



Government of Tokelau

Office of the Council for the Ongoing Government



**PRESIDENT MACRON AND PACIFIC COMMUNITY
ORGANISED PACIFIC LEADERS DIALOGUE ON BIODIVERSITY, CLIMATE
CHANGE AND THE REGION'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.**

**SPC HEADQUARTERS
NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA
3-5 MAY 2018**

'Men argue, nature acts.'

**STATEMENT BY HON. AFEGA GAUALOFA
ULU O TOKELAU**

[Delivered by Ms Paula Faiva, Manager, Climate Change Ministry]

FRIDAY, 4 May 2018

“Men argue, nature acts”: Biodiversity, climate change and the Pacific region’s development agenda

Introduction

Mr Chairman, Hon. French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, Your Excellency, President of the Government of New Caledonia, Hon. Philippe Germain, Hon. Pacific Leaders and members of your delegations, Members of the diplomatic corps, Heads of UN and Regional Organisations, Invited Guests, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. Bonjour.

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Ulu o Tokelau, Hon. Afega Gualofa, the Government, the Elders, and the people of Tokelau, on this historic dialogue. Hon. Gualofa sends his apologies for not being here with us today, due to prior commitments at home.

Let me start with these words from the United States Construction Industry Round Table (CIRT¹) newsletter published in 2014:

“The great [French]man of letters and champion of reason, “Voltaire” might have been talking about climate when he wrote, “Men argue, nature acts.” Men and women argue about climate change...but nature does what nature does, acts, be it drought, ...rain and/or natural disasters like hurricanes. Argue as we will, we inevitably either enjoy and/or suffer the acts of nature.”²

Wendell Berry, American novelist, poet, and farmer wrote,

“A man cannot despair if he can imagine a better life, and if he can enact something of its possibility.”³

Tokelau’s approach to climate change is guided by reason and optimism. I contend this is the same approach used by your government, Hon Foreign Minister, to successfully negotiate the Paris Agreement in 2015.

We know France is deeply committed to supporting global efforts to fight climate change and its impact on Pacific societies. We applaud the French republic leadership in this regard.

¹ CIRT is composed exclusively of approximately 100 CEOs from the leading architectural, engineering and construction firms doing business in the United States.

² http://www.cirt.org/Resources/Documents/CIRT_3RDQ_2014_FINAL.pdf

³ Goodman, M and J. Thornton (2017), Client Earth, Scribe Publications, 18-20 Edward St, Brunswick, Victoria 3056, Australia, Introduction, 314 pp.

Bio-diversity and climate change

From our perspective, we view biodiversity and climate change from an “oceanic-pono” lens. *Pono* is a Polynesian word commonly rendered as righteous, morality, truth, genuine, sincere, rooted in principles of value, justice, and equity.

The 2016 Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) *Te Moana o Hiva Declaration on the Ocean*⁴ captures the essence of who we are as people of the Moana vaha when they declared:

“Our ocean is a biodiversity treasure, a showcase for nature, which we are happy to share with the rest of the world and for which we urge respect and protection. Our ocean is the foundation of our economy. Tourism, fishing, aquaculture and sea mining and energy resources are the drivers of our development and our growth prospects.”

I urge all dialogue delegates to review the Declaration in full. Tokelau believes the recommendations contained therein, remain valid to date, especially the following:

1. *Enhance the capacity and ability of PLG member countries so that they can effectively implement adaptation and mitigation actions, in particular through technology development, dissemination and deployment, access to climate finance, support for relevant aspects of education, training and public awareness and the transparent, timely and accurate communication of innovation, as provided for in Article 11-1 of the Paris Agreement (para 11).*
2. *Set up a "Blue Ocean Fund" within the framework of the Green Climate Fund, funded in proportion to the emissions of countries whose carbon we absorb (para 12).*
3. *Recognize the particular situation of autonomous territories not eligible to financial instruments, technology transfer mechanisms and capacity building, as provided for in the Paris Agreement by:*
 - *Allowing Parties to [the] UNFCCC, on behalf of their autonomous territories, to deposit a specific contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions;*
 - *Applying to autonomous territories the principle of differentiation, to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities of the Parties (para 13).*

We urge France to consider and act on the above recommendations.

⁴ Polynesian Leaders Group, *Te Moana o Hiva, Declaration on the Ocean* (2016), Tahiti, French Polynesia.

Bio-diversity, climate change and the region's development agenda

In thinking about the relevance of the Bonn Climate Change Conference that started this week, and ongoing future UNFCCC and related conferences, to Tokelau and our region's development agenda, numerous questions arise but one dominates;

Why is the Ocean, our region's biodiversity treasure, the foundation of our region's economic development agenda and our growth perspectives, still not yet fully recognised in the post Paris Agreement negotiations, especially under the NDCs agenda?

Under the Paris Agreement, nations pledged their NDCs, which indicate how national governments are evaluating climate risks and policy opportunities. In our view, NDCs is the heart of the Paris Agreement.

According to a study published in Nature in October 2017 "Ocean commitment under the Paris Agreement", as of June 2016, 161 governments had filed NDCs, of which 70% include some mention of marine issues.⁵ The majority of ocean-inclusive NDCs (103) focus on climate change impacts and adaptation needs in marine areas. The dominant concerns raised by governments were coastal impacts (95 NDCs), ocean warming impacts (77 NDCs), and fisheries impacts (72 NDCs). The study also reveals gaps between scientific and government attention, including on ocean deoxygenation, which is barely mentioned.

Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, if 161 governments which covers 188 nations (since the NDCs from the EU spans all 28 EU members), include reference to marine issues in their NDCs, then ocean/biodiversity requires full attention of Parties negotiating the Paris Agreement Work Program (PAWP), and agreement on a set of decisions to operationalize the Paris Agreement, to be adopted at COP24 in December.

At minimum, we need clearly defined "features" of NDCs, transparent reporting of how nations "account" for implementing their NDC and their financial contributions, "mandatory" recognition of developing countries, territories included, adaptation efforts, and cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which include market and non-market-based approaches.

We trust France and the international community will work with us to ensure the ocean/biodiversity, critical to climate mitigation and adaptation, is one of the main "features" of NDCs. In this regard, we acknowledge France, Morocco and Fiji's leaderships, as Presidents of COP21, 22 and 23, in raising awareness about the ocean in the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement and related negotiations.

Tokelau contends NDCs will determine the fate of the Paris Agreement and ultimately our collective efforts to safeguard our planet earth's climate. There is no Planet B.

Merci monsieur. Fakafetai ni.

⁵ Gallo, N.D., et al., 2017, Ocean commitment under the Paris Agreement <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5255342w/qt5255342w.pdf> <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/nclimate3422>., accessed April 30, 2018.