FAD numbers in the Pacific have exploded.

The PNA estimates 80,000 FADs have been deployed in the region this year up, from just 30,000 last year.

Abandoned FADs, with their floating skirts and netting, are a particular problem according to Maurice Brownjohn, commercial manager of the PNA.

"It is quite clear that when they leave the productive areas they are disowned and left to drift and we have plenty of evidence of them going on reefs and beaches in our region," he said.

The international environment organisation, the Pew Charitable Trust says the growing number of FADs is a global problem.

Research released last month by Pew estimates between 81,000 and 121,000 FADs were deployed in the world's oceans in 2013.

"FADs, contribute to marine litter, endanger the survival of vulnerable species and have already contributed to bigeye tuna in the Pacific and Atlantic becoming overfished', the report concluded.

"FADs that are not recovered drift freely entangle and kill marine life."

Between 480,000 and 960,000 silky sharks are killed each year in the Indian ocean after being caught in FADs,' the report says.

FAD fishing in the Western and Central Pacific by the purse seine tuna fleet is the primary factor driving increased catches of overfished bigeye tuna according to Pew.

Scientists have warned bigeye is down to just 16 per cent of its pre-fishing stocks.

Pacific countries have repeatedly called on distant water fishing nations to work with them to cut the catch.

The PNA says FADs may not present a threat to fisheries and more research is needed into their impact.

New sonar technology which reveals which species are swimming below a FAD may result in fishermen being able to choose to set their nets on schools with a lower proportion of bigeye.

The PNA's Maurice Brownjohn says some countries welcome FADs.

"I understand that some parts of the Pacific look forward to them coming through their area because they bring tuna to them for their artisanal fisheries so it's not all bad.

"As a commercial tool perhaps they need to be better managed and better controlled," Brownjohn says.

Next year, the 8 PNA countries plan to implement an electronic tracking system that will monitor FAD numbers and locations in near real time to better understand the impact of the tuna fishery.

The purse seine industry increasingly relies on drifting FADs and there are few regulations for fishermen or vessel owners to follow and no penalties for deliberately abandoning FADs at sea when they are no longer useful.

"At this point in time, we are working on enhancing the management and economics of benefits to the Parties. Individual nations definitely have a serious interest in the environmental issues, in reef damage and so on. So those individuals would be taking a more active role than our office," Brownjohn says.

The issue of FADs use will be discussed at the Intercessional Working Group on FADs, one of several working groups that will convene ahead of the 12th Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting in Bali that begins on December 3rd.....PACNEWS

PAC – TUNA INDUSTRY: ISLANDS BUSINESS

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Thieves roam the Pacific

By Netani Rika in Bali, Indonesia

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) ----- Illegal fishing activities in the Pacific will come under increased scrutiny after four Philippines-flagged vessels were prosecuted for breaching regulations in the high seas off the Federated States of Micronesia.

The company which owns the ships has agreed to pay an undisclosed sum which has been described as substantial fines in a first for the industry in the region.

FSM's Director of Fisheries, Eugene Pangelinan, said the prosecution was immensely satisfying.

"The Philippines has also agreed to binding measures on their (fishing) fleet to ensure vessels comply with requirements not to enter the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones)," he said.

The Philippines boats were picked up on regional surveillance satellites fishing within the FSM's 200 Nautical Mile limit when they should have been on the high seas.

This was a breach of the law of the sea, denied access free revenue to FSM and undermined conservation measures put in place by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

"We recognise their legitimate right to be in the high seas pocket but we want to ensure they comply with their conservation obligations," Pangelinan said.

The FSM would continue to take measures to monitor illegal and undisclosed fishing activities in the Pacific, he stated.

"If people want to fish, we welcome them," Pangelinan said.

He said Palau had expressed similar concerns about illegal fishing in the region and continued surveillance by all nations would help bring about effective prosecution of violations.

