

Reduced carbon emissions suva

"Fiji is on the frontlines of addressing climate change; coastal erosion and sea level rise threaten the very existence of some of our seaside communities and strengthening cyclones can decimate our economy overnight. So, we know first-hand the importance of reducing emissions," says Fijian Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum.

"Our forests have a critical role to play in building not only a more resilient nation, but a more habitable planet. By strengthening our natural environment -- reducing deforestation and degradation -- Fiji is continuing to lead in the global fight against climate change."

The program covers 90 percent of Fiji's landmass, focusing on the islands of Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and Taveuni where 86 percent of the population lives. The initiative aims to reduce emissions by 2.5 million tonnes over five years and will also contribute to restoration of ecosystem services essential for increasing resilience to climate change, such as soil retention and flood regulation.

An inclusive benefit sharing plan was developed through extensive stakeholder consultations at national and local levels, to ensure that participating stakeholders, and particularly local communities, are fairly recognized and rewarded for their role in reducing emissions.

Fiji is the fourth country in Asia, after Indonesia, Lao PDR and Vietnam, and the tenth country worldwide to sign an ERPA with the FCPF. The total value of these ten agreements, which have also been made with Chile, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Mozambique, is over half a billion US dollars. Several other countries are expected to finalize their emission reductions programs and follow suit with ERPA signings early this year.

During the Inaugural Pacific Resilience Meeting in Suva, Fiji this week, Mr Tofiga Fepulea'i, a Pacific entertainment icon was the moderator for key sessions, including that which focussed on Low Carbon Development.

Bringing humour and the personal understanding of how climate change and low carbon development impacts him and his family has helped make a session which is often perceived as "technical", as an issue that we can all relate to.

"The response we got from people in the audience was amazing. Low carbon development is a topic that belongs to us all in the Pacific, not just the practitioners or the experts - we all have a responsibility towards achieving a low carbon economy, because it just makes good sense," said Ms Tagaloa Cooper, the Director of Climate Change Resilience of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

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"To inspire and effect change, people need information that speaks to their context, so if people understand issues such as climate change that they relate to and can link to their own setting." SPREP actively seeks to ensure this happens. This includes bringing a personality whom Pacific island people can relate to, to help raise awareness and engagement towards a low carbon future."

The Pacific island region contributes less than 0.03 per cent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions yet are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Despite this, the Pacific island region is committed to transitioning to a low carbon economy - one in which we use less fossil fuel to generate energy.

A low carbon economy and development not only puts the region at the forefront of the fight against climate change but also brings a wide range of societal benefits including upskilling of the workforce, employment opportunities and reduces pollution.

"Being a part of this has really hit home how serious this issue is. We need to work together to help Pasifika people across the world understand this message," said Mr Tofiga Fepulea'i.

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Web: <https://www.hollanddutchtours.nl/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

