



Permanent Mission of Samoa in Geneva

“Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD)”

Tuesday 29 October 2024, 10:00 am, WTO Room S1

10:00 am – 13:00 pm: Working Group on Trade-related Climate Measures

Developing country perspectives

Thank you and Good morning colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to extend my thanks to the Co-convenors and the Co-Facilitators of the Trade-related Climate Measures working Group within TESSD for inviting Samoa from the Pacific region to share our experiences in climate adaptation, trade and TrCMs.

I would also like to acknowledge the valuable insights shared by the previous presenters on the critical role of trade in climate change adaptation and express my appreciation for the productive discussions on this topic thus far.

For the Pacific, our leaders have endorsed Climate Change as the Pacific priority, and declared in July 2022, that the Pacific is facing a Climate Emergency, with climate change being the single greatest existential threat facing the Blue Pacific continent.

To provide context of the Pacific region, the Pacific islands are large oceanic states, which cover nearly 20% of the Earth's surface, and 14¹ are among the 38 UN-designated Small Island Developing States (SIDS) recognized as ecologically fragile and economically disadvantaged due to their size, isolation, and limited resources. Climate impacts in the Pacific—such as rising temperatures, sea levels, and extreme weather events—threaten livelihoods, ecosystems, and economies. The Pacific islands are highly susceptible to external shocks, severe and more frequent natural disasters resulting in a vicious cycle of rebuilding. The 2021 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) World Risk Report identified the Oceania continent with the highest disaster risk mainly due to high exposure to extreme natural events.

Despite being low contributing emitters to the global climate crisis, adaptation in the Pacific remains the most feasible, and increasingly, necessary means of addressing Climate change impacts, and most importantly, adaptation as an integral part of sustainable development in the face of the climate change crisis.

We stress the point that while the global conversation rightly focuses on decarbonization and emissions reduction, it is equally critical that we bring climate adaptation to the forefront of trade policy discussions. For a region that contributes negligibly to climate change with its total greenhouse gas emissions being 0.03%, we are at the forefront of the consequences with no choice

¹ Cook Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

but to adapt. The needs of adaptation grow with every fraction of a degree that the world warms, and for the Pacific, this is a matter of survival.

The framework or architecture of the Pacific's response to the impacts of climate change includes:

1. Firstly, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP, 2017-2030) which is an integrated regional approach to address climate change, disaster risk management, low carbon approach and climate financing;
(One of the pillars of this framework is Low-Carbon development through the involvement of the private sector by strengthening integrated adaptation and risk reduction to enhance resilience. These approaches also ensure the protection and safeguarding of development assets against climate and disaster risks.)
2. Secondly, the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) with a focus on building partnerships with stakeholders to implement the FRDP
While there is a standing call on the international community to increase financial flows towards adaptation needs, especially for Small Island Developing States like in the Pacific, our Pacific leaders have also endorsed the establishment of the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) as a Pacific led and Pacific owned initiative to ensure local communities are empowered to build their own resilience through the implementation of locally-led adaptation measures.
3. Recently, Pacific leaders adopted the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent with Climate Change and Disaster and Oceans and Environment as two of the seven thematic areas, highlighting the importance of climate change action and protection of the oceans health and integrity.
Hence, the Pacific interest to ensure an equitable WTO Fisheries subsidies agreement that will discipline certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and contribute to IUU fishing.
4. The slow and onset impacts of sea level rise threaten the security of the region's maritime zones. Thus, the 2021 Pacific leaders' Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate-Change Related Sea Level Rise exists as the region's collective position and commitment to maintaining maritime zones without reduction in the face of climate change related sea level rise.

For Samoa, our priorities is in line with that of the Blue Pacific region's priorities - *[climate change and resilience; sustainable ocean management, use and conservation; regional security; fisheries; nuclear legacy issues; and regional and national responses to COVID-19 and recovery efforts.]*

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), climate change amplifies existing challenges related to economic vulnerability, ecological fragility, and geographic isolation. Climate change impacts are an added imposition on the inherent challenges Samoa already faces as a SIDS to achieve its sustainable development goals. Climate projections for Samoa indicate rising air and sea-surface temperatures, more frequent and intense rainfall, stronger cyclones, increasing sea levels and greater ocean acidification through the 21st century. These changes already manifest in observed trends like higher maximum temperatures, more extreme rainfall, and sea-level rise.

