

Climate change again an issue for Small Island States

Pacnews

Tue, 24 Oct 2006

NADI, FIJI ---- Small Island States (SIS) have again raised their vulnerabilities to global warming and climate change as a serious threat to their existence.

Kiribati President and SIS chairman, Anote Tong told journalists that leaders discussed evidence of the effect of climate change and sea level rise during their session.

“We went through severe experiences, many of our member countries in the last two weeks have experienced very high tides. Many suffered severe property damage, fortunately there was no loss of life.

“This is not a new issue but something we will continue to push for at international forums,” said President Tong.

Another SIS nation, Tuvalu has been considered as probably the first island nation to be submerged by water in the not too distant future.

Tuvalu had requested Australia and New Zealand to provide them with special refugees status, in the event their homes are overwhelmed by the rise in sea level.

Both countries have not responded favourably to Tuvalu’s request.

But, the SIS chair is convinced that more dialogue with Australia and New Zealand was needed to ensure the issue continues to get their attention.

“We continue to invite Australia and New Zealand to discuss this issue and if it is true that in 50 years time small low lying islands will be submerged, then it would be an issue not only for the two countries but for the whole international community,” President Tong advocated.

“If this happens, then the international community must be ready to accept this and get used to our plight.”

On labour mobility, the SIS group revealed that they were interested in unskilled employment to Australia and New Zealand.

“I don’t think Australia and New Zealand aren’t negative to the idea. I think the scheme needs to be framed in such a way that is acceptable to all parties.

“I think there is a golden opportunity to be explored, may be we have just not identified it. The only way to discover this is through dialogue.” the Kiribati president said.

An Australian senate committee has rejected a temporary labour scheme with the Pacific.