



An Islands Initiative to
For the Promotion & Protection of
International Human Rights in the Pacific

NGO Contributions to the Stakeholder Report for UPR 38th session

Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review regarding Climate Change in Solomon Islands

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Introduction

Solomon Islands comprises a scattered archipelago of 994 islands. Guadalcanal, a province and one of the archipelago's largest islands is the capital of this island state. The country has a population of 652,858 people. The Solomon Islands are expected to be disproportionately affected by climate change. Furthermore, it is considered to be a low human development and low per capita income country, which highlights its high level of social vulnerability which will be exacerbated by climate change (Solomon Islands Government 2015, p.10).

Temperatures in Solomon Islands will continue to increase and reach a range of 0.4-1.0°C in 2030 due to climate change. The country will also experience an increase in the number of hot days and warm nights and less cool weather, extreme rainfall periods will occur more often and be more intense, it is expected that there will be less frequent but more intense cyclones including an increase in average maximum wind speed and a possible increase in rainfall intensity. In addition to that, the sea level will continue to rise, surges and coastal inundation will increase their impact, and ocean acidification will continue to increase and affect the health of reefs (Government of Solomon Islands 2012, p.9).

Climate change will be a major impediment to the achievement of sustainable development in Solomon Islands, as all economic and social sectors are likely to be adversely affected, and the cost of adaptation will be disproportionately high, relative to gross domestic product. The Solomon Islands National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) has determined, through a broad national consultative process, that agriculture, human settlements, water and sanitation, and human health are priority vulnerable sectors requiring urgent support to enhance resilience against the predicted impacts of climate change (UNDP b 2020). In terms of the most vulnerable sectors to climate change effects, we find agriculture and food security, water supply and sanitation, human health, human settlements, fisheries, and marine resources, coastal protection, infrastructure, waste management, and tourism.

Progress

We praise Solomon Island for its commitment towards a carbon emission plan established in its National Development Strategy for 2016-2035. We are also glad that the Solomon Islands submitted in 2015 the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, which came into effect this year 2020 in

order to achieve the objectives of the UNFCCC. The project has a duration of 5 years and despite being a least developed country, Solomon Islands pursue the objective of reducing its carbon emissions below 2015 levels by 12% in 2020 and 30% in 2030 (Solomon Islands Government 2015). We encourage Solomon Islands to keep on working under the guidelines of the its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution. In addition, Solomon Islands has developed a National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) to address its urgent adaptation needs following a rapid vulnerability assessment of its development sectors. The NAPA has established a baseline of vulnerability situations and priority vulnerable sectors that will need to be reviewed from time to time as vulnerability assessments become better informed through the use of scientific and socio-economic tools and when data is more readily available. We praise this effort to deal with the most urgent issues that the country faces due to climate change effects (Solomon Islands Government 2012 p.20). In addition to the efforts already made, we recommend the Solomon Islands to take additional measures to fight climate change.

Policy Recommendations

1. Establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in line with the Paris Principles and with the full participation of civil society.

The Solomon Islands Government is considering the possibility of establishing this human rights mechanism but has still not taken a decision. In its previous review, it accepted the recommendation of establishing a national human rights institution or expanding the mandate of existing institutions in order to deal with human rights issues. We encourage the government to carry out this very important project to deal with, among other things, climate change-related problems (Asia Pacific Forum, 2020)

2. Establish a National Climate Change Council national Thematic Working Groups.

A National Climate Change Council is necessary to oversee the implementation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of national climate change policies and strategies. Thematic Working Groups would be essential in order to provide technical and strategic support and advice to the lead agency and the National Climate Change Council on climate change issues. Thematic Working Groups should focus on: a) vulnerability, disaster risk reduction and adaptation; b) mitigation & greenhouse gas inventory; c) research, systematic observation, and technology transfer; and d) education, awareness, and capacity building (Solomon Islands Government 2012, p.18)

