

# OUTREACH

a multi-stakeholder magazine on environment and sustainable development

## BRIDGING WATER AND CLIMATE

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

BY HANNAH STODDART

## HOW CLIMATE READY ARE WE?

BY SUNITA NARAIN

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In our sixth COP 16 issue that was published and distributed on Monday 6th of December - we incorrectly referred to Rosaline Reeve as a co-author with David Diaz on the article 'Key Reductions on Safeguards in New Draft of REDD+ Partnership Workplan'. This was incorrect, Rosaline reviewed the article however the author was David Diaz. For any further queries or clarification please contact the Outreach editorial team. Sincere apologies for this mistake and oversight.

**OUTREACH** is produced by:



## OUTREACH

### EDITORIAL TEAM

**Editorial Advisor**  
Felix Dodds  
*Stakeholder Forum*

**Editor**  
Nicola Williams  
*Stakeholder Forum*

**Political Editor**  
Sabrina Chesterman

**Design and Layout**  
Cesar Huerta  
[www.coroflot.com/cesarhuerta](http://www.coroflot.com/cesarhuerta)

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Hannah Stoddart  
*Stakeholder Forum*

H.E. Marcus Stephen  
*President of the  
Republic of Nauru*

Sunita Narain  
*Director, Centre for  
Science and Environment*

Dr. Faiz H. Shah  
*Asian Institute of Technology*

Andrew P. Kroglund  
*The Development Fund,  
Norway*

Dan Smith &  
Janani Vivekananda  
*International Alert*

**Outreach** is a multistakeholder Magazine which is published daily at COP16. The articles written are intended to reflect those of the authors alone or where indicated a coalition's opinion.

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### Submitting stories to Outreach

Outreach is a multi-stakeholder magazine on environment and sustainable development produced by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future at various intergovernmental conferences. At COP16, Outreach will be distributed in the negotiations area at the official publication table, in the side events area for civil society groups and stakeholders, and online for those unable to attend the conference. You can submit articles for potential publication in Outreach via the Editor, Nicola Williams, at [nwilliams@stakeholderforum.org](mailto:nwilliams@stakeholderforum.org) Submissions should be between 500-750 words (+image if available) and letters to world leaders approximately 200 words.



# Bridging Water and Climate

## What are the next steps?

By **Hannah Stoddart**,  
Head of Policy and Advocacy,  
Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

**The closing plenary of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on Saturday 4th December represented a major breakthrough for water in relation to the UNFCCC. Six countries, from across three continents, proposed that water be addressed as an agenda item under the next session of the SBSTA in June 2011.**

**T**he proposal was put forward by Ecuador and Sudan, and supported by Chile, El Salvador, Sierra Leone and Syria. This is the first time that countries have called for water to put on the global climate agenda, and should be seen as a major achievement.

Yet the work does not stop here. Though the Chair suggested that he would take into account the proposals raised by Parties in the development of the agenda for the SBSTA in June 2011, there are no guarantees that this will happen. In order to ensure that a discussion on water is on the table for June, those Parties who raised and supported the proposal will need to liaise directly with the Chair in the coming weeks. Those Parties who are supportive of the proposal but were not able to present in the closing session should also forward their support for an agenda item on water to the SBSTA Chair.

As Parties consider whether they will support the proposal, it is important that they take into account a number of points. Firstly, water is not a sector, but a cross-cutting natural resource upon which all other sectors and human activities depend.

Many of the issues being addressed under the Convention, including forestry, land-use, renewable energy and disaster risk reduction all depend upon water for their long-term sustainability. Therefore Parties should not consider water as being 'just another sector' which adds complexity to the climate change agenda. On the contrary, a consideration of water could enhance the success of many of the Conventions objectives.

Secondly, adaptation is essentially about water management – building resilience though good water management that balances water across competing demands

and prioritises water for basic human needs and ecosystem functions; as well as responding effectively to water-induced hazards such as droughts and floods. Having a conversation about adaptation without talking about water management is fundamentally incomplete.

Lastly, our global interdependencies are woven through water. It is a fallacy to suggest that water is merely a local or national issue. Water resources transcend national boundaries and climate change impacts on transboundary waters will demand a new paradigm of regional and international cooperation. Importantly, global trade in food and other essential products for development depends upon water availability in producing regions – climate-related interruptions to the water cycle upon which this production depends could have potentially devastating global consequences.

It is therefore critical that Parties embrace this issue openly and constructively, and begin conversations on how water issues could be addressed within the Convention.

**The Water and Climate Coalition** has put forward suggestions on the possible elements of a work programme to enhance focus and coordinate efforts on water related issues.

