

Fiji calls for urgency in talks to implement climate accord

6 November 2017, by Geir Moulson And Dorothee Thiesing



Fiji's prime minister Vereqe 'Frank' Bainimarama drinks water during the opening of the COP 23 Fiji UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, Monday, Nov. 6, 2017. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

Fiji's prime minister called for a sense of urgency in the fight against global warming Monday, telling negotiators "we must not fail our people," as he opened two weeks of talks on implementing the Paris accord on combating climate change, which is already affecting his Pacific island nation.

While diplomats and activists gathered in Bonn, the U.N. weather agency said 2017 is set to become the hottest year on record aside from those impacted by the El Nino phenomenon.

The talks in Germany are the first major global climate conference since President Donald Trump announced that the U.S. will pull out of the 2015 Paris accord unless he can secure a better deal, and the first time that a small island nation is chairing such a conference.

Negotiators will focus on thrashing out some of the technical details of the Paris accord, which aims to

limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. While Trump has expressed skepticism, a recent U.S. government report concluded there is strong evidence that man-made climate change is taking place.

Fiji Prime Minister Voreqe 'Frank' Bainimarama, the Bonn conference's chairman, offered greetings "from one of the most climate-vulnerable regions on earth," underlining "our collective plea for the world to maintain the course we set in Paris."

"The need for urgency is obvious," he said. "Our world is in distress from the extreme weather events caused by climate change."



Protestors demand the implementation of the climate change convention in Bonn, Germany, Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017. The Climate summit starts Monday Nov. 6, in Bonn. (Roland Weihrauch/dpa via AP)

"We must not fail our people" and must make the Paris accord work, Bainimarama said, adding that means to "meet our commitments in full, not back away from them."

He didn't refer directly to the Trump administration's position, but appeared to play off Trump's "America first" slogan.

"The only way for every nation to put itself first is to lock arms with all other nations and move forward together," the Fijian leader declared.

In a brief statement toward the end of the opening session Monday, a senior U.S. diplomat told delegates that Washington's position hadn't changed since Trump's announcement in June.

phenomenon that can contribute to higher temperatures. .

WMO says key indicators of climate change—such as rising carbon-dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere, rising sea levels and the acidification of oceans—"continue unabated" this year.



Children with banners reading "save the world" march between the delegates during the opening of the COP 23 Fiji UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, Monday, Nov. 6, 2017. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

But Trigg Talley, the U.S. deputy special envoy for climate change, said the United States will "continue to participate in international climate change negotiations and meetings, including ongoing negotiations related to guidance for implementing the Paris agreement."

The meeting began with schoolchildren chanting "Save the World" processing into the conference hall and a traditional Fijian welcoming ceremony.

The U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization said this year is already on track to be one of the three hottest years of all time, after 2015 and 2016, which were both affected by a powerful El Niño—a weather



Native people from Fiji sit in the convention center during the opening of the COP 23 Fiji UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany, Monday, Nov. 6, 2017. The two-week meeting that started Monday is the first major conference on climate change since President Donald Trump said that the U.S. will pull out of the Paris accord unless his administration can secure a better deal. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

It said the global mean temperature from January to September this year was about a half-degree Celsius warmer than the 1981-2010 average, which was estimated to be 14.31 degrees C (57.76 Fahrenheit).

The five-year average temperature from 2013 to 2017 is more than 1 degree Celsius higher than that during the pre-industrial period.

WMO says 2017 has been marked by higher-than-average rainfall in places like western China, southern South America and the contiguous United States; lower-than-average arctic sea-ice extent.

Participants at the Bonn conference include diplomats from 195 nations, as well as scientists, lobbyists and environmentalists. French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela

Merkel and other leaders are expected to appear near the end of the summit to give the talks a final push.



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German Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks called for "significant progress" in Bonn on implementing the Paris accord.

"The Paris agreement is irreversible," she told delegates Monday. "We now have to do everything in our power to implement it and we do not have much time left."



Cars and trucks queue on the highway A5 in Frankfurt, Germany, Monday, Nov. 6, 2017. The World Climate Conference with 25 000 people participating starts on Monday in Bonn, Germany. (AP Photo/Michael Probst)



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