3. Building greater resources and cooperation in International communities to combat Climate Change

According to its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, their objectives for carbon emission reduction could be even higher with the appropriate international assistance, being able to reduce emissions below 2015 levels by 27% in 2025, 45% in 2030, and 50% in 2050 (Solomon Islands Government, 2015). For that reason, the government shall develop and maintain strong partnerships

and work cooperatively with its national partners, stakeholders, regional and international organizations and institutions, and development partners to address climate change. In this regard, it is relevant to highlight the importance that the Solomon Islands is a least developed country and a small island state, a situation that limits its resources and capacities for implementation. For that reason, the Human Rights Council should take into consideration the special circumstances when proposing further recommendations

4. Decrease timber extraction rates

In Solomon Islands' annual timber extraction rates are currently significantly higher than established sustainable levels. Unsustainable management of forests increases the vulnerability of people, biodiversity, and the economy and contributes to global warming (Solomon Islands Government 2015, p.10)

1.

Issue: The government of Solomon Islands has showed a commitment to human rights. Solomon Islands has ratified numerous core international human rights treaties. It is quite an impressive record although very little has happened regarding the important step of implementation beginning with reporting and then initiating the recommendations into the daily reality of people.

It is also important for Solomon Islands to ratify the remaining international instruments.

Question: Will Solomon Islands work with regional NGOs to support trainings that can assist to better participate in the human rights treaty bodies? Will Solomon Islands also partner with institutions of higher education in Islands as well as the University of South Pacific as well as the University of Hawaii?

Will Solomon Islands be willing to host a regional human rights treaty body review like Samoa did for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the future?

Recommendation: Solomon Islands immediately call and coordinate with NGOs and universities in the region for a national meeting that will provide the skills and strategies to assist the government to catch up with its responsibilities under international human rights law. Solomon Islands also meet with experts in the region to assist with acknowledging the future responsibilities of the state to its citizens as it ratifies the remaining international instruments.

Solomon Islands host a national conversation to create a National Human Rights Institution rooted in the Paris Principles.

2.

Issue: Human Rights education is an important means to ensure continued cultural respect. It is important for Solomon Islands to organize and coordinate a creative curriculum that moves beyond the textbooks to culturally based popular education. It is also to use plays and other techniques that transcend traditional education.

Question: Will Solomon Islands develop a national plan of action for human rights education?

Recommendation: Solomon Islands works with regional and international NGOs to conduct trainings in human rights education. Solomon Islands also translates the various international instruments it has ratified into the indigenous languages of its citizens.

3.

Issue: Solomon Islands plays a prominent role in Melanesia. Solomon Islands can be a catalyst for a regional human rights mechanism. Solomon Islands should sponsor a regional conference focusing on the positive contribution of a regional mechanism that could create tools that ensure human rights is respected.

Question: Will Solomon Islands host a conference to assist the Working Group for a Pacific Island Human Rights Charter and Commission? Will Solomon Islands be a leader to be one of the first states?

Recommendation: Solomon Islands. be one of the founding states of a Pacific Island Human Rights Charter and Commission.

4.

Issue: The environment is essential to the future of Solomon Islands. The spiritual relationship to the land must be reaffirmed by the state through laws and programs that guarantee the right to the land for each community. Solomon Islands should focus on the international instruments such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and specifically the Nationally Determined Contribution Process in the Paris Agreement.

Question: Will Solomon Islands explain its national actions to promote and protect the unique relationship to the land and ocean? Will Solomon Islands also focus on new ideas and instruments being proposed to hold corporations accountable for pollution and destruction of the environment?

Recommendation: Solomon Islands should work closely with its citizens to rededicate itself to environmental protection. Solomon Islands should also lead in international negotiations regarding climate change. Solomon Islands should also issue an open invitation to all UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures. Also, Solomon Islands should host a National Determined Contribution process for Paris Agreement and also UN SDGs Voluntary National Review rooted in human rights

framework of participatory and inclusive with all citizens.

5.

Issue: There has been some blood spilled in conflicts in Solomon Islands. The main conflict still requires attention and must be addressed to guarantee the human rights of the people of Solomon Islands.

Question: What methods of reconciliation are being taken to ensure basic human rights? What indigenous and international models could be coordinated to ensure a peaceful future in Solomon Islands?

Recommendation: Solomon Islands should recommit itself to peace and justice throughout the nation. SI should ensure there is a strong mechanism that promotes conflict resolution.

References

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