### **The proposed work programme on water would include:**

A discourse element, to advance the global policy discourse on water and climate at a global level; a Principles element, to establish guiding and normative global principles on water and climate; a Finance element, to provide expert advice on water and climate priorities to the Convention funds; an Implementation element, to build capacity for the implementation of water and climate objectives globally; and a Coherence element, to promote synergies



# water and climate coalition

between and advance implementation of other multilateral agreements that build resilience through water.

These are possible functions of a work programme that Parties may wish to consider, but ultimately it will be up to countries to bring issues to the table and define priorities relating to water and climate. Elaborating the scope and focus of a work programme first requires a space for dialogue and discussion. Putting water on the SBSTA agenda provides the space to have that conversation.

*The Water and Climate Coalition is an international coalition of organisations working to put water at the heart of global policy responses to climate change.*

*More information on its publications and advocacy can be found at:*  
**[www.waterclimatecoalition.org](http://www.waterclimatecoalition.org)**

## Profile



### **Kate Harris**

**Nationality:**  
Canada

**Country of residence:**  
Somewhere on the Silk Road between Turkey and India.

**Occupation:** Writer, adventurer, wilderness conservationist.

**Current Project:**

Cycling Silk ([www.cyclingsilk.com](http://www.cyclingsilk.com)), a year-long, two-woman biking expedition following the Silk Road. Our goal is to explore existing and proposed transboundary conservation initiatives in mountainous regions, using bikes as vehicles for adventure and environmental advocacy. We're starting the expedition in January 2011, and we'll finish about a year later in northern India. Along the way, we're filming a video documentary about adventures in wilderness conservation across borders. I also plan to write a book.

#### **What are the goals of this expedition?**

The greatest threats our planet faces today transcend political borders, whether you're talking about climate change, poverty, human security, water issues biodiversity loss, or wilderness conservation – and really, these are all tightly interlinked issues. So the goal of Cycling Silk is to explore all these aspects of environmental cooperation across borders through case studies for transboundary conservation in the mountains and deserts of the Silk Road. By sharing our explorations through writing, photography, and film, we aim to raise awareness about the importance of cooperation and connectivity across borders, on the Silk Road and beyond.

#### **What prompted your early interest in environment?**

I grew up in rural Ontario with forests, ponds and fields as my playgrounds, so the so-called "natural" world was always simply "my" world.

**Describe your attempts to 'save the planet':** For me, "saving the world" means making daily and concerted efforts to keep our planet wild and biodiverse. I try to live modestly, and support those people and organizations that operate with an environmental ethos. And above all, I try to make others fall in love with wild places the way I have, since making people care about a place is usually a prerequisite for its conservation.

**Favourite quote:**

"May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view." -Edward Abbey

#### **What jobs have you held that have led to the role you are in today?**

My background is mostly academic, with degrees in earth and planetary science, biology, and the history of science. I now work as a writer and editor for IISD's Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB Team), which gives me direct and invaluable exposure to the world of multilateral environmental agreements. But my real work – my heart's work – is wrestling with my own, more creative writing projects, and exploring mountains and deserts at every possible opportunity.

#### **What is your message to world leaders?**

Think beyond borders.

# How climate ready are we?

By Sunita Narain



**O**n a brief visit to Pakistan I noted that the recent floods have left deep impressions on the country's policy and political leadership. They spoke about the scale of devastation, human suffering and the massive challenge of rehabilitation. They also noted, interestingly, that in their view there was a link to climate change.

The world can shape the debate on a climate link in two ways. One, it can argue endlessly about the scientific veracity of the link between human-induced climate change and the floods in Pakistan. It is difficult to establish long-term trends because data on the future does not exist. Past trends are no longer the barometer of weather changes happening today. So naysayers can dismiss the impacts easily. That is why climate change, with its uncertain science and even more uncertain impacts, is a game made for polluters. It is difficult to pinpoint cause and effect. It is easy to deny liability.

Two, the world can agree that even if a single event—like the Pakistan floods that drowned a fifth of the country—cannot be ascribed to climate change, there is no doubt that a link exists between such events and climate change. Science explains clearly that climate change will mean more intense and variable weather events, from rainfall to cyclonic typhoons to intense heat and cold. What happened in Pakistan is part of the emerging chain of such events of changed weather.

The Pakistan meteorological department's data shows the country received 200 to 700 per cent more rainfall than average. Rains came in cloudbursts in ecologically fragile mountainous areas and led to natural dam

bursts and floods downstream. Rains were incessant leading to more floods and greater devastation.