Asked about the effectiveness of patrol boat surveillance, Pangelinan said this was costly for many smaller nations and the support from the regional satellite monitoring platform was critical to economic interdiction methods.

"The outcome we have had (with the Philippines boats) is an excellent deterrent and vessels must realise that if they contravene the laws there is a system in place and a means for us to prosecute them," Pangelinan said.

"This is not the first incident we have had with illegal fishing but it is the fastest resolution," he said.

"The Philippines stepped up to the mark and played ball with us and we managed to resolve it and we think that's exactly the way it should be resolved."

Meanwhile, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has described illegal fishing as theft.

WWF Tuna Programme Manager, Bubba Cook, said it was important implement proper monitoring control and surveillance measures to stop the theft.

"Vessels that engage in IUU fishing are effectively stealing from the rightful resource owners," Cook said.

"We have supported a number of initiatives, for instance the implementation of these tablet computers for observers that allows for real time delivery of data from the observer into a informationmanagement system that allows verification and validation of certain information that can be used for monitoring control and surveillance purposes," he said....PACNEWS

PAC - TUNA INDUSTRY: ISLANDS BUSINESS

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Information sharing key to fisheries surveillance

By Netani Rika in Bali, Indonesia

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) ----Information sharing is the key to successful surveillance of fisheries activities and the reduction in illegal fishing in the Pacific.

But Pacific nations will need to approach fisheries surveillance with a wide range of platforms including satellites, drones, patrol boats, aircraft and ship-based observers.

Forum Fisheries Agency Deputy Director, Wez Norris, said the recent successful detection of two rogue fishing boats was proof of the regional cooperation.

"The success FFA members have had in terms of monitoring and patrol and particularly surveillance is proof of regional cooperation rather than individual action," he said ahead of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting here.

"Most of the power FFA members have in this regard is because they share a lot of information openly with each other.

"At the end of the day it really comes down to information sharing."

Norris said most information used to track fishing fleets in the Pacific was made available by satellite tracking which was then cross referenced to licence information available at a regional tracking centre in the Solomon Islands.

With this information the FFA produces risk profiles which are shared across the region to enable continuous monitoring, boarding or inspection of suspicious fishing boats.

The tracking is supplemented through direct surveillance by the patrol boats of individual FFA member countries and aerial patrols by Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States.

Increasingly, however, new satellite imagery will be used to track rogue operators.

"Satellite imagery has become far more accessible and what that allows us to do is take a picture of an area of water and compare that to vessels we can see on the regional surveillance picture," Norris said.

"One of our areas of uncertainty is we know a lot about the vessels we know about but there are these rogue vessels floating around out there.

"We don't think there are many but this satellite imagery we can make sure of that and it will give us the opportunity to say we can see five vessels on the regional surveillance picture but six on the satellite image.

"So now we need to look at that sixth vessel and see what it's doing."

Norris said if the 17 FFA-member countries attempted to address surveillance on their own, the results would be very fragmented.

"No other (world grouping) has this level of cooperation."

Data available in the Pacific allows analysts in Honiara in the Solomon Islands to link satellite imagery and electronic reports from ship-based monitors to licence and registry information.

This gives real time information on location of fishing vessels, movement, conditions of licences, where it has been and any illegal activity in which it may have been previously involved.

Sharing of this information allows third parties to take action in the prevention of illegal fishing activities once a rogue ship puts into port or is spotted by a patrol boat.

"Perhaps not immediate action but (they) can take future measures," Norris said.

Meanwhile, an exposition in Auckland next year is expected to look at laser and drone technology which will have maritime and fisheries surveillance capabilities....PACNEWS

VAN - PARLIAMENT: RNZI

PACNEWS 2: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Vanuatu parliament has "money to spend"

PORT VILA, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (RNZI) ----Vanuatu's outgoing and convicted Finance Minister Willie Jimmy says there is money to spend before the 2016 budget is passed and all public servants will get paid.

Jimmy has also assured suppliers that they too will get paid.

