

HackMUN V

GENERAL ASSEMBLY: CONFERENCE ON PACIFIC ISLANDS



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Position Paper Policy

If you wish to be considered for an award this year at HackMUN V, you must turn in a position paper. Position Papers help you prepare effectively for debate and engage meaningfully with the topic before the day of the conference. Furthermore, your chairs can better understand the unique issues and possible solutions, and your committee position at large, prior to the actual beginning of the committee. Please send position papers at least 1.5–2 pages in length, double spaced, in either Google Doc or PDF format by the morning of March 9th to pacificislandshackmun@gmail.com.

Introduction to the Committee

In the past few decades, our world has begun to experience the catastrophic effects of climate change. Marked by an increase in natural disasters, arctic melting, and subsequent rise in sea levels, there is no doubt that the destruction caused by global warming will accelerate past a point of no return. In fact, climate change has already had tangible effects on coastal and island communities throughout the world, namely the Pacific Island Countries (PICs). These nations, which include Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Solomon Islands, and more, are at imminent risk of being submerged in the next few decades. Leaders of these island nations have repeatedly asked major contributors to climate change to implement a plan that can reverse the effects of rising sea levels on Pacific Island communities, but some believe that the damage is irreversible.

In this committee, you will answer this important question: Do we continue to try to implement climate policies in order to save Pacific Islands from destruction, or do we accept that we cannot change their fate, and instead move our efforts to relocation? You will work with other countries to develop fair and effective policies to support the Pacific Island nations and their citizens. You will debate the effectiveness and implementation of new climate policies, create plans for relocation of Pacific Islanders, and consider the economic effects of the “dispersion” of Pacific Islanders to other nations.



Topic 1: Rising Sea Levels

Rising sea levels in low-lying PICs represent an imminent threat to their citizens, infrastructure, and economy. Current estimates by scientists indicate that the sea is now rising at about 0.1 inches per year, but will rise faster in coming years. The impact of exponentially rising sea levels would be catastrophic, as it would lead to a destruction of ecosystems, biodiversity, and infrastructure. Citizens would also be forced to relocate to areas of higher elevation within their country, or in other countries, which could lead to overpopulation and crucial considerations regarding citizenship status and immigration (see Topic 2). At least twenty islands across the world are expected to “disappear” over the next few decades. In the Pacific, islands like Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshal Islands are at risk of partially sinking in the next few decades. In fact, Tuvalu’s Minister of Justice Simon Kofe grabbed global attention for his nation of 12,000 people last year when he addressed a global climate conference standing ankle deep in the sea to illustrate Tuvalu was “sinking.” Forty percent of the capital district is underwater at high tide, and the tiny country is forecast to be fully submerged by the end of the century. Climate change is also destroying Pacific reefs and fisheries, which could severely damage the economies of these islands.

Topic 2: Relocation

Rising sea levels represent a threat to the integrity of the Pacific Islands as nations. Citizens may have to permanently relocate to other countries to avoid homelessness and unemployment. Relocation policies are currently in their early stages. For example, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga and New Zealand set up a scheme to allow workers to migrate to New Zealand if they had a job offer. Each year prior to COVID, 75 people from Kiribati were able to migrate through the scheme. Currently, New Zealand is the first and only country offering a permanent labor migration program from Kiribati. More places for citizens of Kiribati and other Pacific Islands to relocate to are necessary in the near future. Like New Zealand,

Australia has expanded its seasonal worker schemes for Pacific workers, and is now moving towards a longer stay, multi-visa arrangement under its Pacific Labour Scheme. Australia has not expanded this policy, and it is unclear if this will evolve into a permanent migration scheme similar to New Zealand. While other solutions such as climate-proofing infrastructure or even floating islands have been proposed for Kiribati, these cannot happen overnight and are very expensive. By contrast, labor mobility is fast and advantageous to the host country, so it could prove to be part of a promising relocation plan. Countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, and Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia, who are all much larger and developed Pacific Islands (and are not at imminent risk of sinking) could also play a role in the relocation of Pacific Islanders, one that may be less disruptive than moving Pacific Islanders all over the world.

