

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the
Coalition of Atoll Nations Against Climate Change

Accelerating Action for Resilient Atolls and Productive Oceans

10 December 2019 | Tuesday | 5:30 p.m.–6:50 p.m.
Pacific Pavilion, IFEMA - Feria de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Aerial view of Kiribati. (photo by Eric Sales)

INTRODUCTION

Among all nations, the world's four low-lying atoll nations of Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu are arguably the most threatened by climate change, particularly by the impact of sea level rise. Tokelau faces the same existential threat. While climate change will impact all nations and communities, these are the only five that face the prospect of being completely wiped off the map. As such, for these countries pushing for more ambition globally and accelerated adaptation locally are now double priorities.

In recent years, leaders of these nations have worked more closely, beginning with the formation of the Coalition of Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CAN-CC) in 2015. Most recently, high level officials of the nations convened during two Atoll Adaptation dialogues and learning events, the first organized by the Government of the Marshall Islands and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Suva, Fiji in April, and the second hosted by ADB and the Government of the Maldives in August 2019. The objectives of these events were to share knowledge on climate change adaptation, to engage with and learn from experts in various technical areas related to climate change, to identify opportunities to raise global awareness on the exceptional case of atoll nations, and to agree on ways to work more closely and collaboratively as a group.

The dialogues highlighted the commitment of the people of these nations to stay despite the increasing challenges from climate change, to learn from each other and experts on the steps being taken to build resilience, and to better manage their ocean resources. It was agreed that further opportunities would be explored to continue to highlight these challenges at the global level, and one of the key upcoming events identified for this is the COP 25 meeting, dubbed the Blue COP, in December 2019.

OBJECTIVES

On the margins of the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in September 2019, CAN-CC representatives agreed to organize two activities during COP 25. The first would be a visual exhibit on atolls, highlighting their unique geography and vulnerability to the effects of climate change. The second would be a formal side event, featuring speakers from the atolls and prominent climate change experts, whereby the unique challenges faced by atolls and how they can adapt and build resilience would be the main topics of discussion. In summary, the objectives of the events at COP 25 would be to:

- Further raise awareness on the urgency of climate action globally, the exceptional case of atolls, and the need to support accelerated adaptation and resilience building in these countries
- Highlight the commitments of the atoll nations to manage their large ocean resources to sustain livelihoods and to co-finance their adaptation efforts
- Bring attention to the emerging technological solutions and the innovative financial instruments that can be harnessed by these nations, and
- Coalesce public and private investors to finance expanding productivity and actions to build resilience



Residents of Tuvalu enjoying the sea. (photo by Eric Sales)

SPEAKERS

Moderator: Megan Rowling of Thompson, Reuters News Foundation

- H.E. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister, Tuvalu
- The Hon. David Paul, Minister in Assistance to the President and Minister of Environment, Republic of the Marshall Islands (CAN-CC Chair)
- The Hon. Dr. Hussein Rasheed Hassan, Minister of Environment, the Republic of Maldives
- Woochong Um, Director General, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, ADB
- Pa Ousman Jarju, Director of the Division of Country Programming, GCF
- Bill Hare, D. Sc., CEO/Senior Scientist, Climate Analytics
- Tabita Kaitamakin Awira Awerika, youth representative from Republic of Kiribati
- Carlon Jajok Zackhras, youth representative from the Republic of the Marshall Islands