

MEDIA RELEASE

MOMENT OF TRUTH FOR THE CLIMATE (AND THE PACIFIC) AT THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

SUVA, April 12, 2018: The Pacific Islands are watching with interest the outcome of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) meetings in London this week. The IMO, a United Nations organisation regulating the maritime shipping sector, is scheduled to deliver an Initial Strategy on international shipping GHG emissions reduction by the 72nd Maritime Environment Protection Committee meeting (MEPC 72). This IMO Initial Strategy will, among other matters, determine the vision and level of ambition, and is expected to include an ‘action plan’ on the development of short-term measures (2018-2023).

“The final agreement – the IMO moment of truth - to be reached in a few hours will cast the IMO as, either a rogue, or an engaged party on climate action towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. We know through the OECD International Transport Forum latest report that almost full decarbonisation of the sector is possible by 2035, using existing technologies. This means that maritime shipping, as a sector of transport, has no right to be immune from the paradigm shift needed to achieve zero gas emissions by 2050. The fossil fuel industry, the energy sector, the aviation, the car industry and land transport sectors, the financing and investment industries have all understood the need to decarbonize, and with as much ambition and as early as possible” said the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, François Martel.

There is strong division and much opposition among the members of the IMO for their sector, the maritime shipping industry, to abiding by the Paris Agreement long-term decarbonisation targets, despite the fact that decarbonisation of shipping and the rest of the global economy is a necessity.

“We expect MEPC72 to come up with a deal that at least ensure that international shipping cuts its GHG emissions by 70% to 100% by 2050. This would indicate that the IMO is finally acting responsibly on this issue.”

This is in line with the position of the Pacific islands, that many, including the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), consider entrenched and as not wanting to compromise for the benefit of trade. At COP23 in Bonn this year, ICS singled out the Marshall Islands as being “irresponsible and unrealistic”.

“As a strong supporter of the Coalition of Atoll Nations for Climate Change (CANCC), I would challenge this statement for the sake of our many small atoll nations sitting just 2 meters above the oceans and say that the ICS is the one acting irrationally in asking for a compromise” noted Martel. “The Pacific has already compromised enough in the negotiations to reach the Paris Agreement, on loss and damage, on enforceable targets, on 2 degrees, while knowing 1.5 degrees provides a 50/50 chance of survival for the world’s most vulnerable. 1 degree is already too much - just ask our friends across the SIDS diaspora.”

“The only responsible pathway forward is to now implement what the collective global leadership has already unanimously agreed - a single temperature goal – “well below 2 degrees and making all effort for 1.5”. Achieving this single goal requires real effort and real action and real ambition - this what must now be demonstrated at MEPC72. Not compromise. I fear the Pacific has already compromised for too long – on nuclear testing, on overfishing, on plastic waste, on climate change and now - on shipping?”

It is important that the Initial Strategy being agreed at MEPC72 be in line with the Paris Agreement that now all IMO member states are party to. We cannot have a situation where member states have one position at UNFCCC and a different one at the IMO. States need to fix this disconnect quickly as this is inhibiting progress in decisions that need to be taken to address climate change and limit temperature rise to 1.5C. If we are to stick to this target, shipping must do its fair share and bring emissions down to zero by 2050.

“We hear with increasing vigor the voices of progressive and responsible shippers that they fully understand the scale of change required and the size of both the challenges and opportunities ahead. We understand their need, like ours, for managed responsible change while there is still time to act. We, at PIDF, are more than willing to work with all such actors in positive action to assist the IMO implement its full responsibilities under the Paris agreement.”

*****ENDS*****

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The PIDF is a multilateral and multi-stakeholder organization focusing on a distinctive Pacific model of green growth in blue economies aligned to sustainable development principles. The PIDF also serves as the Pacific Islands south-south cooperation platform with the United Nations and is a member of the Inter-agency Collaborative Group on the Global Partnership on SIDS. We are a space for catalysing, mobilizing and mainstreaming action in support of sustainable development through green/blue economy in Pacific Island Countries. PIDF is an action-oriented platform to identify innovative solutions and works closely with international institutions to engage state and non-state actors to develop high-impact collaborations on sustainable development & poverty reduction in the Pacific Islands.