In Pakistan when I was reading about and listening to discussions on floods several questions swirled in my mind. I wondered if the country had a system to manage robust forecasting to inform its people about coming disasters. Did the country have the governance abilities to reach its flood-hit people and help them cope with the devastation? Did the country learn any lessons from the scale of the floods to change its water management strategies? I wondered if Pakistan or any other country could indeed cope with or adapt to the changed climate.

The discussions suggested that the country's meteorological department had information about the possible rain events and it did inform policy makers. But could the system foresee the scale of the disaster? Remember there is no written code for such events in these uncertain times. The other open question is if the weather information the department generated, with all its uncertainties, could be communicated clearly to the people who risked rain, landslide and flood. Yet who can predict whether people, even if told to evacuate, would indeed leave their homes and possessions? These are communities that cope with adversities daily. They would not even have a memory of a disaster of such a scale. This was not an annual flood; this was a deluge.

So how should Pakistan and other similarly affected countries—like most of India—develop a robust system of weather forecasting and disaster information? And can they?

How will the country provide immediate relief to millions rendered homeless? Every flood and drought result in a spiral of poverty and destitution. Every disaster destroys years of development.

Pakistan is no different. The country's media is full of reports on how government will reach people. The country plans to transfer Pakistani Rs 1 lakh (roughly Rs 50,000) to seven million households in two installments for rebuilding lives. It hopes to do this through a smart bank card, which will identify the affected and reach the funds to them. But already reports show the beneficiaries are poorly identified, money is inadequate and not reaching the people. This is not new. All disasters are disasters of poor governance and inability to fix delivery systems.

The question is: how the system of disaster relief can be reengineered for an even more vulnerable world? Can it work in extraordinary times, when it fails in the ordinary?

Then there is the issue of better flood management. As I have written earlier in the context of similar disasters in India, we need to relearn land and water management strategies. Pakistan, like India, has much to learn—from not building habitations in flood-vulnerable areas to channelising river water instead of taming rivers within embankments that invariably break or just do not work. But will it learn, and learn fast in a climate variable world?

The answers will determine our future.

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**Sunita Narain**, Director, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, India.

# Vulnerability in focus:

## Hindukush-Himalaya region

By Dr. Faiz H. Shah

Head, Development Management, Asian Institute of Technology



**T**he entire Hindukush-Himalaya region is prone to the geological or climatically induced hazards of various forms and nature. However, there is a clear indication that not only the frequency of such hazards is increasing with time but also their intensity and impact on the lives and livelihood of people, living in the area, is increasing in severity. This year, we witnessed unprecedented flash floods in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan as well as Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Jammu states of India. However, only a few of the incidents out of the many were reported. Apart from one-third of Pakistan's land mass coming under flood, India also experienced water-induced hazards in Leh, Shimla, Haridwar, Almora, Uttarkashi and Badrinath. In areas across the sub-continent, from Chitral in Pakistan to Himachal in India, incidences of increased cloudburst, floods and landslide have been recorded this year.

The Hindukush-Himalayan belt, ranging from Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan, to Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in India, with Jammu and Kashmir in-between, especially in the context of recent water and climatically induced hazards are very sensitive to earthquakes, landslides and flash flood. The region is disaster prone and in fact the entire Hindukush-Himalayan belt has faced increasingly acute hydrological and geological threats over the last three to five years, with new emerging threats such as glacial lake outbursts, dam bursts and land slides emerging as new threats.

### 2010 flooding

The concerning trend is the increased incidence and impact these new threats are having for example in Nowshera or Kot Addu districts of Pakistan and Almora district in India, which saw entire villages and towns inundated due to floods. 2010 has not only witnessed incidences like cloudburst and landslides at higher regions, however these have been dwarfed by the unprecedented heavy rains in both upper and downstream regions leading to the catastrophic floods. In Pakistan high floods were recorded all along the Indus basin and still continue to inundate lower Sindh province. In India, vast swathes of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh witnessed heavier than normal rainfall leading to flooding. Communities, especially, along the mountains were devastated by the impacts of these floods. Most concerning for these trends is the fact governments in both India and Pakistan are not adequately prepared with effective strategies for mitigating these climatic impacts, even as there is evidence that the intensity of the challenges is increasing.

