



Many Strong Voices – Arctic and Small Island Developing States Joining Forces on Climate Change

The Arctic and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been identified as regions where impacts of climate change are already occurring. Although natural and human environments in the two regions differ markedly, both regions are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Several initiatives have been developed to assess the extent and impact of climate change in the two regions. Research on SIDS has been carried out through the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change. Corresponding research in the Arctic resulted in the release by the Arctic Council of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (2004) – a state-of-the-art scientific assessment of expected changes to the regions as a result of climate change.

Although both bodies of work have been circulated within their respective regions, they have yet to be formally linked or communicated to a broader audience.

The Many Strong Voices Programme aims to fill this gap by supporting exchange of knowledge and expertise on climate change between the two regions, and by assisting people in both the Arctic and SIDS regions to have their voices heard at local, regional, and international levels.

Context

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) showed that the Arctic is experiencing rapid changes in societal, economic and environmental conditions in addition to climate change, and emphasized that climate change will challenge the resilience and adaptive capacity of Arctic peoples.

In particular, Arctic coastal communities and Arctic indigenous people are directly affected by climate change because their ways of life depend on sea and coastal resources and conditions in their immediate environments, environments that are changing rapidly as a result of climate change.

The rate of climate change is higher in the Arctic than elsewhere in the globe. This has led to a sense of urgency regarding the need for adaptation in Arctic regions, as well as a perceived need to advocate for strong and concerted action internationally to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

For the SIDS, climate change has been high on the agenda for a number of years. The adverse effects of sea level rise and continued climate change seriously threaten sustainable development in these regions. Many communities in SIDS rely heavily on coastal resources and on the coastal zones for livelihoods and income.

In Sum:

Both regions consider themselves as weather vanes of global environmental change.

Because of their close ties to land and sea environments, economies and cultures in both regions are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Communities in both regions have proven adept at adapting to changing conditions in the past; however, climate change will pose new and unprecedented challenges to their adaptive capacity and resilience.



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Programme

There are three main programme objectives:

1. Build capacity in the Arctic and SIDS so that people in these vulnerable regions have a stronger voice in negotiating measures to reduce greenhouse gases and in developing ways to adapt to climate change.
2. Raise awareness about the effects of climate change in the Arctic and the SIDS, both globally and within these regions. (This is linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], Article 6.)
3. Increase understanding of needs and solutions and take practical measures on adaptation. (This is linked to the work of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice agreement on adaptation.)

This programme is being designed as a follow up to a number of international initiatives and assessments.

This is a long term programme. It includes components such as comparative field research, outreach, community assessments, and the development of best practices for adaptation. It is policy-relevant and community-driven, and is designed to work with and strengthen the “many strong voices” in the two regions and to link local adaptation needs in the Arctic and SIDS with national and international plans and policies.

Partners

Indigenous Peoples Organisations

- Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
- Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC)

Policy and Research Organisations

- Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre
- Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO)
- New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI)

- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
- Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
- UNEP/GRID-Arendal

Non-Governmental Organisations

- Climate Change & Energy Programme, Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD)
- Climate Law and Policy Project
- WWF South Pacific Programme
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
- Nature Seychelles

Multinational Bodies

- Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (UNEP-GPA)
- Organization of American States, Department of Sustainable Development (OAS DSD)
- Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union (OCTA)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- UNEP Regional Office for North America (RONA)
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat (UNFCCC)

The Many Strong Voices Programme is coordinated by UNEP/GRID-Arendal and the Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO). For more information, or if you are interested in becoming an MSV partner, please contact:

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