

Pacific Partners Outlook

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Washington Should Seek a Climate Change Consensus with Pacific Islands

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It isn't often that speakers at the United Nations get standing ovations, but that is what Marshall Islands poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, 26, received at the September 23 UN Climate Summit in New York after [reading a haunting poem](#) addressed to her seven-month-old daughter. In the poem she pledges to protect her daughter from the threat of climate change, which she warns is being ignored by world leaders. An official UN Twitter account said Jetnil-Kijiner moved many world leaders in the audience to tears.

Speaking separately to the summit via video, Marshall Islands president Christopher Loeak, standing in front of his house around which he recently raised a seawall, declared, "Out here in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, climate change has arrived." Like other Pacific Island leaders, Loeak, who presides over a nation of 22 low-lying atolls, wants to sound an alarm to world leaders that the Pacific Islands are the "canary in the coal mine" of climate change.

Notably absent among the 125 world leaders attending the UN summit was Australian prime minister Tony Abbott, who in July followed through on an election campaign pledge to repeal his country's carbon tax against the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases.

The UN summit followed the once-in-a-decade International Conference on Small Island and Developing States (SIDS) hosted by Samoa in early

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Marshallese poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner with her husband and daughter. Jetnil-Kijiner's reading of a poem to her daughter about the fight against climate change received a standing ovation from assembled delegates at the recent UN Climate Summit in New York. https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/15338101146/

September and attended by 21 heads of state and government. Donors pledged \$1.9 billion in sustainable development projects and launched nearly 300 partnerships between governments, businesses, civil society, and UN bodies in areas ranging from climate change and disaster risk management to sustainable energy and ocean health. The participants sharply criticized both developed and developing countries for not doing enough to tackle climate change and demanded that the world start paying more attention to the cataclysmic impact on their islands.

One outcome of the SIDS conference was a renewed focus on maintaining sustainable fisheries. The pressure on global fish stocks comes from many of the same factors that contribute to climate change: a growing population, carbon emissions, and ocean acidification. However, achieving sustainable fisheries also requires careful quota management, implementation of best practices, and policing of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

Similar themes were sounded during the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), which was held in the Marshall Islands immediately following the SIDS conference. Participants pledged to be “climate leaders” and called on other nations to “phase down greenhouse gas pollution.”

In June, Secretary of State John Kerry hosted a two-day conference in Washington aimed at [saving the globe's oceans](#). With actor Leonardo DiCaprio by his side, Kerry warned in speeches and interviews that the world's oceans are in peril. The secretary said that protecting the oceans is “a vital security issue involving the movement of people, the livelihood of people, the capacity of people to exist and live where they live today.”

Participants at the conference from the Pacific Islands included Kiribati president Anote Tong and Palau president Tommy Remengesau. Kerry told participants that nearly \$2 billion had been pledged in response to the conference to protect oceans. President Barack Obama declared that his administration would expand protection of the central Pacific Ocean by restricting fishing and energy exploration within almost 800,000 square miles.

Secretary Kerry visited the Solomon Islands in August just ahead of the PIF and SIDS conferences. “I just came from the Solomon Islands yesterday, a thousand islands, some of which could be wiped out if we don't make the right choices,” Kerry said. “I saw with my own eyes what sea level rise would do to parts of it: It would be devastating.”

Washington Should Seek a Climate Change Consensus with Pacific Islands *(continued)*



Delegates speak during the recent once-in-a-decade UN Small Island Developing States conference in Samoa. With the Pacific Islands taking up the banner of leadership on climate change this year, Washington should seek to work with them on a consensus position ahead of next year's climate negotiations in France. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itupictures/15277447985/>

Kerry said that in response to these concerns the United States has deepened its partnerships with Pacific Island nations to meet the immediate threats and long-term development challenges of the region. He pointed out that the U.S. Agency for International Development had launched projects to increase the resilience of Pacific Island communities and that Washington had signed new maritime boundaries with Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia to promote good governance and peaceful relations between island states.

Obama told the UN Climate Summit in September that the United States and China, as the world's top carbon-dioxide emitters, have a responsibility to spearhead new efforts to rein in emissions. The president said that the United States would play a leadership role in a new round of climate change talks, despite the uncertain commitments by some countries and opposition at home by some in Congress and the U.S. business community who argue that the controls will be costly and are based on still-unfinished scientific analysis.

"Nobody gets a pass," Obama said. "We will do our part, and we'll help developing nations do theirs."

Washington Should Seek a Climate Change Consensus with Pacific Islands *(continued)*

The president will get an opportunity at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris next year to take a leadership role in once again seeking to achieve a binding agreement on combatting climate change. President Obama's Climate Action Plan already demonstrates a credible commitment to carbon reduction, but if the United States is going to apply pressure to other countries to do more it will need to raise the stakes across the board. Washington will also need to work in concert with those nations on the front lines of the fight against climate change—small-island developing states.