He says the public machinery is functioning as usual, despite the dissolution of parliament last week.

Jimmy says the proposed budget was already completed and presented to the Council of Ministers but the outgoing Prime Minister Sato Kilman wants to see parts of it amended to take into account the Cyclone Pam recovery process.

Meanwhile the President, Baldwin Lonsdale, has responded to rumours online and assured the public that he has no intention to pardon the 14 guilty former MPs.

The President says legal processes are still in progress and it is important that they are allowed to be completed.....PACNEWS

PACNEWS BIZ

PAC - TUNA INDUSTRY: SPC

PACNEWS BIZ: Mon 30 Nov 2015

Capacity building in the Pacific tuna processing sector

LEVUKA, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (SPC) ---- Cannery and national fish inspectors from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands are currently undergoing specialised training in Levuka, Fiji, aimed at ensuring the production of canned tuna in the region meets the required standard for safe human consumption.

The Thermal Processing and Regulatory Audit training is organised by the European Union-supported Development of Tuna Fisheries in the Pacific Project (DevFish2) which is implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC).

In welcoming the 18 participants, Lomaiviti Provincial Administrator, Ekimi Rokoduru, stressed the importance of the training for Fiji's tuna processing industry and the local economy.

"Such SPC regional training adds value to the Pacific Fishing Company Limited's operation in Levuka in terms of supporting the skills of the locals employed in the factory," Mr Rokoduru said.

"After initial plans to move sites, we're pleased the tuna factory will remain in Levuka because it is the mainstay of the local economy, being the largest employer on the island," he added.

The two-week intensive training involves the up-skilling of participants to ensure the process of canning fish at high temperature is observed and maintained so that the end product meets prescribed quality standards.

SPC's DevFish Officer, Jonathan Manieva, said the training was both timely and critical as the tuna processing industry in the Pacific region experiences growth.

According to the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) 2015 Economic Indicators Report, the estimated tuna processing market share of FFA member countries doubled from 100,000 tonnes prior to 2013 to around 210,000 tonnes in 2014.

"As the industry grows, the need for human resource capacities in key specialized areas of the production line also grows. This technical and specialized training will enhance the skill sets of our nationals so they can fill roles that would otherwise be occupied by specialists from overseas. This is enabling employment of nationals at mid-management levels in the industry," Manieva said.

"The safe production of canned tuna fish is also a critical component of nutritional contribution of fish to food security for our people. And enhancing employment opportunities of our nationals in the sector contributes to individual and household income," he said.

In collaboration with the Pacific Fishing Company Limited (PAFCO), the workshop participants also get the opportunity to undertake practical training sessions at the tuna processing plant's factory floor.

"The need for such technical training is critical as the canned products are exported into overseas markets like the EU and US and export requires such technical thermal processing of cans to meet required standards," PAFCO's General Manager, Brett Carter, said.

"Thermal processing in canned fish is classified as a high risk operation and personnel have to be technically qualified and aware to deliver the canning process standards, ensuring canned fish is safe for public consumption," he added.

The workshop ends on Thursday 3 December 2015.....PACNEWS

PACNEWS *In Focus*

The views expressed in PACNEWS are those of agencies contributing articles and do not necessarily those of PINA and/or PACNEWS

The stark reality of life as a fisheries observer

By Yvette D'Unienville, News Editor Radio Tuvalu in Bali, Indonesia

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (RADIO TUVALU) -----People have always thought fisheries observers earns a lot of money, but it also a very dangerous job that families need to pray for the life of their loves ones on the job.

Increasing assaults and intimidation of fisheries observers, and in the worst cases disappearances, have prompted calls for fishery managers and authorities to urgently take measures to ensure observer health and safety on board fishing vessels.

The issue will be discussed for the first time by the 40 nations involved in the Pacific fishery when they meet at Central and Western Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in Bali this week.

Pacific nations and organisations as well as international NGOs are calling for action.

