



## MediaGlobal Panel on Climate Change presents solutions for impending climate crisis

May 13, 2014 | Least Developed Countries, Post-2015 | By Jennifer Guay

UNITED NATIONS, MediaGlobal News – Scientists, journalists, professors, ambassadors, and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Small Island Developing States gathered at the United Nations last Wednesday for a panel discussion on the phenomenon the UN Secretary-General has designated [the defining issue of our time](#): climate change.

MediaGlobal, in partnership with the Earth Institute and the United Nations Correspondents Association, sponsored the panel, which emphasized the responsibility of politicians, scientists, and most critically, the media to disseminate information about the impact of climate change on developing countries. The main focus of the panel was to create awareness of climate crisis as it relates to the Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – the nations most likely to be hit the soonest and the hardest by climate change.

Claudia Dreifus, Columbia University professor and New York Times Science section columnist, moderated the panel, which was held at a time when the UN and its member states are actively discussing sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

Just a day earlier, the White House released a [report](#) warning Americans that the impacts of climate change are now palpable nationwide, with more extreme weather conditions touching every corner of the US.

Congruently, 2014 marks the International Year of the SIDS. With the SIDS Conference in Samoa end-August and the LDCs Conference in November, more attention is being drawn to the fact that LDCs and SIDS are most vulnerable to climate change, and are seeing the effects of global warming temperatures, sea level rise, torrential rains, drought, and extreme weather conditions.

"You don't need a scientist to tell what's happening [in Samoa]. You just need to see coastlines being eroded – where you used to see sandy beaches, they're no longer there," Ambassador Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia of Samoa told **MediaGlobal News**. "Through their own practical experience, the people know something is not right."

In September, the UN in New York will host the first-ever Climate Summit in an effort to mobilize nations prior to the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris.

Under-Secretary General Gyan Chandra Acharya spoke about the importance of promoting global cooperation for climate change solutions through the United Nations.

"As an international organization, we have to look at it in an unequivocal, holistic matter," said Under-Secretary General Acharya. "We must find an ambitious, legally binding framework so we can start reducing emissions."

According to Ambassador Caleb Otto of Palau, the media is the most powerful agent for disseminating information about climate change.

"We're blessed in Palau in the sense that culturally, we already have a frame of mind that is more in tune with the environment than other people," Ambassador Otto told **MediaGlobal News**. "There's a lot more coverage at home because there's much more education on climate change."

Nosh Nalavala, International Bureau Chief at MediaGlobal News, called for a shift to more accessible public communication of climate change by scientists and, more importantly, journalists. He cited news outlets that are growing their climate change coverage – Bloomberg, for example, reported 133 percent more climate change news in 2013 than in 2012 – while others have yet to devote more resources to covering the phenomenon.

He announced two new initiatives: The Development Writers Program, a fellowship program and Climate Solutions Television, both based in the United Nations and aimed at creating awareness around the constraints of vulnerable countries.

Michael Gerrard, Director of Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia Law School, lamented that too much coverage in the American media is given to climate change deniers who lack legitimate research to substantiate their claims. Misrepresentative media coverage, often afforded in the name of fair and balanced coverage, can have "very corrosive



From left to right, Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia Law School Director Michael Gerrard, Ambassador Caleb Otto of Palau, UN Under-Secretary General Gyan Chandra Acharya, New York Times science columnist Claudia Dreifus, and Ambassador Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia of Samoa gathered to discuss the impacts of climate change at a panel on Wednesday. Not pictured: MediaGlobal International Bureau Chief Nosh Nalavala. Photo credit: Tamar Auber/MediaGlobal

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United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presents the Award to Nosh Nalavala, International Bureau Chief of MediaGlobal/UNEARTH News

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political effects,” according to Gerrard.

Ambassador Elisaia said that politics can be a very powerful agent in bringing climate change to the forefront of the global agenda – but can also slow progress.

“I always maintain that at the end of the day, it’s a political issue,” Ambassador Elisaia told **MediaGlobal News**. “Climate change is a toxic topic. People get offended if somebody says: ‘You should do this because your forefathers put us in this situation.’ But for me, it’s a phrase I rarely use, because my focus is on today and tomorrow, rather than yesterday.”

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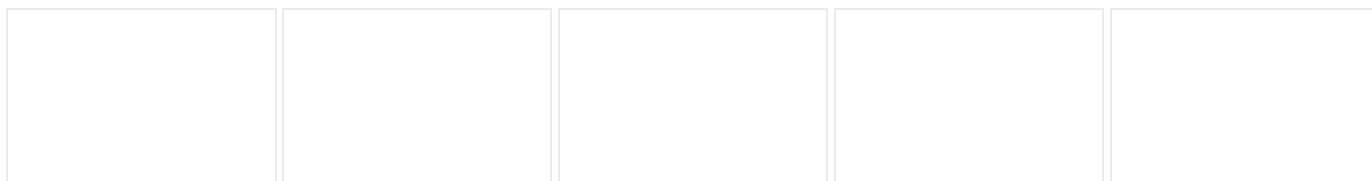

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MediaGlobal disseminates news stories globally on economic development, global health, food security and the impact of climate change on developing countries.

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