



OHCHR Pacific Regional Office (PRO)

**OHCHR PRO's Welcoming remarks to
Consultation workshop of the 2024 Capacity Building Program on Human Rights and
Climate Change, Human Rights and Business in the Pacific
Facilitated by Francisco Javier Sanjuan, OHCHR PRO's Emergency Response Team
(ERT)
25 June 2024, Peninsula Hotel, Suva, Fiji.**

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, Professor Surya Deva.

Representative of the Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission.

Executive Director of Diplomatic Training Programme (DTP), Mr Patrick Earle.

Representative from Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF), Ms Viniana Cakau.

Representatives from the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (PIANGO).

Representatives from Pacific Human Rights Defenders' Network (PHRDN).

Distinguished participants.

Good morning and greetings from OHCHR Pacific Regional Office.

OHCHR PRO is delighted to be part of this strategic partnership with the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Diplomatic Training Center, the Pacific Islands' Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (PIANGO) and the Pacific Human Rights Defenders' Network in organizing this three-day consultation workshop for the capacity building programme on human rights and climate change for human rights defenders working on issues around human rights, climate change and environmental rights in the Pacific.

We hope that this consultation workshop will be a critical milestone not only in enhancing the knowledge and understanding on inter-relations between human rights and climate change but also will contribute to the development of a longer-term capacity building strategy to support effective civil society advocacy on climate change, human rights and business in the Pacific.

As we all know, the Pacific region is facing the **triple planetary crisis** (pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss) which is posing existential threats to atoll nations and islands. In the Pacific, many people live in low-lying coastal areas and are vulnerable to the damaging effects of climate change and environmental disasters caused by increasing sea levels, intensified tropical storms and persistent droughts. Along with the impact of repeated natural disasters of increasing severity, climate change is likely to trigger migration out of atoll nations and islands, as people move in search of more secure livelihoods and better quality of life.

Climate change threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights including right to life, right water and sanitation, right to food, right to health, right to housing as well as right to self-determination, culture and development with the eminent loss of land, and biodiversity as well as loss of livelihoods and traditional knowledge-based tools and technologies of the Pacific people.

I would like to reiterate that States have a human rights **obligation to prevent the foreseeable adverse effects of climate change** and ensure that those affected by it, particularly those in vulnerable situations, have **access to effective remedies** and means of **adaptation to enjoy lives** of human dignity.

It is in this context, OHCHR, globally, is placing human rights at the front and centre in all **climate negotiations as part of environmental action**, fostering support by all stakeholders, from the private to the public sector. Likewise, we will work to ensure that greater well-being, **sustainable and inclusive development**, economic policies, investment decisions and business models are informed by civil, political, economic, social and cultural, rights, the right to development and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

In line with the **2030 Agenda** and with the **Paris Agreement on climate change**, OHCHR aims to promote a human rights-based approach to climate action. This requires that States take ambitious adaptation and mitigation measures that are inclusive and respectful of communities affected by climate change. We aim to achieve this through the next interventions:

- Collaboration with partners to integrate human rights in environmental laws and policies.
- Support for the inclusion of civil society in environmental decision-making processes, access to information and effective remedies for victims.
- Assisting human rights mechanisms to address environmental issues, including climate change.
- Advocacy on behalf of Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) and supporting efforts by the UN system to protect them.
- Research and advocacy to address human rights risks and challenges caused by environmental degradation, particularly to groups in vulnerable situations.

In the context of Pacific Island Countries, OHCHR PRO is continuously engaging with Pacific Island Forum (PIF) governments, national human rights institutions, civil society partners, and communities to promote human rights-based to address adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to sustainable and effective climate action should underscore the creation of inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities, and it should also ensure public participation and access to information on environmental matters from the perspectives of accountability and transparency, which are key human rights principles for an effective climate action.

OHCHR PRO has continued its efforts to mainstream the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; build greater understanding of the relationship between climate change, human rights, and the environment, and advance a HRBA to climate action.

These efforts include the OHCHR PRO's continued work on advocacy and technical support as part of the Joint Programme on **Pacific Climate Change, Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS)** along with ESCAP, IOM, ILO, PIFS and PDD, which has involved efforts to integrate human rights principles and perspectives in various policies, including in the **Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility**, which was endorsed by the PIF Leaders in November 2023.

The Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility recognizes, among others, the urgent need to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration on climate change-related human mobility, including developing planned cross-border relocations, migration and displacements/evacuations caused by climate change, as well as to establish adequate human rights-based responses and support mechanisms for people at risk through full and inclusive consultation with both communities, the affected and the receiving, including for stranded migrants.

OHCHR is confident that this joint initiative with DTP in organizing such a consultation workshop on climate change and human rights will complement with OHCHR's other ongoing and future engagements in climate change, human rights and right to clean, healthy, and sustainable environments among others. We foresee opportunities of strategic partnership with DTP, PIANGO and Pacific Human Rights Defenders Network through this engagement including coordination and collaboration in terms of implementation of Pacific Climate Change, Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS) Phase II focusing on addressing human rights issues related to climate induced mobility including staying in place, planned relocation, migration and displacement of the Pacific people.

Among others, integrating HRBA to climate mobility is key to the implementation of the Regional Framework in the Pacific region, to this end, OHCHR will be developing repository of resources on climate change and human rights with specific focus on HRBA to climate mobility for the capacity building of EHRDs, CSOs and NHRIs in the region. In particular, the strategy on climate and human rights and the development of curriculum for training human rights and environmental rights defenders/advocates will be useful for this complementarity.

On behalf of OHCHR, I look forward to your continuous partnership and collaboration with all the entities present in this workshop on human rights, climate change, as well as on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Thank you very much.
