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COP23: The Power Of An Ocean

What a year 2017 has been! No region has been spared the increasingly intense and extreme weather events that are becoming more frequent and as a result of climate change. Hurricanes, wildfires, droughts, floods, not to mention the superstorm that is the current US Administration. Fiji Prime Minister Bainimarama rightly said that when it comes to climate change, “we are all in the same canoe.”

If we don't come together and act, things are only going to get worse. “Extreme” events could become the new normal. This year's UN Environment Emissions Gap report finds that current NDCs will only reduce emissions by a third of what is required by 2030. Even with their full implementation, a temperature increase of at least 3°C by 2100 is very likely. ECO first wrote, in 2010, that the next few years are crucial to closing this mitigation gap, and that it requires a sharp increase in mitigation ambition, climate finance flows, technology cooperation, and capacity building. Negotiators, do you hear us now?

To facilitate transformational change and limit warming in line with Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, making climate finance available on the ground is key. Climate change is going beyond the ability of people and ecosystems to adapt. The lack of essential progress to mitigate and adapt to climate change means that vulnerable countries, communities, and ecosystems now face catastrophic changes. This phenomenon is known to negotiators as ‘Loss and Damage.’ Put in normal terms: The most vulnerable are already suffering terrible consequences and if we do not take decisive action, the good ship planet Earth looks certain to run aground.

But don't despair, dear negotiators, the future is in your hands. While individually we may be but drops, together we embody the power of an ocean. Jointly you have the power to ensure smooth sailing ahead. At the first Pacific COP, please bear in mind that your action, or lack of action, will set the course for the future of our planet and the very survival of the most vulnerable. Your countries ratified and embraced the goals and visionary ambition of the Paris Agreement. For the Agreement to be effective it needs robust guidelines that encourage countries to raise ambition over time, while providing support to those that need it to manage the transition, to adapt, and to cope with loss and damage. Don't let the Paris Agreement be but a vision of a far off future on the horizon of a rough sea. Let us transform this vision into the concrete promises it deserves to be.

ECO is here to help. In order for COP 24 to deliver what has been agreed in Paris, there are a few things that need to happen during these two weeks.

First, you need to make substantive progress through constructive negotiations on the Paris implementation guidelines. Balanced and constructive discussions need to happen to make progress across *all* areas of the Paris Agreement Work Programme. To stay on track for finalizing the guidelines at COP 24, this COP needs to prepare a zero draft of the implementation guidelines. Nothing less will do!

Second, ECO enthusiastically welcomes the Talanoa Dialogue. Talanoa means inclusive, participatory, and transparent dialogue that builds empathy and leads to decision making for the collective good. Parties should work in this Talanoa spirit to lay the groundwork for a successful outcome from the Dialogue in 2018. This is a vital opportunity to provide the information, create the right conditions, and send the political signals to empower Parties to make their NDCs more ambitious by 2020. Talanoa can thus engender a spirit of collaboration and trust that is needed to provide direction and enhance critical pre-2020 action and support.

Dear delegates, this work is essential to ensure smooth sailing on the seas ahead. But some waves are already breaking on our shores. Pacific islanders are threatened by rising sea levels, forcing them to abandon their land. Heavy, unseasonal rains have made farming impossible in many places, and increasingly frequent and intense extreme weather events are causing untold damage all over the world. Therefore, loss and damage must be addressed at COP 23. ECO notes with grave concern that the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) has yet to make progress on its core mission of delivering finance for addressing loss and damage. Let's give the WIM a fighting chance to fulfil its agreed mandate. At COP 23, ECO calls for the establishment of an initiative for loss and damage finance, with a two year work plan identifying sources of revenue adequate to the scale of the problem delivered in a fair and predictable way. Enough finance to enable the WIM to do its job: to pay for those impacts caused by our failure to mitigate climate changes that are now unavoidable.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement sparked real hope that governments were serious about ambitious and collaborative climate action in pursuit of a world where warming would be limited to 1.5°C. This year has provided us, again, with a stark reminder of the consequences of delaying action. COP 23 must lay the groundwork for collective progress towards the Paris goals and prepare the way for revised, more ambitious NDCs. We expect nothing less from a Pacific COP.

US Action

As COP23 begins, there is a large (orange) elephant in the room. The Trump Administration has made the US the only country that has fully rebuffed the spirit of Paris — not only with threats of withdrawal but also renewed pledges to ramp up extraction of fossil fuels, and that's not all. While the Administration is abandoning all sense of reason to eliminate climate policy (despite it being unclear whether those efforts will be successful), the resistance is active and fighting back, making positive progress well beyond the reach of the Trump Administration.

