

<http://pacific.scoop.co.nz/2009/10/forget-the-speeches-we-want-change-say-pacific-climate-change-campaigners/#more-4061>

‘Forget the speeches, we want action,’ say Pacific climate change campaigners

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Climate change action campaigners in Micronesia use coconuts for their symbolic global message. The coconuts were then planted.

Pacific.Scoop

By Susi Newborn of Oxfam

Pacific people have called for the world to act fast on climate change science as they bear the burden of increasing drought, rising sea levels, salinated land and food shortages. “Today we are reminding the world’s leaders that they can give all the speeches they want, but that won’t change what the science says,” says Fiji 350 Coconut Telegraph organiser Linda Blue.



“There are people in the world who have already begun to suffer from drought, from flood, from the spread of disease. We will not stand by and let that happen,” she said.

350 organisers are calling for world leaders to commit to a firm and binding treaty at Copenhagen in December based on science, including the research of leading Nasa scientist James Hansen.

Fiji

A 350 tea party was also held in ankle-deep water in Fiji. Event organiser Noelene Nabulivou says: “Pacific people live daily with the impacts of climate change – it is imperative that the world hears directly from us.” Churches across Fiji rang church bells and lali (traditional church gongs) 350 times as a backdrop for the other events. 350 Nesian organiser Subhashni Raj, who coordinated a festival of events, says: “We are people.... Not poker chips.”

Niue

Many of the events drew attention to the sea level rises, an extremely important issue for the low-lying Pacific Island nations. Niue is the largest uplifted coral atoll in the world, with an area of 250 sq km perched high on top of an extinct volcano with the highest point at 80 metres. High cliffs protect the villages.

Locals in Niue warmed up for a large tree planting with group aerobics. “Greenhouse gases know no boundaries and carbon dioxide is also building up in the Seven Seas,” says Niue’s Ira Merrifield.

Micronesia

Micronesian locals made a 350 and a “Save our Islands” out of coconuts. They then planted the coconuts.



Solomon Islanders taking part in the 350 climate change action march at the weekend.
Photo: 350 Aotearoa

Solomon Islands

A large public march with 350 coconut giveaways was held in the streets of Honiara, culminating in public speeches from the British Commissioner and the Minister for the Environment. The minister’s message said that a sea-level rise of 0.40cm to 1.2 metres was catastrophic for the Solomon Islands. He added: Long-term concentrations of GHG in the atmosphere must be limited to well below 350ppm of carbon dioxide equivalent. What does this mean?

In technical terms this means that:

- Global emissions must be reduced by at least 95 percent by 2050 from 1990 levels,
- Global emissions must be reduced by at least 45 percent by 2020 from 1990 levels,
- Global GHG emissions must peak by 2015,
- Global average surface temperature increase must be well below 1.5 degree celsius above pre-industrial levels,

Other events in the Pacific were based around community exercises:

A 350 canoe paddling event held in the Northern Marianas brought locals together to celebrate their community and culture.

Bleaching sites

People gathered at coral bleaching sites in the Northern Marianas to learn about the impacts of climate change. The Marshall Islands held a “Cli350” basketball tournament with environmental actions and education in between games.

Many of the events were based around improving local environments.

Locals in Papua New Guinea cleaned up a beach with everyone doing a measurable part – “peg a metre, clear a metre”, sponsored by local business. 350 mangrove seedlings were planted in Bougainville, 350 coconut palms were planted in Kiribati, and MPs led the planting in Niue. Plantings in Niue were followed by one of the more unusual events in the Pacific so far – a 350 cocktail design competition.

There have been festivals with traditional song and dance in Bougainville, Fiji, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands. Traditional dress formed an important part of some of the events in Fiji. The day has been marked with community education and workshops in Palau, Western Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga.

Locals also stood in the water around the coast of French Polynesia to highlight the issue of sea level rise

More actions were taking place over the weekend.

Each country’s call for action will be broadcast through a global network, including on a huge screen in Times Square, New York.

** About 350: 350 is a global movement calling for urgent and binding action to curb climate change. The 350 International Day of Climate Action is being reported globally.*