

Many Strong Voices

Arctic • Small Island Developing States • Action on Climate Change



PRESS RELEASE

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Many Strong Voices join forces on climate change

Belize City – Driven by the need to protect the cultures and economies of countries and regions most affected by climate change, representatives of Arctic communities and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) from the Caribbean, and Pacific have formed an alliance called Many Strong Voices to press for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

In a passionate and forthright address in which he supported the establishment of the Many Strong Voices alliance, Honourable John Briceno, Deputy Prime Minister and Environment Minister of Belize said “we need action now, not tomorrow.” He urged participants to raise their voices and insist that those responsible for climate change be held accountable for their actions.

The participants, who came from 16 countries and regions, including Alaska, the Caribbean, Fiji, the Canadian Arctic and the Overseas Countries and Territories Association of the European Union, including Greenland and French Polynesia, met in Belize City to prepare a five-year action plan. The strategy includes plans to push for deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It also includes an assessment of the SIDS to adapt to climate change and a plan to inform and warn the world of the dramatic effects of climate change in their regions.

“Together, we have identified common problems as a consequence of climate change, and our communities are suffering,” said Taito Nakalevu, Climate Change Officer with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, based in Samoa. “We insist that those countries that are causing the problems have a responsibility to those whose lives are being affected.”

The participants from the Arctic and the SIDS regions pointed to similar climate change effects, including the relocation of communities as well as changes in marine resources on which communities depend.

“In the Arctic, we know that melting ice and sea level rise are going to affect everyone on the planet especially people in Small Island Developing States. This is why we have chosen to work together – amplifying our voices in

global negotiations,” said Alaska-based Patricia Cochran, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

Stressing the connection between the Arctic and the SIDS regions, Dr. Ken Leslie, Director of the Belize-based Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) noted that Belize has been experiencing many effects of climate change. “We have many small, low-lying, inhabited islands along our coast and the second largest barrier reef in the world that are vulnerable to sea level rise and, most significantly, hurricanes which are increasing in intensity due to the warming of the sea.”

The Many Strong Voices meeting was hosted by the CCCCC and was coordinated by UNEP/GRID-Arendal, based in Norway, and the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research – Oslo (CICERO).

www.manystrongvoices.org

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