

Pasifika Youth Declaration on Climate Change

Suva, Fiji 2009

As Pasifika Youth, we call upon our leaders to move us in unison towards a cleaner, greener, sustainable future for all.

We, the youth and elders of the Pacific region, are witnessing the rise of waters around our island homelands. Shifting climate and weather patterns are destroying our natural heritage - destabilizing reef ecosystems, salinizing fresh water aquifers, and causing mounting disequilibrium in all natural biomes. The youth of the Pacific are asking:

If not you, then who?

If not now, then when?

If not our Pacific islands, then where?

Please work with us and help ensure that we remain!

We, the youth of the Pacific, applaud the decisions of both the Australian and New Zealand governments to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and commit to emission reduction targets. Coming from the most industrialized members of the Pacific family of nations, these commitments convey a strong message of support for the predicament of the Pacific Islands in the face of climate change.

However, recent scientific developments suggest that these targets are no longer sufficiently ambitious to ensure the survival of cultural, social, and economic livelihoods. Highly developed nations such as Australia and New Zealand need to commit to stronger emission reduction targets in order to avoid catastrophic environmental, economic, and humanitarian disasters.

The youth of the Pacific envisage a future in which the global community stands united in transforming the Climate Crisis into an opportunity to build a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future for all.

In order to make our relationship with the natural world sustainable, atmospheric carbon dioxide must be stabilized at no more than 350 parts

per million. This is an important step towards what must be a much deeper reassessment of humanity's stewardship of our Earth.

This is the hope of all youth: to live in a world where our cultures, livelihoods, homelands, and identities are no longer under threat.

In a world full of unequal influence, the voices of young people are often overlooked and all too often underestimated.

Countless youth-authored declarations have been received by governments and governing bodies, only to be ignored.

We, as national and global citizens, look to our leaders to do more than just receive our requests. We have the energy, passion, background, determination, and competence to be at the discussions and negotiating tables, where we can play a critical role in building our sustainable future.

As we approach climate 'tipping points' from which scientists believe we are unlikely to ever reverse, we must be involved in the decisions being made today.

Many of our decision-makers and elders will have passed on by the time the crisis really hits - while we, the youth of today and youth of the future, will be left with an unhealthy and potentially dangerous planet.

Our voices, ideas, experiences, and know-how are valid and must be included.

With our planet in a climate crisis, and our livelihoods at stake, we - the Pasifika Youth - commit to:

- I. Changing our own lives, and developing environmental awareness and skills among 45% of our peers within the Pacific Islands region by 2020;
- II. Living our lives as climate change heroes to the best of our ability and age, as an example for our future children and grandchildren;

- III. Standing tall to support environmental policies within our communities and homes;
- IV. Developing a regional youth and climate change action strategy by 2012, for implementation by 2020.

We therefore call on governments of the world to:

1. Commit to an emissions reduction target of at least 45% on 1990 levels in developed countries by 2020.
2. Make a greater financial commitment to adaptation programmes in Small Island Developing States, to commence immediately after Copenhagen.
3. Develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the voice of youth is integrated into national climate policies, and that young people and their ideas are represented at international negotiations in a meaningful way.
4. Become signatories to the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples.

This is our collective call to action officially endorsed by the young people of the Pacific at the 2009 Pacific Youth Festival