What will soon take place is this “Great Pacific Diaspora,” where inhabitants of countries like Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tonga will abandon their jobs, culture, and land in order to live without the threat of constant climate disasters. As one writer from Kiribati put it, “We are on the front line of this crisis, despite having done amongst the least to cause it. It is difficult to leave the only home we have known. But science does not lie. And we can see the water coming.” Countries like the United States and China are disproportionately causing the most climate-related damages, while the PICs emit relatively little but pay the bulk of the price. However, it is important to understand that many Pacific Islanders do not want to relocate, as it would mean abandoning their culture and way of life. They see relocation as a last resort, and instead call on other countries to help reduce emissions and adapt to the dangerous circumstances created by climate change. Unfortunately, for some island nations, relocation may be the only option at this point.

There is also the question of citizenship. When these Pacific Islanders migrate from their home country, do they lose their citizenship? After all, it does not quite make sense to be a citizen of an uninhabitable country. Some believe they should automatically gain citizenship of their host country, because unlike most types of immigration, this would be *forced* immigration. As a minister from Kiribati wrote, “we want citizens of Kiribati to be able to migrate as first class citizens with access to secure futures rather than as climate refugees.”

Topic 3: Global Economic Competition

Climate change's effects in PICs are fostering global economic competition between world powers. PICs, though small, make significant contributions to the world economy. The Pacific region accounts for more than 50 percent of the world's catch of marine and river fish and 89 percent of global aquaculture. PICs have strong trade and diplomatic relations with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. In recent years, countries like China have sought to strengthen their economic and military grasp in the Pacific. China recently signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands, and has previously made similar deals with Vanuatu. The United States has felt provoked by China's actions in the Pacific. China's interests have increasingly sparked concern in Australia as well, which has traditionally considered the Pacific to be its "backyard."

The Pacific Islands are in a strategic geographical location, as they are in the middle of the U.S., China, and Australia and can serve as military checkpoints. Because of this, some believe that the climate crisis in these countries will be pushed aside so that world powers like China and the U.S. can advance their own ambitions in the area. For example, Tuvalu fears that its climate change issues are being forgotten by world powers, and it worries that fellow island nations could become "pawns" in a global competition between China and the United States, its foreign minister said. Simon Kofe, the Minister of Justice, noted that "superpower competition was a concern, distracting attention from climate change, the priority for Pacific islands endangered by rising sea levels." It is important for the Pacific Islands to handle deals with other countries very carefully so they avoid falling into the trap of being taken advantage of by foreign powers.

NOTE: We encourage you to continue reading beyond the contents of this background guide.

Positions

Note to Delegates: Please read through the descriptions of your country as well as the descriptions of other countries. These descriptions outline important policy perspectives and unique features of each country in the committee.

Kiribati

Despite only being responsible for 0.6% of the world's emissions, Kiribati is the country most at risk of being fully submerged in the next couple decades. This submersion has already begun: in 1999, two of Kiribati's uninhabited islands, Abanuea and Tebua Tarawa (the latter used by fisherman) disappeared under the waves. Now, storm surges cause the sea to invade the land increasingly more often, contaminating freshwater reserves, killing crops and flooding homes. Kiribatians have already begun to emigrate in response to what they believe to be an unavoidable situation. Others cling on to their land, looking for temporary solutions. Residents have begun building walls out of coral rocks which are then destroyed by the high tide. Some towns have shifted a few metres inland, and mangroves have been planted to protect the soil from erosion and mitigate storm surges.

The possibility has also been discussed of building an enormous floating platform, similar to those used by petroleum companies, or temporary sea defenses; however, both options have been ruled out due to their high cost— the platform would cost around 2 billion dollars, which is 10 times Kiribati's GDP. In search of a more realistic solution, the Kiribati government has bought land in Fiji to grow crops and possibly even serve as somewhere to evacuate the country's entire population if the worst does happen. However, this is only a band-aid solution because Fiji is also at risk of being submerged in the future. The World Bank has argued that Australia and New Zealand should allow open migration of people displaced by climate change from Kiribati and other Pacific islands threatened by the sea. Until now, only the New Zealand government has responded to the needs of Kiribatians, allowing 75 people to migrate to New Zealand per year.

