OHCHR PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE (PRO)

Regional Representative's opening remarks

Human Rights, Climate Change and Business in the Pacific: A Civil Society Capacity Building Program

Pacific Harbour, Fiji | 23 June 2025

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Lani Inverarity, Director fo Programs and Strategy at Accountability Counsel
Joshua Cooper, Lecturer at the Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights, University of Hawai'i

Ni sa bula Vinaka, Namaste and Good morning.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this week-long training on *Human Rights, Climate Change, and Business in the Pacific*, a civil society capacity-building programme organised by the Diplomacy Training Program.

This is a timely and important gathering. The overlapping crises of climate change, environmental degradation, and economic inequality are having serious impacts across our region, deepening vulnerabilities and disproportionately affecting those already at risk of marginalisation. Civil society plays an essential role in responding to these challenges. You are on the frontlines, advocating, mobilising, informing, and holding power to account.

This training aims to support your efforts, strengthen your skills, and foster connections across the region. It is an opportunity to explore the intersections between business practices, climate justice, and the human rights of all Pacific peoples, particularly those most affected, including women and girls, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQA+ persons, older people, and youth.

Human rights provide a powerful framework for shaping just, inclusive, and sustainable responses to the climate crisis. They remind us that people must be at the centre of all development efforts, including climate action and economic decision-making.

The UN Human Rights Office remains committed to supporting civil society actors in your crucial work. We believe that a human rights-based approach to climate and business policy is not only possible, but necessary. It means recognising and protecting the rights of affected communities, enabling meaningful participation in decision-making, and ensuring accountability when harms occur, whether caused by States, companies, or other actors.

Throughout the week, we will dive into practical strategies, tools, and frameworks, from regional standards to global treaties and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We will also explore how these standards can be applied meaningfully in the Pacific context and how to engage meaningfully with the UN to promote and protect rights.

This training forms part of a broader UN effort to support peacebuilding, social cohesion, and inclusive governance in the region. We are grateful for the collaboration of all our partners who have made this training possible, and to you for taking the time to be here.

We hope that the discussions ahead will be honest, thought-provoking, and empowering. As climate change reshapes the future of the Pacific, so too must we shape the response, which should be grounded in human rights, guided by community wisdom, and fuelled by collective action.

Thank you very much, and I wish you all a productive and inspiring training during these five days.

Vinaka vakalevu, Dhanyavad, thank you.