Natural calamities like the ones faced by huge populations in both Pakistan and India during 2010, and indeed across other countries in the region, have had a long-term impact the lives and future livelihood of communities in the path of such disasters. These hazards completely destroy traditional livelihoods from agriculture, farming and animal husbandry. The hardy citizens of these communities have only managed to sustain their lives with a balance

in agriculture, animal husbandry and migration. This year's heavy rainfall and hazards have further threatened the already precarious livelihoods of these communities as well as those further downstream where agriculture is more predominant. Moreover, the floods and climatic destroyed the communication channels of these regions, therefore flood water rapidly destroys years of incremental infrastructural improvement. This communication breakdown included road transportation, particularly in Pakistan's Northern provinces and India's Uttarkhand and as a result, essential supplies have been unable to reach isolated mountain communities, with prices of green vegetables, cereals and other essential goods unaffordable.

Ironically, while resources from aid or central government funds are available, it appears that local authorities, whether they are in Pakistan or India, have yet no effective strategies to counter disasters and their impact on local livelihoods. If it is accepted that such incidences of climatic calamity are to increase in the years to come, more damage the local infrastructure, livelihoods and lives cannot be responded to. Since early 2010, Pakistan's northern Hunza region has faced rising waters just above the settlement of Karimabad, despite spillways constructed to relieve the pressure. Likewise, glacial lake outbursts in the Garhwal region indicate the crying need for future action. As indicated by the collapse of major dams like Bhakhara, Nangal and Tihri in India and the unprecedented flows threatening the Sukker barrage in Pakistan, the threat

is real. In Uttar Pradesh the overflowing Ramganga river affected Bijnaour, Moradabad and Bulandshahar, while the entire cities of Nowshera, Thatta and Badin came under water in Pakistan. In both countries, it became clear that all tiers of government were unprepared to react strategically and effectively to such a flood situation.

### Lack of coherent policies

Neither India nor Pakistan has national policies to protect the Hindukush-Himalaya region and its pristine ecosystem. Experts have long established that this is a sensitive zone covered by glaciers, seasonal and perennial snows, wetlands (including lakes), quagmire, and peat. It is necessary that a policy be created by both countries, ideally in collaboration with each other, to make this entire region safe for communities, and perhaps for the entire sub-continent. Ironically, both India and Pakistan have reacted by aiming to delegate local administrative powers to newer provinces or states with the hope that these regional administrations will be able to take care of their development or environmental issues. Meanwhile, shortfalls in revenue may well have necessitated governments on both sides to act in environmentally unfriendly ways. Environment related policies and safeguards exist in both India and Pakistan, but when it comes to practice, the evidence is more visible in terms of environmental destruction. While the likes of Ambuja cement

are blowing up mountains for cement and stone, the "timber mafia" is busy denuding Pakistan's forest cover. The rising incidence of avalanches and landslides as a result of explosives and poor tree cover is visible all around, all for short-term benefits from industrial revenue or the timber black-market. There is an immediate need to stop all activities that are causing damages to the mountains. A national consensus on these issues is necessary in both Pakistan and India. This must be followed by a long term policy framework for all Hindukush-Himalaya provinces or states in both countries. It appears that in both countries policy makers are not interested in developing the Hindukush-Himalaya as an environmentally secure area.

The Hindukush-Himalaya communities are highly vulnerable to the disasters and having a near-absence of rescue or support mechanisms and inadequate resources to adapt to or mitigate threats, there is real fear that new disasters will cause grave and permanent loss to livelihoods. As strategic measures are defined, it is essential to include the local wisdom of the communities who have faced comparatively lesser disasters like earthquakes, landslides or flash-floods in their living memory. More information flows on the changing climate scenarios provided to communities in forms that can be understood, accompanied by tools that can be used to cope with change in terms of adaptation or mitigation strategies, is a key priority.

### Present challenges include:

- Lack of advanced geo-information systems available to government agencies
- Poor coordination among various agencies
- Slow response-time of agencies responsible for emergency response
- Gap between government capacity and community requirement

### The action agenda for the Hindukush-Himalayan region calls for:

- A locally responsive strategic policy process to articulate responses to imminent threats to the region
- Measures to develop a shared understanding of issues between communities and government agencies
- Specialized Capacity Building interventions for managing flash-floods and improving sustainable livelihoods
- Inclusion at all levels of local communities in the policy process and design of local initiatives
- Institutionalized and adequately resourced research, on the regular basis, for risk reduction and innovative solutions
- A well-rehearsed response strategy and preparedness plan for disasters, at the community level
- A long-term approach to building resilience among communities and helping them safeguard agriculture, flora and fauna
- Alternative livelihood development projects for local hill communities, particularly those living in extreme conditions

## High Level SIDE EVENT:

### “Gender and Climate Change Finance: Empowering Women to lead in the New Green Economy”

**On Thursday, December 9th**, during COP16 High Level Segment, the Governments of Mexico, Finland, and Grenada, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme and the Global Gender and Climate Change Alliance, will host a side event entitled: **“Gender and Climate Change Finance: Empowering Women to lead in the New Green Economy”**.

