

Japan pledges climate change aid to Pacific island nations

May 23 2015, by Yuri Kageyama

Japan pledged Saturday 55 billion yen (\$450 million) in aid to Pacific island nations that are battling rising sea levels and natural calamities as a result of global warming.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made the pledge at a two-day meeting with the island nations' leaders in Iwaki in northern Japan.

The assistance will be doled out over three years to help fight [environmental disasters](#) and for access to clean water, renewable energy, waste management and related issues.

Japan will also help with expert exchanges and training. Participants agreed to work together to preserve ocean life and encourage trade and investment.

The island nations include Fiji, the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands and others dotting the Pacific Ocean, some of which are threatened with rising sea levels.

Scientists say the melt of Arctic glaciers is a key factor in the [sea level rise](#) that is threatening island nations, many of which are built on coral atolls just a few meters (feet) above [sea level](#).

In a landmark report in 2014, the U.N.'s expert panel on climate change said oceans could rise by as much as 1 meter (3.3 feet) by the end of this century if no action is taken to cut the [greenhouse gas emissions](#) blamed

for [global warming](#).

"In order for us to face up to the fury of nature and also recover even better from disasters, we must bring to each other our wisdom and experiences while maintaining connections," Abe said in a speech.

He also expressed gratitude to the nations' leaders for helping in the recovery of the remains of Japanese soldiers who died on the islands during World War II, an important issue for Abe this year, which marks the 70th anniversary of the end of that war.

Abe has been eager to turn a new leaf for Japan, in asserting itself in the region not only economically but also in defense and diplomacy, and countering the growing prowess of regional rival China.

On Thursday, Abe announced \$110 billion in fresh infrastructure financing for Asia, topping the \$100 billion China set for its newly created Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Japan has sided with the U.S. in not joining the 57 countries in AIIB.

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