Tuvalu

The fourth smallest nation in the world, Tuvalu is home to just 11,000 people, most of whom live on the largest island of Fongafale, where they are packed in and fighting for space. Tuvalu's total land area accounts for less than 26 sq km. Already, two of Tuvalu's nine islands are on the verge of going under, the government says, swallowed by sea-rise and coastal erosion. Most of the islands sit barely three meters above sea level. Scientists predict Tuvalu could become uninhabitable in the next 50 to 100 years. Tuvalu is heavily reliant on foreign aid, with most of its GDP made up from donations from the UN and neighboring countries.

Plans for adapting to climate change include the ongoing – and much delayed – construction of a sea wall to protect the administrative centre of the capital, funded by the United Nations Development Program. The local town council has a plan to dredge and reclaim land at the south of Fongafale, raise the land 10 meters above sea level, and build high-density housing. It is a plan that would cost \$300 million, and that so far has no funding. Tuvalu has not welcomed the idea of relocation. Tuvalu's prime minister, Enele Sopoaga, has said that evacuation would be a last resort, despite frequent talk from Pacific neighbours that Tuvaluans will become the world's first climate-change refugees. Fiji has repeatedly offered land to the Tuvaluan government to relocate their population 1,200km south, an offer the Sopoaga government has not accepted. Former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd suggested Tuvalu's citizens could be offered full citizenship in exchange for their country's maritime and fisheries rights; a proposal rejected by Sopoaga. According to him, "Moving outside of Tuvalu will not solve any climate change issues ... If you put these people in the middle of industrialized countries it will simply boost their consumptions and increase greenhouse gas emissions." In the event that Tuvalu becomes uninhabitable, the Tuvalu government wants to retain sovereignty over its waters and the natural resources contained in them. Lastly, Tuvalu plans to build a virtual version of their country using virtual reality, a first step to preserving its rich culture and history.

United States

The United States is undeniably one of the world's major contributors to climate change. In comparison to the carbon footprint of the Pacific Islands, the United States represents a stark contrast: in 2018, each person in Kiribati was responsible for 0.95 tons of carbon dioxide emissions. By contrast, each person in the United States was responsible for 17.7 tons. This disparity inevitably causes the Pacific Islands to be disproportionately harmed by the actions of major emitters like the United States. In recent years, policymakers have sought to change this dynamic. President Joe Biden recently pledged to make the United States a leader in climate finance by supporting nations worst hit by climate change and with the least resources to cope (namely, the Pacific Islands). New laws have been proposed to allow people displaced by climate change to live in America, which could be promising, but there is significant backlash from some American policymakers, who claim that the United States already has border immigration problems, and letting more individuals migrate to America would only worsen the situation.

Currently, the United States has directly provided over \$1.5 billion to support the Pacific Islands over the past decade and has recently announced over \$810 million in additional expanded programs. This financial aid has aimed to improve conditions in these countries and prepare these countries for dealing with climate disasters. It is also worth noting that the Pacific Island Countries and the United States have very established trade relations, and recently the U.S. has been mildly threatened by countries like China who seek to benefit economically from the Pacific Island Countries.

China

China's emissions of greenhouse gasses grew by 75% from 2005–2019, a drastic increase compared to world's total emissions, which grew by 24%. China is the world's largest emitter of Greenhouse gasses, releasing 12.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide in 2019, much of it attributed to economic expansion and rising energy demands. China is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has ratified the Paris Agreement, meaning they are aiming to reduce emissions significantly.