This event will be made up of high-level leaders on gender and climate change from different sectors and regions, including government representatives, United Nations, civil society and private sector.

This high level side event will showcase examples of women's increasing empowerment in climate change finance and the green economy, including reports on

new entrepreneurial ventures, advocacy strides in climate finance architecture, and public-private partnerships, going beyond why it's important to empower women to a discussion of how it's being done.

The focus will be on capitalizing upon women's potential and experiences as innovators and agents of change and identifying strategies for bringing them into the mainstream.

#### Details:

**Time:** 13:20-14:40

**Location:** COP16, Room Aguila, Cancun Messe

Go to <http://www.wedo.org/> for further information



# Eve & the apple

By Andrew P. Kroglund

**E**ve once had the audacity to eat of the tree of knowledge. That led us into the life of farming. But since then we seem to have lost touch with the soil. But something is about to change – the climate. And COP 16 in Cancun is taking heed of this new knowledge.

There is a small revolution going on here in Cancun, with agriculture is back on the table, like it originally was when the Rio conventions were made in 1992. Back in 1992 it was made perfectly clear that the provision of sustainable food systems was a prime concern underlying the conventions. But then it was forgotten. However interesting statements were made at the Agricultural and Rural Development Day on the 4th of December that eventually will make way for actions on food security and hunger in post 2012 agreements in a comprehensive climate deal.

## From plenty to hunger

Why this shift? Essentially because parties, policy makers and civil society will all come away from Cancun with an enhanced understanding that there is more life and more diversity in a handful of soil than on all other planets we know of in our solar system. Our soil is teeming with life. Despite this oxymoron thousands of children die every day because of malnutrition. How is it possible that we came from paradise and plenty, to today's finding ourselves in a world where 925 million go to bed hungry?

According to the UN special rapporteur on food security, Olivier de Schütter, we will see an additional 600 million hungry people in the world by 2080, due to new rain patterns and drought. This is a paradox, when we know that agriculture as such is only 10.000 years old. Our ancestors decided at that time to wander less. They began to domesticate certain plants. They domesticated animals too, and got labour, as well as milk, pigs and dogs. Agriculture gave greater food security and the ability to feed more people and create larger communities. Researchers estimate that approximately 5000 species might have been domesticate by man. But today we know that 75% of our crop genetic varieties have gone from the farmers fields. That's erosion for you!

## Climate Strikes Back

But the way we have managed the knowledge Eve and her descendants gave us has made us forget our link to nature. The violent floods in Pakistan and droughts in Russia in August show how climate change affects global food security and all farmers, in both rich and poor countries. It also shows that reliance on modern, monoculture agriculture is part of the problem, contributing to climate change. This is also true from a carbon point of view; of the 13.8% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from agriculture the main bulk comes from industrialized countries.

The link to agriculture and food security underpins a graver link to sovereign nation-

al security issues. Earlier this year Russia decided to halt its grain exports because of fires and a heat wave, while Canada's crop was reduced by almost a quarter due to flooding. Wheat prices have risen by about 70 percent since June. This price increase has also put pressure on international prices for maize and rice, which will hit poor countries. In Maputo, Mozambique, six people were killed in riots on the 2nd of September, partly due to this.

## Africa at risk

Climate change will have a profound effect on global food security, and in line with this connotations for national security. In countries where extreme risk and vulnerabilities are predicted and in many cases already occurring this impact will be magnified. The synergistic link climate change implicates heavily on the food security sector, and further onto national security.

The average income spend of most poor households, particularly in Africa is largely dedicated on good – between 50 to 100% of income. This leaves very limited household financial capital resources for new investments, improved seeds, or school uniforms and school fees. This further links into education with many children falling out of the formal education system and hence livelihood enhancement strategies linked to formal stable employment fade away, and realities of crime and insecurity creep in. A harsh reality climate change will implicate upon us is an entrenchment of poverty – there will be more children, and



more people will be born poor, live poor and die poor. Consequently the increase in food prices we are now witnessing is so disastrous for those at the bottom of the ladder.

## Eat of the Tree of Knowledge

The Human Rights Declaration of 1948 recognizes the right to food as a human right. Unilateral commitment to industrial-scale agriculture is not sustainable. Rough estimates show that there are three billion small-scale producers throughout the world. It is among this group it is important to invest extra efforts of adaptability and resilience in both their livelihoods and production systems to buffer against food and general security. If such resilience is built up and small scale farmers are able to control their everyday lives, they will also be good stewards of natural resources, producing sufficient food, that that is able

to stimulate an income and propel them away from the grip of poverty. It is here the climate adaptation fund comes into the picture; for it to succeed it must invest in better extension services and adaptive methodology for small-scale peasants.

The Biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden can be interpreted in many ways. A variation is that the story symbolizes man's transition from free and happy hunters and gatherers, to settled farmers who had to work hard and sweat in order to earn his daily bread, as it says in scripture. But hunger and famine have followed people from the very dawn of time. Today we know what it takes to eliminate hunger and in doing so will ensure a more equitable and safer system. We have eaten of the tree of knowledge. We can still live in paradise, if there is enough political will. The negotiators here at Cancun should thus take a leaf out of the book

of Eve, and have a new bite of the apple in these last closing vital days of talks, in the form of evidence based science. Therefore despite a backdrop of hunger, there is reason for cautious optimism. There is knowledge and there are ways of improving small-scale food security with sustainable methods. Reaching some type of understanding here in Cancun on a green climate fund that is to assist in adaptive measures in agriculture is an important stepping stone to a much greater achievement of national security which starts in the bellies of its hungry citizens.

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**Andrew P. Kroglund,**  
Director of Information and Policy,  
The Development Fund, Norway.  
[andrew@utviklingsfondet.no](mailto:andrew@utviklingsfondet.no)

## First Youth Victory at UN Climate Talks in Mexico

By The YOUNGO Youth Constituency

**The first international success at the United Nations climate talks in Mexico was reached with the help of more than 100 young people from around the world.**

**A**rticle 6, as it's called in the UN text, ensures that education for sustainable development is supported, especially outreach by youth nongovernmental organizations. The policy also ensures equity, sustainability and opportunity to young people and women from all backgrounds and cultures. Its adoption by UN negotiators Friday constituted a victory for transparency and representation on the international stage, which strengthens civil society's involvement in high-level decisions on **climate change**.

For youth leaders, it was the realization of more than five months of crafting policies that would appeal to all nations to achieve tangible gains for youth, women and non-formal **educational organizations**. Young people from around the globe gathered to observe and participate in the official discussions.

Danny Hutley from the United Kingdom Youth Climate Coalition praised Article 6's passage, earlier telling negotiations, "No decisions about us, without us."

Robert Owen-Jones, chair of the UN's Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), who oversaw these negotiations, hailed

Article 6 as a "good decision." Owen-Jones met with international youth Monday and said this success highlights that "young people are potent agents of change."

*"In my dreams, I imagine a YOUNGO [international youth] rep standing on stage and reporting to ministers,"* he added.

Owen-Jones also encouraged youth to continue contributing to the UN climate talks and said he wanted thousands more people watching the decisions made.

Following the adoption of Article 6, the international community has been united in its praise for the young. "When all these young people are expecting an outcome we have to stop fighting over details. We must reach a decision now," said a delegate for the Dominican Republic.

Youth active in Article 6 policies included delegates from international organizations such as **the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the British Council, the Federation of Medical Students, the European Youth Forum, United Kingdom Youth Climate Coalition** and Spire (Norway), along with many others.



**For more details contact:**

Kari-Anne Isaksen, Spire  
[kar\\_ann@hotmail.com](mailto:kar_ann@hotmail.com)  
+52 998 192 3804

Danny Hutley, UKYCC  
[drhutley@gmail.com](mailto:drhutley@gmail.com)  
+52 998 108 1912

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*About the international youth climate movement:*

**The international youth movement, or YOUNGO, gained official UN constituency status in 2009.**

*Young people, as responsible global citizens, are responding to climate change from grassroots levels to the highest political platforms, fighting for the survival of all nations and communities at stake and changing the world's course away from the disastrous impacts of climate change.*

*Learn more at:*

<http://www.youthclimate.org>.

# The President of the Republic of Nauru on climate impacts across the Pacific



**L**ast year, heads of state from the world's largest economies gathered at the U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen to show solidarity with their colleagues from smaller, more vulnerable countries in the face of the largest environmental crisis in history. The failure of the negotiations to produce a legally-binding treaty, coupled with shifting domestic politics, have kept the same leaders away from this year's meeting in Cancun, lest they be associated with another breakdown in talks or accused of not putting their own country's problems first.

But while climate change may have become politically inconvenient in the past year for some, the threat it poses to the world is no less real. And for few people is the danger so great as it is for the citizens of Pacific island nations.

For this reason, several heads of state from our region will personally take part in the Mexico negotiations—to ensure that our interests are fairly represented and to remind the world that, for us, action on climate change is not simply a matter of politics, but of survival.