Bubba Cook, WWF's Central and Western Pacific Tuna Program manager, who is on the board of the Association of Professional Observers, has a very personal connection to the issue.

He told Pacific journalists about the disappearance of his close friend, the American observer and marine scientist Keith Davis, who went missing on September 10th from the merchant vessel Victoria 168, 500 miles off the coast of Peru.

The disappearance "happened in broad daylight and calm seas while 2 vessels were alongside each other," Cook said.

"The fact that he went missing in those conditions expresses to many of us in the observer community that there was foul play involved.

"The conditions on board were such that you just simply couldn't trip and fall overboard and even if he had someone would have seen something."

Charlie Lasisi, another observer employed by the National Fisheries Authority of Papua New Guinea disappeared while working on a tuna vessel in 2010; the body was never found.

Multiple African observers are reported to have vanished at sea under suspicious circumstances and have never received any form of recognition.

Although there hasn't been any intimidation reported by Tuvaluan observers, Bubba Cook said every observer who has been doing it for very long has a story of being threatened or harassed at some point.

"Fisheries observers play a very important role, they are the "eyes and ears" of our enforcement agencies charged with protecting our ocean resources," Bubba Cook said.

"They also serve as the front line of scientific research, measurement, assessment and reporting while stationed on fishing vessels.

"Fisheries observers are not "policemen" but they document everything that happens on the ship and have an obligation to report any violations.

"As such, they help us to better understand the health of our fish populations whilst, at the same time, ensure that rules and regulations are correctly followed."

The peak fisheries body for the Pacific island nations the FFA is also concerned about threats to observers. "This issue of observer safety is a crucial one," FFA Deputy Director Wez Norris said.

Cook said technologies are available to help increase the safety of observers.

"Technologies such as video monitoring and the Automatic Identification System (AIS) must be mandatory on all fishing vessels to create transparency at sea," Cook said

"These surveillance measures will increase safety for observers and can also demonstrate that the fishery is not involved in illegal fishing activities," he said.

WWF is calling on all Regional Fisheries Management Organisations such as the WCPFC to immediately adopt procedures to ensure the health and safety of fisheries observers by implementing the International Observer Bill of Rights.

The organisation says member states must be required to report to their RFMO any event involving threats, intimidations, harassments and assaults, not to mention any disappearance of observers or crew participants.

Cook said governments also have a very important role to play in ensuring the safety of lives of their seafarers.

Increasingly observers are not welcomed on board by vessel masters and crew.

"They are viewed as taking up space, unnecessary, as a potential threat because they do serve a compliance purpose." Cook said

"They identify any activities that might be considered illegal so it puts them immediately at risk because they are viewed as being as opposition, in many cases by the fishermen."

"It is very unfortunate that it is that way because the fishermen should view them as an important part of the process because the observers are the ones providing the information to ensure that the fishery is sustainable for everyone."

The 17 member Forum Fisheries Agency is moving to improve observer safety.

"Early next year, we will be initiating a region wide review of standard of operating procedures, so that there is consistency in how we respond and react to cases of observers reporting intimidation assault, Wez Norris said.

"As observer providers the Pacific Island countries need to do a lot to make sure that they put in place a robust policy framework and robust procedures to enhance the safety of observers," he added.

"In terms of investigations, ...it is the responsibility of member countries because they (observers) are their nationals, they are employed under their national programmes.

"We also need to work with the flag states so that they take it equally seriously, either to assist observer providers in their investigation and actions, or take actions and investigations in their own way," Norris said.....PACNEWS

PACNEWS *In Focus*

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The price of canned tuna vs the cost of a life

By Netani Rika in Bali, Indonesia

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (ISLANDS BUSINESS) ----- A can of tuna can cost anywhere between \$USD0.60 and \$3 in thousands of shops and supermarkets in the Pacific.

It's cheap, affordable food – dinner for families, lunch for office workers.