Climate change has become an increasingly important part of China-Pacific relations in recent years and now features prominently in high-level visits between the two sides. At the first China-Pacific Islands Economic Development and Cooperation Forum in 2006, China pledged to support PICs in responding to natural disasters. In 2013, China promised more support for Pacific Island Countries in environmental protection and natural disaster prevention and mitigation. In recent years, the China-Pacific Island Countries Climate Action Cooperation Center has worked with Pacific island countries, working to improve the countries' ability to cope with climate change. China has donated much-needed equipment to Kiribati and other islands and gave millions of dollars to fund climate-related infrastructure projects. At this point, China has not expressed interest in taking in displaced citizens of Pacific Island Countries, although this may change as the climate crisis in countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu worsens. China has been expanding their economic grasp on Pacific Island nations in the past few years, which threaten the United States' and Australia's trade and diplomatic relations with these countries.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a small player when it comes to global carbon emissions. Last year, it produced 78.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent – well below the biggest emitters, China and the United States. But the New Zealand government takes climate change seriously, and last year released its first emissions reductions plan to meet a goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Despite this, New Zealand is starting to feel the effects of rising sea levels and climate change. Sea-level rise and storm surges cause coastal erosion which takes sand away from beaches. In the future, communities will have to decide whether to fortify the coast with structures like seawalls, or retreat and build further back from the coast. There is no doubt that rising sea levels will destroy New Zealand's infrastructure and economy. However, there is still quite a bit of time before New Zealand is in imminent danger of being submerged.

New Zealand is a big player in this committee, as they have a very strong economic and cultural relationship with the Pacific Islands. New Zealand has given hundred of millions of dollars to promote development in the Pacific Islands, and has committed to doing so in the future. During COVID, workers from Kiribati were allowed to migrate and work in New Zealand, and this is the closest the world has gotten to a climate refugee

relocation policy. In 2017, New Zealand's (then) new minister for climate change, James Shaw, announced that the country was considering issuing "an experimental humanitarian visa" category for Pacific Islanders displaced by the effects of climate change. The scheme would aim to bring around 100 people a year to New Zealand. However, this plan was later dropped due to Pacific Islanders expressing their belief in fortifying their country and reducing emissions rather than relocating permanently.

Australia

Due to their close geological distance, Australia has given the most to support the development and protection of PICs. The Australian Government is deeply committed to taking real and significant climate action at home and establishing Australia as a climate leader internationally. They have committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Australia is working in consultation with partner governments in the Pacific to develop programs that address climate change and disaster preparedness. These partner countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australia is the strongest trading partner of the Pacific Islands, currently representing approximately 18% of the total merchandise trade (imports plus exports) of Pacific island countries. This share has declined over the past decade as other trading partners, notably China, have increased their trade with Pacific island countries.

Australia has expanded its seasonal worker schemes for Pacific workers, and is now moving towards a longer stay, multi-visa arrangement under its Pacific Labour Scheme. In 2020, the Australian government was advised by a variety of public health leaders to create a new visa category to allow Pacific Islanders to relocate permanently to Australia in order to mitigate the impact of climate change. The recommendation entailed that Australia relocate 3000 Pacific Islanders per year. Experts argued that adaptation alone is insufficient in the case of the many Pacific islands threatened by increasingly frequent and severe weather events as a result of climate change. Thus far, the Australian government has yet to commit to this, or even consider this as a possible solution to the climate crisis.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands, is an archipelagic nation with rich cultural heritage and diverse ecosystems. Its geographical makeup consists of hundreds of islands spread across vast oceanic territory. This network of islands amplifies the risks associated with rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and storm surges. The Solomon Islands is home to a resilient population that has long-standing traditions deeply rooted in nature. The nation's cultural heritage, including traditional resource management systems and conservation practices, can provide inspiration and guidance for effective climate policies. The Solomon Islands understands the importance of considering cultural preservation, community engagement,

and inclusive decision-making processes in shaping policies and strategies for adaptation and mitigation.

