

Toda Pacific Declaration on Climate Change, Conflict and Peace

Explanatory Note

In 2018, the Toda Peace Institute and the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (University of Otago, New Zealand) conducted a workshop on “Climate Change and Conflict in the Pacific: Prevention, Management and the Enhancement of Community Resilience” in Auckland, New Zealand.¹

This ‘Toda Pacific Declaration on Climate Change, Conflict and Peace’ flows from the debates and findings of that workshop.

Preamble

Recognising that the Pacific is a climate change hotspot, with Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change,

Recognising that terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and the livelihoods of communities are under threat from climate change, including threats to: culture, food, land, water and health, which are intensifying under these pressures,

Recognising that the impacts of climate change are resulting in internal (within a nation) and international migration, seen in the increasing frequency of relocations of entire communities across the Pacific,

Recognising that climate change induced pressures, combined with existing vulnerabilities, can lead to conflict, and even violent conduct of conflict, thus threatening peace, human security and stability, both within countries and at the regional level,

¹ The workshop brought together academics, policymakers, peacebuilding practitioners and civil society actors to discuss the challenges and potential conflict linkages posed by climatic uncertainty in the Pacific. The workshop established the ‘Auckland Climate Change, Conflict and Peace research and policy network’ in order to initiate and coordinate future activities.

Concerned that in the international debate surrounding the climate change–security nexus, PICs have attracted less attention than other parts of the world, despite the vulnerability of the region to the conflict-prone effects of climate change,

Convinced that there is an urgent need in the region for policy-relevant research, and evidence-based policy advice, on the issue of climate change, conflict and peace so as to foster the elaboration and implementation of policies and strategies,

We declare the following:

Findings, Principles and Guidelines

1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation responses require integrated foundations, based on dynamic and adaptive co-management approaches that bring together the best contemporary and traditional modes.

These include the following dimensions:

- 1.1. Integrating the knowledge and activities of stakeholders from different societal spheres such as: communities, government institutions (e.g. national and sub-national governments), traditional customary representatives (e.g. chiefs, elders and other cultural and wisdom custodians), religious faith communities (e.g. churches), as well as civil society agencies (e.g. NGOs),
 - 1.2. Building the wide variety of significant cultural and spiritual contexts of the Pacific into climate adaptation responses,
 - 1.3. Weaving together traditional ecological knowledge with climate science,
 - 1.4. Linking the international climate legal regime with state and traditional customary laws,
 - 1.5. Building linkages between all levels of climate change governance, from the local to the international,
 - 1.6. Supporting bridging institutions which have the capacity to bring together stakeholders from various governance levels, societal spheres, localities, and with different worldviews. Such bridging institutions can be civil society organisations, in particular in PICs the churches and other religious communities and institutions, educational institutions and/or networks of leaders who are familiar with both the ‘modern’ and the ‘traditional’ worlds.
2. There is a real risk that climate change-related conflicts may escalate across the Pacific. These will include conflicts over land and scarce natural resources, conflicts due to climate-induced displacement, conflicts in the aftermath of extreme climatic events (such as cyclones and floods), as well as conflicts arising from inadequate environmental governance or poorly designed and implemented climate change policies and adaptation and mitigation measures. The impacts of climate change, combined with pre-existing vulnerabilities and other factors, such as population pressures and rapid urbanisation, multiply the likelihood of conflict and even of violent conflict escalation, as well as an increase of everyday violence, in particular gender-based violence. Therefore climate

change adaptation responses require conflict prevention and conflict-sensitive approaches that prioritise local contexts and the maintenance of peace.

This encompasses:

- 2.1. Identifying and mitigating key local, national and international vulnerabilities which, when combined with the effects of climate change, threaten the peace and security of societies and communities, from threats to the sovereignty of states to everyday violence (particularly against women and children),
 - 2.2. Prioritising research which pays attention to the complexity of integrated human (economic, social, political and cultural) and natural systems,
 - 2.3. Including dimensions of the climate change–conflict nexus which so far have been widely ignored or underestimated, such as cultural and spiritual aspects, gender, traditional customary law and knowledge, together with contemporary indigenous knowledge and indigenous ways of climate change adaptation, of conflict transformation and peacebuilding,
 - 2.4. Paying attention to the (unintentional) conflict-prone effects of mitigation and adaptation measures, e.g. reforestation projects that lead to the displacement of communities,
 - 2.5. Developing context-specific conflict analysis and training tools, and organising comparative learning exchanges,
 - 2.6. Documenting cases of climate-related conflicts to identify lessons learned for conflict prevention and resolution, e.g. conflicts resulting from climate change-induced forced relocation of communities, or violence against women which may increase due to resource scarcity,
 - 2.7. Focusing on regional dialogue as crucial to the development of conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation responses.
3. The effects of climate change may require the resettlement of communities (e.g. relocating villages and infrastructure to higher grounds). These processes need conflict sensitive planning, involving affected communities from the onset.

This involves:

- 3.1. Acknowledging the inseparable connection of Pacific people(s) to the land (vanua, fenua, fanua, 'aina, whenua, enua, fonua, te aba ...) which is fundamentally, culturally and spiritually, linked to identity. Therefore the loss of land means a loss of cultural identity. This worldview needs to be incorporated in responses to climate change challenges,
- 3.2. Respecting the desire of people to stay and adapt their home territory to the effects of climate change whenever possible, as well as the need to plan for relocation when there are no other options,
- 3.3. Integrating the needs, interests and expectations of both resettlement and destination communities, as well as other social groups and stakeholders,

- 3.4. Ensuring that both resettling and destination communities are meaningfully included, and participate fully, in each stage of the resettlement process, based on ongoing dialogue with all parties.
4. There are dimensions that are central to Pacific peoples' lives and cultures which are not usually addressed in climate discourse. These include: emotions, spiritual connections, traditional laws, knowledge and practices, faith, gender, relationality and the more-than-human world. These aspects are highly relevant for conflict prevention and the maintenance of peace.

An approach that is sensitive to these dimensions encompasses:

- 4.1. Including differing worldviews in responses to climate change,
- 4.2. Highlighting the injustices inherent in the impacts of climate change pertaining to communities and nature across PICs, acknowledging that PICs' contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is negligible, while they at the same time bear the brunt of the negative effects of climate change,
- 4.3. Overcoming human-centred approaches, which separate people from nature,
- 4.4. Nurturing the concept of relationality which will deepen connections between people and other living beings and the material and immaterial worlds,
- 4.5. Nurturing cross-cultural dialogue through engaging and sharing Pacific worldviews, knowledge systems and spirituality, and integrating 'Western' and Pacific ways of thinking,
- 4.6. Acknowledging the rights of future generations to a viable and peaceful planet,
- 4.7. Acknowledging the rights of nature through the protection of sustainable eco-systems, which in turn support a viable and peaceful planet,
- 4.8. Focusing on education, including traditional and local knowledge, as crucial for conflict-sensitive adaptation responses,
- 4.9. Recognising the roles and responsibilities of churches and religious communities as influential civil society organisations across the Pacific and their (actual and potential) leadership role with regard to climate change and conflict,
- 4.10. Strengthening international climate law to ensure its enforceability and capacity to protect vulnerable states such as PICs,
- 4.11. Looking at ways in which civil society actors (including religious institutions) can reinforce and help realise national and regional political efforts to respond to the negative impacts of climate change, and
- 4.12. Holding to account those actors who are responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that cause immense problems and hardships for the people in PICs, demanding the substantial lowering of emissions and the setting and achieving of meaningful targets for the reduction of such emissions.

We/I endorse this Declaration.