The countries in our region are spread across thousands of square miles in the Pacific and include hundreds of small islands and coral atolls. The region is home to over 8 million people, 600 distinct languages, and some of the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems in the world.

As with other small island states, our low-lying terrain, remote geography, vulnerability to storms, and dependence on natural resources have made the impacts of climate change all the more severe.

For example, the combination of rising seas and intensifying weather events has led to coastal erosion and the intrusion of saltwater into agricultural land and our increasingly scarce fresh water supplies. At

sea, ocean acidification and coral bleaching have degraded fisheries and threaten our tourism economy.

Even more concerning, a steady rise in sea level has put some of our member's islands at risk for complete inundation. In fact, hundreds of people from Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and other parts of our region have already been forcefully displaced due to climate-related impacts, making them among the world's first climate refugees and raising a number of previously unimaginable questions: If our homes are swallowed by the sea, where would we go? What country will we belong to? Who will own our fish and undersea resources?

These dilemmas are by no means isolated to the Pacific. New research has shown that the rapid loss of ice sheets could contribute to an increase of sea level of over a meter, which would put New York, London, Shanghai, and many other coastal cities at risk for severe flooding. The International Organization for Migration has said that rising seas could lead to as many as 200 million climate-impact related refugees worldwide by 2050. This is clearly a crisis with implications for international peace and security and must be urgently attended to.

So what can we achieve in Cancun? In spite of the low expectations that have been set for the meeting, we can still take a step toward reaching an agreement that helps protect millions of people in low-lying countries if progress is made in the following areas.

**First**, governments must preserve the international character of climate change policymaking. At Copenhagen, some governments began lobbying for a system that would replace an internationally binding agreement with a patchwork of domestic regulations and enforcement regimes. Such a proposal would disenfranchise the voices of millions of people most at risk from climate change and undermine the

multilateral approach that is the cornerstone of international relations.

**Second**, the emission reduction targets proposed at the Copenhagen meeting are not nearly sufficient to prevent severe climate impacts to low-lying and coastal areas. We have joined other island states and vulnerable countries throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas in calling for emission reductions designed to keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees, the level scientists say is needed to significantly reduce the risk to our islands and surrounding reefs and atolls.

**Third**, the international community should use this opportunity to establish readily accessible sources of funding specifically dedicated to help vulnerable communities such as ours adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change. It is critical that this support be additional to previous commitments to international development aid and administered according to the highest standards of fairness and transparency.

The predicament facing the Pacific's low-lying states, though seemingly far removed from the world's largest cities and capitals, in fact is just the earliest manifestation of a crisis shared the world over. A failure to do what is necessary to protect us now will eventually doom all of humanity to a similar fate.

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**H.E. Marcus Stephen is the President of the Republic of Nauru, which currently holds the chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), a grouping of Pacific Missions at the United Nations that work together to raise issues of common concern to the countries in their region.**

**The PSIDS include Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.**

# Adapting to climate change:

the 'how' is just as important as the 'how much'

Dan Smith & Janani Vivekananda  
International Alert



**N**o longer can anyone seriously deny that climate change is happening. The world has already warmed by 0.7°C in the 20th century and almost every year this century has been warmer than in the last. Even if by some miracle, greenhouse gas emissions were to stabilise now, the air and seas will continue to warm, and the knock-on consequences of the emissions already in the atmosphere will carry on being felt over the next 3-4 decades. But whatever happens in Cancun, this miracle will not and CO2 levels will continue to rise.

This means that we need to adapt. Communities around the world already have to find ways to live with scarcer water, changing monsoon patterns, more intense and frequent storms and rising sea levels.

Adaptation has not received the same amount of attention – in negotiations and in donor financing – as mitigation. The reason for this is that unlike the neat quotas which can be discussed at a global level in mitigation debates, adaptation will necessarily be untidy. It will take all sorts of forms in different contexts. Some communities will have to cope with sudden and dramatic changes; others will face slow, creeping changes, even within the same country. For example, whilst the Koshi river floods inundated the southern plains of Nepal in 2008, communities in the middle-hills just some 200 kms north of the plains have been watching their ground water drying up, making agricultural livelihoods unviable for these remote hill communities. Even within a small geographic area, it is impossible to generalise the nature of impacts communities will face. Furthermore, given that specific data on local level climate impacts is still far off, adaptation response are not only variable but also uncertain. It is hard to know exactly how each community will need to adapt

Most of the energy devoted to discussing adaptation focuses on responding to the direct risks of climate change, such as by

switching crops, building flood defences, moving homes and building dwellings differently. But, important as it is to address the direct impacts, it is the knock-on social consequences that ultimately require more attention and resources. These knock-on consequences of climate change will be the most far reaching, yet are the least discussed.