But how much would Pacific islanders pay for a can of tuna if a relative had died in the process of bringing the product to the shop shelf?

Indeed, would Pacific people buy canned tuna if they knew that their people had died on the high seas while attempting to guarantee the sustainability of fish stocks?

The murder of neutral observers aboard fishing boats in the Pacific is one of the most under-reported issues in the \$US6billion industry.

In September United States national, Keith Davis, disappeared from the Victoria 168 off the Peru coast after taking on a shipment of fish from the Vanuatu-flagged Taiwanese boat Chung Kuo No 818.

Bubba Cook - the World Wildlife Fund's Western Central Pacific Ocean Tuna Programme Manager – said the tuna industry actively covered up these incidents.

"They try to keep those stories, you know, in-house because they know that no one will want to buy tuna that people die to produce," he said.

Cook's comment came as Pacific tuna nations gathered here for two weeks of discussion at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

A major search operation was conducted by United States and Peruvian Coast Guard after Davis disappeared. He was never found.

But Cook suggested that the extent of the search and the assets used would not have been the same if Davis had been a Pacific islander.

At least two Papua New Guinean observers have been murdered at sea and the WWF will push for measures to ensure the safety of fisheries observers working on fishing vessels.

"Within the last five years there's been at least three observers from Papua New Guinea who have gone missing," Cook said.

Charlie Lasisi was murdered by six Filipino crew members on the Dolores 838 in the Bismarck Sea in March 2010.

His body was found bound in chains and the crew members faced trial but were acquitted by a Papua New Guinea court. Ironically, Lasisi was employed as an observer by the PNG Fisheries Department.

His compatriot, Wesley Talia, also died in suspicious circumstances while posted as an observer on board a foreign fishing vessel in the Pacific.

There is no evidence that the families of Lasisi or Talia have been compensated for their loss.

Very few Pacific nations provide data on fisheries observers, conditions aboard fishing vessels or incidents in which these monitors are injured, disappear or die.

Cook said observers had come under increasing threats from the fishing industry in recent years.

"In many cases the observers aren't very welcome on board. They are viewed as taking up space, unnecessary, as a potential threat because they do serve a compliance purpose," he said.

"They identify any activities that might be considered illegal so it puts them immediately at risk because they are viewed as being in opposition, in many cases by the fishermen."

This situation, Cook said, was unfortunate because the observers had huge potential to ensure that the fishing industry remained viable well into the future.

"The fishermen should view them as an important tool, as an important part of the process because the observers are the ones providing the information to ensure that the fishery is sustainable for everyone," he said.

"Unfortunately that is not the case. So as a result of that dynamic over a number of years we have seen increased complaints from a number of observers as to the way they've been treated.

"They have experienced intimidation, threats harassment, in some cases assault on board vessels fishing in the region. In the most extreme cases observers have gone missing."

The WWF will attempt to address the issue of observer safety at a plenary of the WCPFC this week.

One issue which may be discussed is the possibility of providing the observers with communications equipment which is independent of on-board radio.

Industry insiders have said that communications equipment aboard most vessels is controlled by the captain and because of this observers are sometimes reluctant to make incriminating reports.

Observers are the eyes and ears of the management agencies on the ocean and needed technical support from all parties involved in the industry, Cook said.

"They provide a critical role in monitoring and controlling the fisheries in terms of the information that they provide is both used for management as well as compliance purposes and they form the backbone of the science that comes into the management process that ultimately determines how the stocks are managed and whether they are managed sustainably."

Meanwhile, Patricia Kailoa, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Pacific Dialogue, told a regional tuna meeting in September that despite the size of the regional fishing industry, there were few published observations about working conditions.

"The remarkable feature of all of these reports, is that not one of them reports on, or refers to (beyond a mention), crew conditions in the Pacific Islands region – home to the largest tuna fishery in the world and perhaps, the world's largest high seas fishing fleet," she said.

