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GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

9th Our Oceans Conference 2024
Side Event: Coastal resilience in the climate crisis:
Supporting solutions for small island developing states

Address by Honourable Prime Minister Mark Brown

Athens, Greece | 16 April 2024

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me first thank the organizers of this event. Our engagements and partnerships are now more important than ever. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about two global priority challenges.

First, we must address climate change. It remains the single greatest threat facing our Blue Pacific Continent. As Pacific Small Island Developing States and Low-Lying Atoll States, rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and sea level rise are already taking a toll on marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Urgent action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change on the Pacific Ocean.



Secondly, we must reduce marine pollution, including plastic pollution. Every year, at least 16 million tons of plastic waste enter the ocean, harming marine life and ecosystems. The current negotiations for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution offer

a prime opportunity to ensure we have an ambitious and comprehensive treaty that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics. We must also actively tackle other forms of pollution.

We must protect and restore marine habitats. Protecting and restoring these ecosystems can help enhance resilience to climate change, sustain the livelihoods of communities, and ensure the perpetuation of cultural practices. Maintaining a biodiverse marine environment could also help unlock future medical solutions and innovation.

We must enhance international cooperation and governance of ocean-based activities. Strengthening international frameworks such as UNCLOS and the Paris Agreement can help ensure that our ocean and its ecosystems remain healthy, productive, and resilient.



Leaders of the Pacific have endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent – our regional roadmap that builds on our collective vision, amplifying our voices in solidarity to support delivery of action-orientated solutions. It is our answer to the challenges we face as we chart our course as the Pacific. The pillar on Ocean and Environment encapsulates the work we need to do to protect our people, our ocean, and our livelihoods.

The Pacific Resilience Facility is a Pacific-owned and designed resourcing mechanism under the 2050 Strategy Implementation plan that will help us achieve this vision. The PRF is a climate financing facility that will complement existing climate finance mechanisms but will focus on Pacific needs. It recognizes the unique needs of small island communities to build resilience against the impacts of climate change such as foreshore protection.

And it recognises the need to reduce complexity in accessing climate finance. The scale of some of these community projects are such that they fall under the radar of the likes of the GCF. But their need and importance to these Pacific Island communities is no less urgent than those with multimillion dollar projects.

Essentially the PRF can finance two categories of community resilience projects, the first of which is Climate and Disaster Resilience. This can fund projects for climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and can support early disaster response. The PRF has also been approved to receive loss and damage funding for the Pacific region subject to ongoing regional and global dialogue.

Secondly, the PRF focuses on Social and Community Resilience that allows the community to implement resilience projects, this includes SDG projects directly relating to climate and disaster resilience. This may also include programmes that can support community capacity building, education and awareness, data analytics, governance mechanism strengthening, public financial management, etc.

An investment in the PRF is an investment in strengthening community and coastal resilience and advancing SDG progress. I welcome partners to contribute to the PRF.



We the Pacific people recognise the connection between our Ocean, Our Mana, and Our future. As a result, we must emphasize the role of traditional knowledge systems in all our undertakings. International law, including the recently adopted BBNJ Agreement, has recognized the complementarity between science and traditional knowledge systems.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities who hold such traditional knowledge must be recognized, respected, and protected. As holders of traditional knowledge, they also act as moral compasses to help us rethink our relationship to Nature and to ourselves, as individuals and as a collective.

For the Pacific, 2024 is a critical year for our oceans. We require the mechanisms and facilities to fund and address our vulnerabilities.

As the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, I remain optimistic about the work we can do to address climate change, heal our ocean, and provide the opportunities through the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy to receive the necessary climate financing support to promote

sustainable ocean management practices, strengthen regional cooperation, and advocate for the protection of the Pacific Ocean and its resources.

I thank you for this opportunity.