Samoa remain highly susceptible to economic and environmental shocks, especially cyclones and natural disasters. More and more, natural disasters have emerged as a key determinant of growth in Pacific island countries like Samoa. Moreover, it is observed that while official development assistance directly contributes positively to economic growth, it also effectively mitigates the negative impact of natural disasters on economic growth if encouraged to be invested in essentials to minimize the human and economic cost of natural disasters. The impacts of COVID-19 have been substantial, particularly on our key sectors of tourism, fisheries and agriculture. As well, we continue to face challenges in the training and education of our young people, and are acutely aware of the far-reaching implications that these have for our children, their families, and our communities.

A Secured Environment and Climate Change is a Key Strategic Outcome of the current 5-year Pathway for the Development of Samoa. The Plan recognizes that the real challenge is not about securing more scientific evidence, setting new global targets, and making new pledges. It is about action for survival. Actions include encouraging investment in sustainable / renewable energy sources, support community replanting programs to build climate resilience from flooding, while offering economic opportunities for landowners; and improve mainstreaming of climate resilience and disaster risk management (including health crises) in all sectors, drawing on the extensive risk mapping and identified activities in the community plans.

70% of the population and infrastructure are located in low-lying coastal areas. The total economic impact of cyclones such as the cyclone Evan which hit Samoa in the late 2012 was estimated at 40% of the country's GDP at the time.

The Samoa National Climate Change Policy 2020 – 2030 provides the framework for both national adaptation and mitigation actions on a whole-of-country approach to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Adapting to climate change impacts will continue to be 'the major occupation and priority policy determinant for Samoa well into the future' including across all sectors of the economy. Actions include;

1. (Review of) Sector Adaptation Strategies implementation, Integrating Climate Change Risks into Agriculture, Health, Tourism Sectors and Forestry Management in Samoa. These sectoral strategies focus on enhancing resilience through adaptive actions tailored to each sector's needs.
2. Implementing the Community Integrated Management (CIM) Plans for 368 Communities of Samoa, which addresses climate resilience at the grassroots level. This includes adapting infrastructure, protecting biodiversity, managing coastal and inland ecosystems and securing water resources to name a few.
3. Enhance adaptation approach to increase resilience across the focal areas such as Built environment (coastal and inland infrastructure), Ecosystems, Ecosystems services, Biodiversity, Health, Soil, Sanitation and Agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries) and Food Security and lastly;

4. Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction, with climate adaptation, aimed at enhancing response and resilience to extreme weather events like cyclones, which are expected to increase in intensity

Certainly, the effective implementation of these measures will facilitate better coordination of climate change work in Samoa and providing opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between the government and all stakeholders.

Recent reviews of climate adaptation projects point to the need for programmed or strategic approach to the funding of adaptation options and measures and not a “project-by-project” approach. The successful adaptation in small islands will depend on supportive institutions, finance, information and technological support. As such, like many SIDS, Samoa faces limitations to financial resources, resilient infrastructure and technology and technical expertise in terms of transitioning to greener production processes and products, which could help fully realise our climate goals. Therefore financial assistance, capacity building and technical assistance from development partners is crucial.

As a region facing some of the most severe impacts of climate change, we recognise the need for systemic solutions and a holistic approach to help us adapt, and trade policy can contribute to this agenda – nationally, regionally and multilaterally such as here at the WTO. These existential issues and adaptation implications should be reflected in the international agenda through its inclusion in the outcomes of key international meetings. Such outcomes should give due consideration to the impacts on developing countries, especially the most vulnerable like SIDS. Given our major exposure to climate change impacts as a region, the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and Trade Ministers in 2023 recognised the need to address trade-related contributions, and have therefore endorsed in principle for the Pacific to elevate its trade and environment agenda. This would include the development of a Regional Sustainable Trade and Environment Strategy in the coming years.

With these ongoing efforts and the need for more support towards climate adaptation, Samoa is confident that as small island developing states, we have to stand up and be counted when we need to do so. Our ‘smallness’ should not deter us from international engagement, rather we should stand with our partners and share our particular circumstances to mold and influence the development of international policies. In this instance, understanding the interlinkages of international trade policies and climate change adaptation. Thank you.