Climate change is not only a climate issue. The knock-on consequences of climate impacts such as changing monsoon patterns and increased natural disasters will affect the national economy, trade, development, equity, governance and political stability. And these issues all affect the ability of people and governments to respond constructively to the challenges climate change generates. A quick look at the terrible plight of Pakistan this year shows only too clearly how the floods rapidly fuelled widespread political unrest due to the perceived inability of the national government to adequately respond to people's needs.

Most of the least developed countries lack the financial, technical and political institutions necessary for such endeavours. Even if they were to receive adequate financial support, they lack technical capacity, stable governance and representative political institutions necessary for providing public goods such as efficient irrigation or public information about the dangers of soil erosion and floods due to deforestation.

When adaptation does get attention, the focus has invariably been on the headline issues of securing financial pledges from the rich polluters. It's important but it wholly misses the crucial detail of how problems need to be addressed. When it comes to adaptation, the trees are as important as the forest. The how is just as, if not more important than the how much.

Yes, we need to ensure there is sufficient

financing available for those most at risk to adapt. But responses to climate change have to work within the political and social realities of the communities they are targeted at or they will not work. The problems of climate change are interlinked, so the responses must be too.

The task is twofold: first there needs to be greater understanding of the social complexities of response to climate change; secondly, decisions and institutional mechanisms need to be shaped so as to address the challenges of linked with linked responses.

If responses to climate change take account of the broad dimensions of what makes people resilient – not just drought-resistant crops and embankments to protect them from floods, but also the availability of information and the ability to digest and act on it, relationships of trust between citizens and authorities, viable livelihoods options and good governance, there's a good chance that adaptation efforts could yield a double dividend: increasing resilience to climate change and developing new approaches to poverty reduction. Failure to take account of the linkages however will result in widespread mal-adaptation and a monumental wasted opportunity.

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#### About the authors:

**Dan Smith**, Secretary General of International Alert, and **Janani Vivekananda**, Senior Climate Change and Security Adviser in International Alert's Security and Peacebuilding Programme, are co-authors of *A Climate of Conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war*, published by International Alert in 2007, and *Climate Change, Conflict and Fragility: Understanding the linkages, shaping effective responses*, published by International Alert in 2009.

# Women Leaders on Climate Change



On Monday, December 6th, former President of Ireland and human rights activist **Mary Robinson** convened a side event entitled “**Women Leaders on Climate Change**”. This event brought together a group of high-profiled women leaders in the climate change arena including: **Christiana Figueres**, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC; **Ambassador Patricia Espinosa**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of COP16/ CMP6; **Lykke Friis**, Minister for Climate Energy and Gender Equality of Denmark; **Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, Coordinating Minister for Heritage of Republic of Ecuador; and, **Connie Hedegaard**, European Commissioner for Climate Action.

The event aimed to engage women Ministers, negotiators, key civil society figures and senior women leaders in a discourse on the role of women’s leadership in the fight against climate change and in promoting climate justice as a strong, fair, and effective approach to climate change. President of the COP and Foreign Mi-

nister of Mexico, Patricia Espinosa stated that, “women in decision-making positions have a clear responsibility to provide leadership in making policies that bring a gender perspective to the climate change issue.” Further to this, as pointed out by Minister Garcés, strong leadership is not just about women sitting in conferences making high-level decisions, but also about the women at the grassroots level. This understanding of women as agents of change needs to be incorporated into adaptation, mitigation, and finance policies resulting from climate talks. According to Minister Garcés, leadership should be about bridging the gap between women at all levels, to ensure the inclusion of justice in outcomes.

Speaking on climate justice and the role of women, Executive Secretary Figueres spoke on the importance of technology and education. “Half of the world’s women still cook on open fires. Therefore to be fair, women would have to own up to the fact that they are responsible for some actions that contribute to climate change.

What would be just however, would be to realize that unless and until half of the world’s women are granted quick and affordable access to clean technologies, black soot and deforestation will continue to occur. Women leaders have the responsibility to push for policies that implement solutions focused on investing in women’s and girls’ education, better technologies which can actually be used by women, and that can be quickly disseminated particularly in rural areas.”

WEDO believes the only true way to face climate change is to promote women’s leadership at all levels to move towards a sustainable future. We actively work to promote women’s leadership and participation through our advocacy efforts at the UNFCCC negotiations as well as through the Women Delegates Fund (WDF) project.

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