The Solomon Islands has developed national policies and strategies, such as the National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), to enhance resilience and promote sustainable development. It is committed to reducing its reliance on fossil fuels and transitioning towards renewable energy sources, such as solar and hydropower. The Solomon Islands aims to ensure the well-being and rights of its citizens, should the nation seek to relocate. They will work to develop comprehensive plans and strategies for managed relocation, emphasizing cultural preservation and community engagement. It actively participates in regional initiatives, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Islands Development Forum, to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in addressing the impacts of climate change with its fellow island nations.

The Maldives

The Maldives, officially known as the Republic of Maldives, is an archipelago in South Asia, situated in the Indian Ocean, southwest of India and Sri Lanka. The Maldives' chain of atolls spans the equator, covering 90,000 km² total, with just 298 km² of land area. Over 99.5% of the territory of the Maldives is sea, and the highest natural point is just 2.4 meters above sea level, putting the state at a great risk of sinking as a result of climate change. The Maldives is one of the world's smallest nations, having a population just over 500,000, and is the smallest Asian country. As such, the island does not have much politico-economic influence, despite being arguably in the most danger from rising sea levels.

While the Maldives is not a Pacific island, it is one of the countries most at risk of rising sea levels, and as such has spent a lot of time planning for the imminent risk of being permanently flooded. Because of this, their input should be highly valued by the assembly. More than 80% of the country's land consists of coral islands less than one meter above the sea. According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, at current rates of sea level rise, the Maldives will be uninhabitable by 2100, and some sources suggest it could be submerged by 2050. In 2008, President Mohamed Nasheed announced that the country would be looking into purchasing land in India, Sri Lanka, and Australia, so that Maldivians do not have to be "climate refugees living in tents for decades."

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea, officially known as the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, is a country in Oceania, composed of the eastern half of New Guinea and its offshore islands. It is the world's third largest island country, with an area of 463 thousand km². It is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries, with 839 known languages. Papua New Guinea is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and shifts in precipitation patterns. These changes have adverse effects on agriculture, water resources, and the livelihoods of its population,

particularly in rural areas. The country's emissions primarily stem from deforestation and land-use changes, as well as the burning of fossil fuels for energy production and transportation. Deforestation, driven by logging, agricultural expansion, and illegal activities, not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions but also diminishes the country's ability to sequester carbon.

To address these challenges, Papua New Guinea has undertaken various initiatives. The country has developed national policies and frameworks, such as the National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy and the Climate Change (Management) Act, to guide its climate change response. Papua New Guinea is also actively engaged in international climate negotiations, advocating for the interests and concerns of small island developing states. Efforts are being made to promote sustainable land management practices, reforestation, and the use of renewable energy sources. Community-based projects focusing on climate change adaptation and resilience-building are also being implemented. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain in Papua New Guinea's quest to reduce emissions and combat climate change. International support, technological advancements, and financial resources are crucial to assist the country in its endeavors towards a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

Fiji

Fiji has more than 300 islands and a population of just under 1 million. Fiji has seen firsthand the effects of climate disasters on its economy and people. Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 incurred \$1.3 billion in economic losses, including \$700 million in damages and \$600 million in losses. Like many other Pacific islands, Fiji has already had to internally relocate numerous citizens and villages due to rising sea levels. More than 675,000 Fijians or around 75% of the total population are coastal dwellers with *total dependence* on the coastline. The government of Fiji has identified around 800 communities that may have to relocate due to climate change impacts (six have already been moved). Coastal erosion and flooding have severely damaged villages over the past two decades. Homes have been submerged, seawater has spoiled food crops and the seawall has been destroyed. Despite this, almost all of the residents of these islands have chosen to stay. Relocating entire villages is no easy feat, however, and will require significant sums of money to rebuild and rewire areas. In addition to this, in 2021, Fiji published the ground-breaking Climate Change Act, which emphasizes nature-based solutions to combat climate change. One example is the restoration of ecosystems such as mangrove swamps and marshes in coastal communities. These solutions will hopefully improve fisheries, bring back lost biodiversity and boost carbon sequestration.

