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Pacific Civil Society Advances Climate Justice Through Human Rights Diplomacy Training

June 24, 2025

— Categories: *Human Rights*



Regional workshops equip leaders to address climate change through a rights-based lens. Civil society organisations from across the Pacific are taking the lead in a transformative initiative that aims to tackle climate change through a human right-based approach. This week, representatives from seven Pacific Island nations are participating in the Human Rights, Climate Change and Business in the Pacific Diplomacy Training Workshop, a five-

day intensive programme focused on advancing climate justice while protecting the rights of the most vulnerable communities.

Organised in partnership with the United Nations Human Rights Pacific Office, the workshop brings together a diverse group of participants, including civil society advocates, government officials, and private sector representatives. Together, they are exploring the intersections between environmental sustainability, human rights obligations, and corporate responsibility in the Pacific context.

UN Human Rights Pacific Representative Heike Alefsen, in her keynote address, emphasised the urgent need to prioritise the rights of marginalised groups particularly women, youth, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities who are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.

“This crisis is not only about rising sea levels or extreme weather events,” Alefsen stated. “It is fundamentally about people’s dignity, safety, and futures. Recognising and protecting the rights of affected communities is not only possible, but necessary for sustainable and equitable climate action.”

The workshop is designed to equip participants with practical skills to engage in national and international climate processes, advocate for policy reforms, and hold both governments and businesses accountable for their environmental and human rights impacts. Topics include international human rights law, climate change governance, corporate due diligence, and community-based advocacy strategies.

A unique feature of this training is its emphasis on inclusive and collaborative solutions. By bringing together stakeholders from civil society, the public sector, and business, the workshop aims to build a shared understanding of how development and environmental protection can go hand in hand particularly in a region as climate-vulnerable as the Pacific.

Alefsen also highlighted the indispensable role of civil society in this effort. “Civil society actors are critical to promoting transparency, disseminating reliable information, and ensuring that the voices of frontline communities are heard and respected,” she said. “They are not only witnesses to the impacts of climate change, they are essential agents of change.”

As the workshop concludes on Friday, participants will leave with enhanced capacity to advocate for climate justice, strengthened regional networks, and a deeper commitment to protecting both people and the planet. In the face of escalating environmental threats, the Pacific is demonstrating that meaningful and rights-based climate action must begin from the ground up with the voices of communities at the centre.