

Cooperation is the Key to Climate Actions in the Pacific

Kosi Latu

Director General, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

The Pacific islands are home to the largest ocean, with a land area of 553,000 km², and an exclusive economic zone and territorial sea area of 30 million km², equivalent to 10 percent of the World's ocean. It is because of this unique environment that Pacific Island leaders established by treaty the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in 1993. SPREP was created to help conserve and protect the environment for present and future generations. It is based in Samoa and consists of 26 member governments, including 21 Pacific island countries and territories of the region. With strategic priorities in island and ocean ecosystems, environmental monitoring and governance, and waste management and pollution control, climate change is the highest priority of SPREP, as an accredited entity of the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund.

Pacific Island leaders have led the world in dealing with climate change, which has been identified as the biggest threat facing the region, with the potential to affect the survival and sustainable development of Pacific island communities and their unique environments. In recognition of Japan's long-standing relationship with the Pacific and the global issue of climate change, at the Seventh Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 7) held in Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe committed to providing comprehensive assistance to SPREP for the development of the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) and capacity building to tackle climate change.

Development of the PCCC was made possible with the generous support of bilateral grant aid of Japan to Samoa. It will provide practical information and capacity-building sup-



port to address the climate change adaptation and mitigation priorities of the Pacific. It will serve as a knowledge broker and build relationships between sources and users of climate change knowledge to enable decision-makers to receive timely, reliable, and accessible information; enable applied research and exchange; promote capacity building through training and learning; and support development of innovative products and services to increase resilience.

SPREP has a longstanding relationship with JICA in the field of solid waste management, including dispatching of personnel and two successful technical cooperation projects. Based on this strong

foundation, JICA's Project for Capacity Building on Climate Resilience in the Pacific will be implemented through the PCCC with 12 tailor-made courses on climate adaptation, finance and mitigation for the Pacific. The partnership of Samoa and Japan for establishing the PCCC demonstrates a holistic commitment to a "Resilient Pacific." SPREP as a regional asset, is proud to host and support the PCCC at its own campus. We look forward to future opportunities of collaboration and partnership with Japan and appreciate the generosity extended by the people of Japan to the people of the Pacific to help tackle the challenges of climate change.

Profile:

Kosi Latu has served as the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme since 2016, prior to which he was Deputy Director General. Previously, he worked for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Commonwealth Secretariat, holding a number of senior positions including Special Legal Adviser. He is a graduate of the University of Canterbury, and his expertise includes international environmental law, law of the sea, and financial compliance.