Palau

Palau, officially known as the Republic of Palau, is a small island nation located in the western Pacific Ocean. Despite its small size and population, Palau faces significant

challenges in terms of emissions and environmental sustainability. Palau is known for its pristine natural beauty, rich marine biodiversity, and vibrant coral reefs. However, the nation is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events. As a result, Palau has recognized the importance of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. In recent years, Palau has taken significant steps to address its emissions. The government has implemented various initiatives and policies to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. For instance, Palau has set a goal to generate 45% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025, and rely fully upon renewable energy by 2050, with full electric vehicle deployment, primarily through solar and wind power. Additionally, the country has launched programs to improve energy efficiency in buildings and promote sustainable transportation. Palau has also been actively engaged in international efforts to combat climate change. The nation has been a vocal advocate for stronger global action and has participated in international agreements and forums, such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Despite these efforts, Palau's emissions remain a challenge due to its reliance on imported fossil fuels and limited resources. The country continues to explore innovative solutions, such as the development of sustainable tourism practices and the implementation of nature-based solutions to mitigate emissions.

Nauru

Nauru, the smallest country in the United Nations, is situated in one of the world's most remote locations. Unfortunately, the surrounding sea is experiencing a worrying trend of increasing warmth, leading to more frequent droughts and severe coastal erosion. These detrimental changes are posing a significant threat to the fish population, upon which Pacific Island communities heavily rely for sustenance. The situation is projected to worsen unless urgent measures are taken to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, the primary driver of global warming. To address the challenges of climate change, Nauru has joined forces with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition comprising 43 islands and low-lying coastal nations that share similar environmental concerns. AOSIS has consistently appealed to developed countries to take concrete steps to reduce their emissions in accordance with scientifically recommended levels. Such efforts are crucial for the survival of all our nations. This call to action is not only driven by the pressing time constraints to avert catastrophe but also by the evident lack of leadership among the world's major economies in confronting the problem, for which they bear significant responsibility. The country's main objective is to make other countries to lower their contributions to climate change in order to avert further crisis.

Vanuatu

The Republic of Vanuatu is composed of about 80 small islands along the southwestern Pacific Ocean, its closest neighbors are Fiji and Australia which Vanuatans are currently depending on as their situation with global warming continues to escalate. Vanuatu was already struggling with natural disasters, such as cyclones, volcanoes, droughts, floods, and much more, but with the combined active threat of global warming an official plan to relocate was made in December 2022. It will take approximately 24 months for over 300,000 Vanuatans to leave their lives behind. The rising sea levels due to global warming have made Vanuata inhabitable especially for those who live closest to the ocean. While Vanutatu has always been a country prone to disasters it is no longer habitable due to climate change. Emission rates have caused irreparable danger to not only Vanuatu but many other countries in the Pacific Islands. The process of a sinking country is not a slow one and officials in government are alerted first, so there decision to wait significant amounts of time to tell the public has been questioned.

Indonesia

Indonesia, the world's tenth largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, is also a country who ranks in the top third of countries experiencing climate risk due to its high exposure to flooding and extreme heat. Since Indonesia is extremely biodiverse, offering both tropical and marine habitats which provide clear air and water control, it is essential that Indonesia is as protected as possible from greenhouse gass emissions. However, Indonesia's accelerated urbanization has put these diverse lands at risk. Since Indonesia's carbon emissions, with land use and energy creating 84% of their emmissions, are so high, sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion have already advanced to the point where communities have had to relocate. Additionally, protracted droughts put people at risk of famine. In the future, the number of "climate refugees" is expected to rise because the intensity of these hazards is expected to grow as the climate becomes hotter.

Indonesia joined global climate talks in 1992. In September 2022, it updated its 2015 Paris Agreement commitment to cut GHG emissions by 32% (or 43% with aid) by 2030. It also aims for net-zero emissions by 2060. Steps taken include forest protection, peatland restoration, and improved firefighting. In energy, they plan for 50% renewable power by 2030 but still rely heavily on coal. Additionally, In Indonesia, USAID focuses on an extensive environmental portfolio, aiming to cut GHG emissions, enhance land-use practices, bolster resilience against natural disasters and climate risks, and encourage renewable energy and energy efficiency adoption.