ECO's here to help fill in the gaps and let you in on the good, the bad, and the ugly of the US climate scene.

First, the bad and the ugly: the Trump Administration's endless attacks on efforts to address climate change. Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), led by fossil fuel shill Scott Pruitt, has proposed rescinding the Clean Power Plan, an Obama-era rule aimed at drastically cutting carbon emissions from power plants, and the foundation of the US's NDC.

There are a slew of other terrible things his administration has acted on. Reopening vehicle emission standards for review with the aim of weakening them? Check. Halting a review of public land coal mining royalties and inclusion of climate change into reviews of those projects? You'd better believe it. Dismissing EPA science advisors and replacing them with fossil-fuel insiders, and appointing similar fossil-fuel representatives to key environmental posts in the Trump Administration? They sure are trying. Not even direct attacks on citizens' homes are out of the question. Just before Hurricane Harvey dumped 50 inches (127 cm) of rain on Houston, the Administration revoked federal flood standard requirements to take into account climate-related sea level rise. Nor are other countries exempt, with the administration turning its back on the most vulnerable by withholding climate finance, and changing guidance for the US to support fossil fuel projects by Multilateral Development Banks.

But all is not lost: there is good. Trump doesn't speak for most Americans. Not the cities and states that they live in, not the businesses they work for, nor the universities they attend. More than 2,500 states, cities, companies and investors, and universities, representing over 130 million Americans and \$6.2 trillion of the US economy said that they are "still in" and committed to meeting the US's NDC despite the Trump Administration. Fifteen states and Puerto Rico are on track to meet the US NDC goals within their own jurisdictions.

Additionally, it's not quite as easy to roll back environmental regulations as the Administration wants to believe. Well-established US law requires greenhouse gases be regulated for the public's health and welfare. Even while the Administration is trying to dismantle the Clean Power Plan, many states are already on pace to meet the 2030 targets due to economic forces, successful campaigns, and grassroots organizing. So despite their climate denial and consistent attempts, the Administration has accomplished little.

But perhaps what is most important to know is that Americans aren't letting the Trump Administration get away with this. Americans are acting as agents of positive change, getting 200,000 people to march in Washington DC this year, and fighting against every pipeline under the wisdom of Native Americans whose land and heritage must be protected from fossil fuel extraction. Scientists emerged from their labs and research stations to march through the rain in the March for Science to have their voices heard in Washington.

These Americans are here in Bonn, too. You'll find them advocating for **Parties to look beyond this administration and take on ambitious climate action** and telling their stories as part of the "US People's Delegation." **They'll continue** to hold this Administration accountable **here in Bonn and at home by ensuring our commitments under Paris are honoured** and preserve a safe future for the global community.

Pacific Climate Warriors/Ende Gelände

ECO wants to remind everyone that despite the somewhat familiar setting of Bonn, this is no normal round of climate change negotiations, it is historic. This is the first time that a Pacific Island Nation is leading a COP. And ECO asks, who better to lead this process?

After all, Pacific Island nations are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The continuous burning of fossil fuels is leading to accelerated sea level rise; longer, more intense heat waves; and exacerbated natural disasters. Yet, in the face of such menace, Pacific Islanders are standing together and saying to the world: "*We are not drowning. We are fighting!*" This is the resounding message of the Pacific Climate Warriors, a network of Pacific Islanders fighting for climate justice, who yesterday joined with local communities and activists in the

Ende Gelände action to confront Europe's biggest source of CO₂: the coal mines and power plants in Germany's Rhineland. They stood in solidarity with thousands of people as part of a peaceful protest to shut down one of the world's biggest lignite coal mines and demand an immediate coal phase-out — because these mines are still expanding and threatening the livelihoods of frontline communities around the world.

ECO applauds this successful action against the fossil fuel industry and wants to remind everyone attending the climate negotiations, as they kick off today, of the demands laid out by the Pacific Climate Warriors in their Declaration on Climate Change:

- End the era of fossil fuels and move to 100% renewable energy
- Support the adaptation of vulnerable communities
- Limit global warming to 1.5C

COP23 is the 'Pacific' COP with Fiji being the first Pacific nation to hold the presidency. The Pacific Climate Warriors are here to amplify and strengthen the climate leadership coming from Fiji and the Pacific.

We must listen to the voices of those most impacted by climate change and push for strong ambition on climate action. This, after all, is a Pacific lead COP.

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