

Negotiating Climate Change

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Apia , Samoa -- Ensuring that the voice of Pacific Island countries is heard at the international level is critical for the success of the climate change negotiations. This was one of the many lessons stressed during a week of negotiation training and consultations at SPREP Headquarters in Apia, Samoa.

The world is now only six months away from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 15th Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP15) in Copenhagen, where a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol is slated for adoption. In preparation for the meeting, Pacific Island countries party to the UNFCCC received in-depth training in negotiations strategy and techniques.

Dr Ian Fry, a prominent climate change specialist and a negotiator for the Government of Tuvalu conducted sessions to help prepare participants for key issues that will be addressed at COP 15.

SPREP's Climate Change Adviser Espen Ronneberg is pleased that this training has brought many new faces to the climate change negotiations table. He feels it will help strengthen the capacity of the Pacific at the negotiating table by providing additional trained negotiators that will have a strong understanding of the issues to be discussed.

“The training component provided valuable inputs in negotiation techniques, as well as expert knowledge on preparation for the very complex meeting arrangements at the international level. In addition, the Pacific has had an opportunity to also discuss the key issues that are still under negotiation, which will allow them to gather information back home to address concerns arising from those key issues,” Ronneberg said.

The training is an important component of activities planned during the 2009 Pacific Year of Climate Change. “Our Century’s Challenge, Our Pacific Response” is the theme of the year, which hopes to build momentum in the Pacific before December’s meeting of the COP in Copenhagen.

Ronneberg believes that strengthening the climate change negotiation skills of Pacific island country parties to the UNFCCC will also contribute to greater participation in climate related discussions at both the national, regional and international level.

In addition to the negotiations training, the Pacific held consultations with the European Commission on the implementation of the Pacific-EU climate change declaration in the Pacific Islands. This represents a new and additional financing opportunity for climate change work in the region, and could expedite action on the ground in the Pacific on responding to the adverse effects of climate change.

The training was held 11 – 15 May at the SPREP Compound in Apia.