Philippines

The Philippines, accounting for only 0.3% of global carbon emissions, is confronted with the escalating challenges of rising sea levels and extreme weather events caused by climate change. These phenomena have significantly impacted the nation, with over 60% of its population directly affected by climate-related disasters. The implications of rising sea

levels are particularly concerning for the Philippines. Coastal areas, which are home to millions of Filipinos, are “high risk” areas. Projections indicate that by 2050, 13 million people could be displaced due to increased flooding and the submergence of low-lying regions. The economic toll of climate-related disasters in the Philippines has been substantial, with infrastructure damage alone amounting to an estimated \$20 billion between 2006 and 2016. The Philippine government has set a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030. The Philippines has implemented policies to promote renewable energy sources, enhance energy efficiency, and adopt sustainable land use practices.

The Philippines has advocated for knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and capacity-building among nations to facilitate effective adaptation and climate change mitigation efforts. They also see the importance of stronger regional cooperation within Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands to develop coordinated strategies in dealing with climate-related challenges. Lastly, the Philippines stands ready to assist Pacific Island nations in adapting to the impacts of climate change, providing resources to facilitate smooth transitions and the preservation of their cultures. Relocation to the Philippines may become a viable option for some Pacific islands facing the irreversible consequences of rising sea levels.

Japan

Japan, the world’s 5th biggest carbon emitter, aims to reduce their carbon emissions by 46% in comparison to their 2013 levels by 2030. However, during 2021-2022 their emissions rose 2% - first increase in emissions in 8 years. Since this increase is attributed post-Covid-19 economic recovery and their carbon emissions are 3% lower in 2023 than in 2020, the 2030 goal is plausible. The Pacific Islands and Japan’s friendly diplomatic relationship is enhanced by their close proximity. For example, Pacific Island countries supply food and natural resources to Japan and 40% of Japan’s bonito and tuna are caught in Pacific Island countries. In efforts to maintain their positive relations and transactions with Pacific Island, **Japan supplies aid, tailored to the specific needs of each country. Although they supply aid,** Japan still contributes to the crisis affecting their allies with their high carbon emissions. In the past 30 years, Japan’s annual carbon emissions average to around 1.2 billion tons. However, their emissions have steadily been decreasing and had been nearing 1 billion tons yearly in 2021. Additionally, in 2020 Japan pledged to reach complete carbon neutrality by 2050, targeting a 46% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 from 2013 levels.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the world’s major attackers to climate change and rising sea levels. Being the 17th largest CO₂ emitter, with 368 million metric tons of total carbon dioxide emissions produced in 2016 the UK has taken center stage as a global

frontrunner in the fight against climate change. The UK government has made the commitment to eliminate all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This echoes the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), hosted in Glasgow. The UK's resolute stance materializes through stringent measures aimed at decarbonizing their economy and championing environmental safeguards. The UK's actions reverberate as a beacon of inspiration, motivating nations worldwide to increase their efforts in combatting climate change and safeguarding a healthier planet for generations to come. With the United Kingdom having territories in the Pacific Islands, this gives the nation motivation to battle climate change and rising sea levels. These territories are the Pitcairn Islands, the islands are a British Overseas Territory and formally a British Colony. The Pitcairn Islands are the last British Overseas Territories in the Pacific. The relationship between the Pacific nations and the United Kingdom is their shared values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. They have historical connections rooted in the British Empire and membership in the Commonwealth. Recently, the United Kingdom has bolstered its diplomatic efforts in the Pacific region, demonstrating a firm dedication to enhancing ties with its Pacific counterparts. Emphasizing the pressing concern of climate change, the UK has recognized its significance and urgency. As a testament to its commitment, the UK is actively pursuing both domestic and international strategies to combat this challenge, including offering financial assistance to enhance climate resilience in the Pacific.