Cook made a similar observation.

"I have seen very few officially documented cases yet of observers being harassed, threatened, intimidated, and, in rare cases, assaulted or even murdered. There are many reasons why this information is not recorded," Cook said.

What is clear going into the WCPFC in Bali is that the regional fisheries industry is vast – from Indonesia in the West to Peru in the east – and that it is worth billions of dollars to small Pacific nations.

It is also clear that if the price is right, some actors within the industry are willing to remain silent about conditions on board ships and the safety of observers.

What is not clear is whether the lives of these observers is worth more than a can of tuna...PACNEWS

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IUU tuna blacklist from six to two after FSM settles with Philippines

BALI, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (FFA) ----- Pacific nations pushing for a record number of six tuna boats to be banned from fishing in their waters are taking that number down to two.

The 17-member Forum Fisheries Agency are in Bali at the upcoming 12th session of their regional tuna fisheries management body, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Up until this morning the FFA members were lobbying for a total of six tuna fishing boats flagged to China, France/Wallis and Futuna, and the Philippines to be formally blacklisted from fishing in the Pacific.

Today the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM, announced it had reached a confidential settlement with the Philippines as flag state for four vessels it had successfully added to the Tuna Commission's provisional blacklist. The four vessels were cited for transshipment and fishing without a license in FSM's waters. The two carriers and two purse seiners formed the bulk of the provisional list of IUU vessels set for blacklisting by the WCPFC12 meeting in Bali next week. The vessels had been reported by the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM for illegal fishing and transshipment activity in the FSM EEZ between May 2014 and Feb 2015 after earlier efforts to resolve the violations were unsuccessful.

IUU blacklisting, part of a busy agenda for the Pacific Tuna Commissions annual meeting, strips blacklisted vessels of the right to fish the world's tuna-rich Pacific 200 mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs).

Speaking in Bali where he is leading the FSM delegation, Fisheries head Eugene Pangelinan welcomed the settlement.

"Any encroachment into our waters without a valid fishing license or authorization is tantamount to illegal fishing and we take it very seriously as tuna is our only renewable resource. The case with the Philippines boats is about their opportunity to fish in the high seas pockets but in doing so, they have a commitment to ensure their operations do not result in IUU activities and this case, sends a strong signal to the Philippine fleets to ensure their operations don't violate our laws," he says. "We respect their right to be where they are as permitted by the RFMO but in doing so, Philippines Government and the fleets must take additional measures to prevent breaking our laws."

Pangelinan says the settlement is a "clear indication of the strength of the WCPFC's IUU listing procedures to bring flag states and fishing vessels to account for their violations, and seek to resolve them with coastal states if they want to continue to enjoy the rights and benefits of fishing in the WCPO."

Congratulating the Philippines and FSM for reaching settlement, and commending Fiji and Tonga for their reporting of the remaining vessels on the list, FFA Director General James Movick says the blacklisting

process within the tuna commission provides ample opportunity for out of court resolution “but recognises that Pacific coastal states are well appraised of their rights when it comes to penalising illegal fishing activity in their waters. Fishers need to get the message that breaking the law on the oceans means paying the penalties on land. Settling out of court can lessen the cost of formal prosecution, where maximum penalties are more likely to be imposed.”

DG Movick says the current blacklist provides a recognition and warning from the WCPFC that those who flout the rules stand to lose their opportunity to fish.

“As is their right, FFA nations as members of the Commission are able to provide cases for blacklisting, and flag states for these vessels are able to respond. Most cases do get resolved and that may yet happen for the other vessels on the provisional list,” he says.

“However, as the process and the WCPFC agenda shows, IUU blacklisting is a conclusive end to unacceptable behaviour. The FFA membership are strong and unified on this issue because breaking the law and then trying to duck out of paying the penalties after being caught is a serious matter not just for our Pacific resource owners—but for the majority of licensed boats that are fishing in compliance.”

