

LOCAL

Pacific leaders tackle ocean acidification

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If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive.

This adage is relevant now more than ever as climate change is encroaching on our shores.

Leaders from around the Pacific have joined in to tackle the issue of climate change specifically focusing on ocean acidification.

Last week, was the opening of the New Zealand Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification (P.P.O.A) project and the Tokelau Project Inception Workshop at Taumeasina Island Resort.

The New Zealand Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification (P.P.O.A) project is a collaborative effort between the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the university of the South Pacific, and the Pacific Community which aims to build resilience to ocean acidification in Pacific Island communities and ecosystems, with financial support from the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Government of Monaco.

Deputy Director General of S.P.R.E.P. Roger Cornforth, stressed the importance in taking immediate action against climate change for the Pacific Islands.

He said, "The Pacific Islands are at the frontlines of climate change, and their peoples are dedicated climate change warriors whose voices have been active in shaping global climate change policy and action. The Pacific Islands led fight during COP 21 and actively worked to have the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C included in the Paris Agreement."

"At home we have been actively engaged in climate change adaptation and mitigation, where Tokelau is a global leader the use of solar power."

"The impacts of climate change on our oceans have been largely overlooked and action has been lacking. Given our high dependence and intimate relationship with the ocean we already lead the world in marine management and conservation, and we are poised to lead the world on managing the impacts of climate change on our oceans. In addition to sea level rise, climate change is causing our oceans to warm and become



WELCOME: Ulu o Tokelau, Faipule Siopili Perez with a Tokelauan Official from Public Service at Taumeasina Island Resort.

more acidic, both of which are detrimental to"

"Globally we have already lost 50% of our coral reefs and their associated fisheries and ecosystem services due to local anthropogenic stressors such as destructive fishing practices and pollution. By 2050, under business-as-usual practices, the world will likely lose 90% of its coral reefs. The risks posed by this are highest for the atoll nations such as Tokelau, where the reef is your home and basis of your livelihoods."

"SPREP is committed to helping our Pacific Island members in their fight against climate change and to sustainably manage their oceans. SPREP started out as a UNEP Regional Seas body working to help the region manage their coral reefs, and we returning to our roots. In our new Strategic Plan, adopted by Members last year at the SPREP meeting, we highlight that climate change is the priority area for action in the region and that oceans are the underlying and cross-cutting basis of our work."

"Previously SPREP has supported Tokelau's adapt to climate change through the PACC program, which included the installation of rainwater tanks. In addition to the ocean acidification project we are also providing capacity building support for Environmental Impact Assessments and support in managing Invasive Species."

The Tokelau Project Inception Workshop aims to build communities capacity on the importance of coral reef ecosystems and the stressors that threaten their survival and engage in decision about community management and adaption activities at the pilot site.

To mark the special occasion, the Ulu o Tokelau (equivalent to Head of State) Faipule Siopili Perez was present for the opening of the workshop.

Ulu o Tokelau said, "It goes without saying how invaluable the ocean and ocean life is to the Tokelauans and to all other Pacific Islander. Our ocean is us, our cultural identity. Our lives are intertwined with the ocean



SPREP: Facilitating the workshops will be Dr. Timothy S. Moore with assistance from Paula who is from Tokelau.

life in all and every aspect—economy, culture, language."

"For decades, knowledge and skills passed down from our ancestors has been the key to our harmony with the changing nature. I believe resilience and innovation an amalgamation of traditional knowledge and

modern technology and both rooted in science, can only bring out the best of results for nature and our people."

Now that formalities are done and dusted, it's time to get their hands dirty over their five day workshop.