India

India, as the world's third-largest emitter of CO₂, faces significant climate change challenges. Coal, comprising 45% of its energy, contributes substantially. To address this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to increase natural gas to 15% by 2030 from the current 6%. Recognizing the urgency, Modi encourages active citizen participation in the fight against climate change. In a recent move, India allocated a \$12 million grant to Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) for impactful developmental projects. This initiative strengthens India's ties with the Pacific, cultivated through the Forum for India–Pacific Island Cooperation (FIPIC). The grant showcases India's commitment to global climate action. During discussions on the sidelines of the UNGA, Modi engaged with PSIDS leaders, emphasizing inclusive and sustainable development to address inequality. The talks covered diverse areas, including sharing development experiences, renewable energy cooperation, disaster resilience, and collaboration in the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. Modi offered India's expertise in renewable energy and pledged developmental assistance and technical training to Pacific nations in priority areas. This diplomatic effort underscores India's commitment to a collective response to climate change and sustainable development.

Malaysia

As a developing nation with a rapidly growing economy, Malaysia faces the dual task of addressing its own carbon emissions while grappling with the impacts of climate change. The government has implemented various initiatives, including the Renewable Energy Act and the National Green Technology Policy, to promote sustainable development and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Rising sea levels pose a significant threat to Malaysia's coastal areas, including major cities like Kuala Lumpur and Penang. The erosion of coastlines, increased frequency of flooding, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources are pressing concerns that require immediate attention. Malaysia actively engages in international collaborations and agreements. Malaysia highlights the importance of equity in climate actions, ensuring that developing nations receive adequate support in adaptation, technology transfer, and capacity-building. It is ready to collaborate with Pacific Islands and share its expertise in addressing climate-related challenges, including potential relocation policies. However, Malaysia remains neutral on relocation programs with the Pacific Islands. Malaysia promotes regional cooperation through platforms like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to strengthen resilience and adaptation measures. The country actively participates in initiatives such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, focusing on sharing best practices, capacity-building, and joint efforts to address climate-related disasters in the region.

Singapore

Singapore, officially the Republic of Singapore, is an island nation and city-state in Southeast Asia, between Malaysia and Indonesia. It is known for its strict laws and low crime. It is very safe and has a very high population density because of its small size. It has four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil. It has an incredibly strong trade system and economy, with the third-highest GDP per capita in the world, and had the highest sovereign credit rating in the world in 2017, and is still considered one of the most economically strong and stable countries in the world. Because of its exceptional economy, Singapore was able to commit 5 billion SGD (Singaporean Dollars) to a Coastline and Flood Protection Fund in 2020. Moreover, it was the first country in Southeast Asia to create a carbon tax on corporations producing more than 25 kilotons of carbon dioxide annually, at 5 SGD per ton. Moreover, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, the nation has accelerated deployment of solar panels on rooftops, and vertical surfaces, and has begun building what is planned to be the world's largest floating solar panel arrays. All of these efforts go toward reducing Singapore's emissions and decelerating rising sea levels and other climate-change-based threats to Singapore and its low coastline.

Questions to Consider

1. Should countries increase efforts to reverse the effects of climate change in Pacific Islands, or accept that we are past the “point of no return” and switch their efforts to relocation of citizens?
2. What climate change/environmental policies might world powers and Pacific Islands implement to reduce the probability of all Pacific Islands sinking completely?
3. What is the role of major world powers in offsetting the economic burden of climate change on Pacific Islands? How do we ensure economic stability in these Pacific Island nations given the frequent climate disasters?
4. On relocation:
 - a. How can the burden of hosting Pacific Islanders be spread across all nations in a fair way?
 - b. What role should major contributors to climate change (like the U.S. and China) play in the relocation of Pacific Islanders?
 - c. Should larger, more developed nations in the Pacific allow migration of Pacific Islanders for job opportunities and permanent relocation?
 - d. How can larger, more developed countries invest in infrastructure to accommodate climate refugees?
5. How can the fundamental rights of citizenship be protected as Pacific Islanders relocate to other countries?
6. How will relocation affect internal problems in host countries and world powers?

Further Reading:

[This document](#) details policy ideas that countries can implement to accommodate climate refugees.

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