China and Wallis/Futuna (France) are the remaining two flag states with vessels on the Provisional IUU blacklist this year. In June, Fiji reported a Wallis/Futuna (France) – flagged vessel for failing to notify authorities of entry into Fiji waters, having a broken antenna which may indicate non-polling of its location, and having shark fins on board. Also in June, Tonga reported a long liner, flagged to China, after it was photographed illegally fishing in Tongan waters by an aircraft undertaking maritime surveillance.....PACNEWS

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Working for equality between women and men

APIA, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (UNDP) ----- Equality between women and men is just, fair and right. Making gender equality and political participation a reality is a core commitment of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women.

Since August this year, the Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS), a joint programme of UNDP and UN Women in partnership with the governments of Samoa and Australia, has been promoting a series of trainings aiming at strengthening the capacities of women that want to run in the March elections.

As part of the IPPWS, a new training “Helping women win” will be held tomorrow and Tuesday at the FAO Conference Room, in Matautu-Uta, Apia. The facilitator of the sessions will be the Elizabeth Weir and all women candidates are welcome to join.

Elizabeth Weir is a senior international parliamentary expert with extensive experience in training parliamentarians, political party activists and candidates in many countries of the world. As a former parliamentarian, senior government official and political party leader in Canada, she also brings an exceptional range of experience to her work as a trainer.

“The training will give the participants an overview of the key elements of an election campaign and will highlight the areas where support can be provided.” – declared Weir - “The main goal of the sessions is to demonstrate how women candidates may be assisted to be successfully elected to Parliament. Helping women win will provide examples of activities that will allow women candidates to campaign effectively with limited resources.”

“When women participate in politics, there are benefits for women, men, children, communities and the nation at large” said Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga IPPWS Coordinator. “UNDP strives to ensure that women from

all constituencies in Upolu and Savai'i have a real voice in all governance institutions so that women can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making."

UN Women's Country Programme Coordinator for Samoa, Suisala Mele Maualaivao, added: "Women succeeding as politicians, gaining voice through participation and leadership can have enormous impact on society and policies. Women can help governance systems to become more inclusive and democratic because gender inequality is an obstacle to progress, a roadblock on the path of human development."

On Thursday 3rd of December at 12noon, UNDP and UNWomen will also launch a new handbook titled: "Building the Blocks of Gender Equality. What Political Parties can do to strengthen the participation and representation of women".

The publication identifies targeted interventions for promoting the stronger presence and influence of women in political parties as well as advancing gender equality issues in party policies and platforms. The entry points identified are designed to provide ideas for action for political parties....PACNEWS

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Regional Network to Improve Gender and Protection in the Pacific

SUVA, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (UNDP) ---- Recognising the need to advance gender and protection issues during times of disasters made worse by climate change impacts, a network comprising of government officials from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu has been set up to provide a platform to share information, experiences and best practices.

Referred to as the ProPa Network, which coins two words, Protection and Pacific, it aims to raise awareness on the range of issues related to the cross cutting theme and to better address these issues before, during and after a disaster.

Protection, in a humanitarian context, is still a relatively new concept in Pacific Island countries says, Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) Adviser to the Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP), Krissie Hayes.

"The members of the Network recognises the need to further advance gender and protection issues during times of disasters in their countries and at the same time draw on experiences from their pacific islands neighbors," she said.

"There remains a limited and varied understanding about what constitutes gender and protection, and the vast range of issues that are covered by this cross-cutting theme even amongst gender and protection cluster leads themselves." She added, "This gap in knowledge is not only identified in the country disaster management offices, but also amongst regional and international humanitarian actors.

"Through the ProPa Network, it will help facilitate gender and protection actors to share ideas, drive future developments and improvements in these fields," Ms. Hayes said.

At the national level, each of the members will be working at improving the various methods of data collection and information sharing to ensure needs based gender and protection programming, said Assistant Secretary of Local Government and Community Development and the Focal Point for the National Safety and Protection Cluster with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Samuela Pohiva.

