

No climate change blood money, experts told

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Apia, Samoa-----Economics of Adaptation to Climate Change was the subject of a study mission to Samoa conducted by a group of international agencies. Four international consultants met with local partners to address the issue, said Fiu Mata'ese Elisara, Executive Director Ole Siosiomaga Society Incorporated (OLSSI). The four consultants were Sergio Margulias (World Bank), Peter King (past ADB) of World Bank, Fine Lao (Tongan) of SPREP and Heremoni Su'apaia-Ah Hoy (Ministry of Finance).

Mr Fiu told the consultants there is still grave concern about developed countries not fulfilling their commitments to the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as they continue to renege on these responsibilities and avoid legal liabilities by manipulating flawed solutions through market based carbon trading initiatives that only serve to exacerbate the problem instead of curbing it. "It is neither morally right nor ethically responsible for Samoa in my view to welcome these 'dirty' resources given that Samoa has contributed very little if at all to the problem and yet we have been asked, and our government has welcomed these adaptation resources from global activities like 'clean development mechanism' (CDM), emissions trading schemes, joint implementation arrangements, monoculture projects, and 2 per cent from carbon sinks projects that many people directly affected refer to as 'blood monies' and which in effect allows developed countries to continue with their disastrous industrial activities, take over lands that belong to indigenous peoples around the world, that translates enormous lands in the developing countries of the South to bio-fuel to fuel cars of the rich countries of the North, that compensate the culprits in schemes like REDD (reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries) and not compensate those who have conserved forests for generations, monocultures that threaten food security and violate food sovereignty, as well as allowing the rich to enjoy their unsustainable production and consumption that further destroy our small countries like Samoa and cause economic disasters from the impacts of cc such as cyclones as a direct cause," he said. "It is unfortunate that despite the strong voices from Samoa and AOSIS in the last decade pushing for adequate responsibilities by the developed countries as root causes of climate change to take the necessary actions to meet the objectives of UNFCCC on curbing climate change, as well as accept some legal liability and accountability to the disastrous results of their irresponsible actions by continuing to engage in industrial activities that cause continued large scale emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, it is now evident that their current pre-occupation in the UNFCCC is about resource mobilisation and ignore the ethical and moral obligations to push the Annex1 countries to deliver on their commitments to the UNFCCC to accept hard and timely emission cuts targets and to prevent "dangerous" climate change obligated on them by the convention." Mr Fiu told the consultants that Pacific island countries have a sovereign right to continue to exist as nations protected under the Charter of the UN. Thus any impacts that may affect them

need to be addressed in terms of responsibility, accountability, and violation of human rights by those directly involved in the root causes.

The Bali road map (2007) was clear on responsibilities of developed countries to support the financing of adaptation, mitigation, and technology transfer and already there is deliberate move by the developed countries to yet again renege on those responsibilities and even try to renegotiate the whole UNFCCC and suggest that the IPCC4 report not be used as the basis of climate change discussions despite the global high standard and integrity of the IPCC4 work calling for urgent action by the rich countries to curb climate change, he said. “In Poznan December 2008 the Prime Minister of Tuvalu almost brought the roof of the auditorium down in a rousing standing ovation in response to his emotional plea that “... Tuvaluans would not accept defeat on climate change. It is our belief that Tuvalu as a nation has a right to exist forever...”.

For Samoa as a sovereign country, this too should be our unconditional call, said Fiu. “Our rights to exist as nations and survival of peoples and cultures are not negotiable. Climate change directly violates those rights and those responsible must bear responsibility and be held accountable for our demise when we lose our cultures, when our traditional ways of lives are trashed, and when we are denied our freedom to exist as peoples and as countries. To say that we can adapt to these losses are injustices so huge that it is difficult for the ordinary people to contemplate. “We call on the consultancy to heed these contextual positions on adaptation by many of our peoples despite the stands by many of our PIC countries, which include Samoa, and pressure those culprits responsible for global warming to deliver on their commitments to take real and urgent action to curb climate change”

The consultants were asked to ensure that in their study the polluter-pays principle, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities, the precautionary principle, inter-generational equity principle, and all the other Rio principles be respected in their study. Fiu said the study should also reflect the principle of state responsibility to ensure that the activities within their own jurisdiction do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of their national jurisdiction. The principle of inter-generational equity is to protect the global climate for both present and future generations. “On the issue of adaptation, the first problem is that it introduces the notion of ‘replace ability’ of something. In this case, the consultants are dealing with replacement and compensatory values of the lives of the Samoan peoples. An economic focus for this study will never be able to address fully the complexity of social, cultural, environmental, communal, and other factors that are integral to faa-Samoa and contribute cumulatively to the sustainable livelihood and existence of Samoans as a country and peoples,” said Fiu. “We stressed to the consultants that this study needs to go beyond its limited confines of economics and be inclusive of all the relevant parameters of what we are asked to adapt to and what replacement values it is considering, and what methodology used to holistically value the replacement costs of what is involved. “There is Samoan vibrant culture, identity, traditional knowledge, eco-systems integrity, natural resources, eco-system services, etc. and we find it not morally correct in the case of Samoa and no way to justify replacing a lifestyle, a culture, the identity of peoples alive, natural resources, language, spiritual connectivity to the

dead, traditional approaches, and a peoples. Especially when asked to adapt and we did not cause the problem in the first place. The other problem, said Mr Fiu, is with financial calculations. “This implies a bias toward the interest of the money guy. You’ll never find a process by which the more powerful party ends up giving more than the acceptable minimum. This is far from being fair. The capitalist mentality is based on opportunism, formally said, opportunity cost: “I decide what to do with my money... unless someone more powerful tells me otherwise.” “I also contend that for Samoa it is not unwise, unrealistic, or ambitious to push for the concept of “ecological debt” in the climate change adaptation study which is now formally pushed by the Government of Bolivia (it being one of the seven countries involved with Samoa in this study) as issues of rights, justice, and historical indebtedness by developed countries to developing. “Given the historical footprint of how the developed countries have made their monies through exploitation for generations of the resources of the South, the ‘ecological debt’ needs support from the Pacific and Samoa.

All the ‘debts’ through loans from financial institutions like the WB should be unconditionally cancelled. The financial flow rightly should be from the North to the South and that will help tremendously with the adaptation agenda that befits the struggles of the South.” “It makes it more clear that some impacts, especially in terms of the impacts on human lives, livelihoods and cultures, cannot be “adapted” to, and that there is a moral obligation of developed countries and financial institutions to compensate the tremendous exploitation of resources of the South, manipulation of development models to suit the interests of the North, acts of bio-piracy, imposition of neo-colonialism models, exploitation of the natural resources and peoples of developing world for generations, and immense damage they have already caused in the lives of the peoples of the developing world.” Mr Fiu told the group that dealing with a man-made crisis such as climate change is expensive, sometimes bloody and in human terms invariably late. “We believe that the reality has forced us to accept that it would be more humane and less expensive to act preventively and focus on resilience and mitigation strategies and to meet threats upstream rather than to have them confront us as adaptation crisis downstream,” he said. “The consultants are asked to keep this in mind.”