"Gender and protection priorities in the Pacific and at the national level is due to the reality that disasters make worse pre-existing issues", Pohiva said.

"Focus for data collection and analysis must therefore be during non-disaster periods."

Drawing from the Vanuatu experience, the Economic Empowerment Officer for the Ministry of Justice and Community Services under the Department of Womens Affairs and also the gender and protection Cluster lead, Mark Eson, highlighted the importance of information sharing.

"We've noticed that formats used for information gathering is quite complex and thus valuable information that should be captured by existing tools are missing," he said.

"Through this network, we will try and explore ways in which our other members have addressed this issue."

"As a way forward we will also look at ways to facilitate better information sharing amongst all actors and work to review the existing knowledge management platforms which allows for less sophisticated inputs," Mr. Eson said.

The ProPa network was formed following a preparatory meeting between the representatives of the four countries prior to the Pacific Humanitarian Partnership (PHP) meeting that was held in Suva in October this year. The need for a Network was prioritised by the Government participants based on the discussions from the two day meet.

The preparatory meeting was organised in partnership between UNWOMEN and the UNDP's Pacific Risk Resilience Programme with support from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

While the ProPa Network is driven by the National Government's representatives, these partners will be working together to fine tune the ProPa Network's structure as well as extend learnings to other Pacific island countries that may be interested.

PRRP works with Pacific Island nations and their people to consider the risks they face from climate change and disasters and include those risks in their usual plans for development. Communities can become more resilient to climate change and disasters if routine government, community and other planning processes takes these risks into account. This risk governance approach is delivered through a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme and international non-government organization Live & Learn Environmental Education (LLEE), and supported by the Australian Government. PRRP is being delivered in four countries: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.....PACNEWS

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RAMSI applauds Solomon Islands Police efforts against gender based violence

HONIARA, 30 NOVEMBER 2015 (RAMSI MEDIA UNIT) ---The Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIPF) has been applauded for its programs marking the 16-day campaign for the elimination of gender based violence through conducting outreach programs at various locations in the capital Honiara starting on 27 November.

The theme of the 16-day campaign is, "IUMI STAN TOGETA FOR ENDIM VAELENS AGENST WOMEN".

The RSIPF campaign program will also include presentations at the various RSIPF Housing Estates in Honiara as well in the Malaita Provincial capital Auki and nearby communities.

The RSIPF Community Policing and Family Violence Team together with the Police Band started the outreach program at the Henderson Market in east Honiara stopping at the various market locations in East Honiara and ending at the White River market in West Honiara.

The campaign in Honiara on 27 November also featured 20-year old Lovinda Reggie, the Miss Red Manson Inn in the recent 2015 Miss Solomon Pageant and Chief Peter Usi from the Burns Creek community in East Honiara

Speaking when the outreach team stopped at the Kukum Market in Honiara, the Acting RAMSI Special Coordinator, Alex Cameron congratulated the RSIPF Community Policing and Family Violence Team for conducting the awareness on gender based violence as part of their 16-day campaign activities.

"Solomon Islands is a happy and peaceful country but like many other countries, it is struggling with disturbingly high rates of gender-based violence. Around two-thirds of women in this country experience violence first-hand at some point in their lives," said Mr Cameron

Cameron said, "The impact of violence on women's lives is devastating and affects the well-being of entire communities. It breeds insecurity, contributes to poverty, and adversely impacts on development and the nation's economic growth."

"The elimination of gender based violence is a national commitment that must be supported by all stakeholders, be they communities, chiefs, churches, provincial governments, civil society, international organisations and donors," said Mr Cameron, RAMSI's Acting Special Coordinator

The RAMSI Participating Police Force is working together with RSIPF to help eliminate gender-based and family violence in Solomon Islands through the implementation of the Family Violence Act 2013.

The RSIPF campaign program will end on 10 December 2015....PACNEWS

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