The Pacific Islands this year have seized the mantle of leadership on climate change, and the Marshall Islands foremost among them. This should carry additional weight for U.S. policymakers, as the Marshalls are in a compact of free association with the United States. As with Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia, the United States has a close, longstanding, and mutually beneficial relationship with the Republic of the Marshall Islands and is responsible for its protection.

This means Washington is in a uniquely capable position to work with the Marshalls and other Pacific Islands ahead of next year's UN climate conference. Doing so will ensure that the United States' negotiating position reflects the concerns and needs of those nations most threatened by climate change. It will also amplify the voices of small-island states at the conference, lend the United States some of the moral force exhibited by the Pacific Islands in recent months, and help cajole other nations to join the effort against climate change. ▲

The Month That Was



An F/A-18F Super Hornet refuels with an Omega tanker during Exercise Bersama Shield 2011. Australian F/A-18Fs have now joined U.S.-led combat missions against the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq. https://www.flickr.com/photos/aus_defence_force/5734741133/

AUSTRALIA

Australian jets fly first combat mission against ISIS in Iraq. Australian F/A-18F fighter jets flew their first combat patrols over Iraq on October 6, though they found no Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) targets to engage. Australia has sent 400 support and 200 special forces personnel along with Wedgetail surveillance aircraft and KC-30A multirole tanker aircraft to contribute to the U.S.-led coalition fighting ISIS. The Australian government has said that its jets will not join strikes against ISIS in Syria. Australia's contribution to the fight is expected to cost \$440 million per year.

Parliament passes enhanced counterterrorism, intelligence collection laws. The Australian Parliament on September 26 passed a tranche of laws to expand the government's ability to fight terrorism, including allocating \$200 million in additional funding over four years to Australia's intelligence agency. The legislation also allows the agency to use a single warrant to search an unlimited number of electronic devices on a single network, and institutes prison sentences of up to 10 years for journalists and whistleblowers who reveal details about intelligence agents or operations. Meanwhile, lawmakers are debating legislation that would criminalize travel by Australian citizens to select areas identified by the government as being home to terrorist activity.

Antiterrorism raids result in one arrest. Australian police on September 29 conducted a number of raids across Melbourne targeting individuals suspected of having connections to the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq following a tip from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. The raids resulted in just one arrest—of a man who allegedly sent thousands of dollars to a U.S. citizen fighting in Syria. They followed similar raids in Queensland State on September 10 that resulted in two arrests, and the September 24 fatal police shooting of a teenager who stabbed two officers after being brought in for questioning about alleged links to terrorism.

Australia, Cambodia conclude refugee deal. Australian and Cambodian officials on September 25 finalized an agreement to resettle in Cambodia refugees currently held at the Australian detention facility on Nauru. Australia will foot the bill for relocating the refugees, though details have not been released. Authorities said that only those asylum seekers who qualify as refugees and willingly choose to relocate will be moved to Cambodia. Australian immigration minister Scott Morrison said Australia

will provide Cambodia with \$35 million over the next four years but denied that it is directly tied to the resettlement deal.

Government splits budget into four separate bills in hopes of passage.

The government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott on October 1 split the controversial budget it submitted to Parliament in May into four smaller bills in hope of winning support for some of the measures from the Labor Party-led opposition. The proposed budget would bring substantial savings by cutting support for higher education, slashing government jobs, and raising the eligibility requirements for obtaining welfare benefits. Treasurer Joe Hockey said that despite splitting up the budget bill, the government remains committed to all the planned reforms.

NEW ZEALAND

Ruling National Party wins election by landslide. New Zealand's ruling National Party won the country's September 20 general election with 47 percent of the vote, garnering 60 seats in Parliament and returning John Key to a third term as prime minister. National fell just one seat shy of achieving the first single-party majority in the 120-seat legislature since the current electoral system was put in place in 1996. The party has agreed to continue to govern in coalition with its previous partners—the United Future, ACT, and Maori parties—which won a combined four seats. Labour Party leader David Cunliffe resigned shortly after the election, opening the way for a fight for leadership of the opposition.

McCully scolds UN Security Council as New Zealand campaigns for seat.

Foreign Minister Murray McCully gave a speech to the UN General Assembly on September 30 as part of New Zealand's campaign for a two-year seat on the Security Council. McCully scolded the council for its inaction in the face of international crises, including in the Ukraine and Iraq and Syria—and contrasted this with New Zealand's engagement in the Pacific, where he said results have been prioritized over talk. The General Assembly will vote on a new set of nonpermanent members of the Security Council on October 16

PACIFIC ISLANDS

Bainimarama's party wins Fijian elections. Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama's FijiFirst party on September 17 won the country's first democratic election since Bainimarama's 2006 coup, garnering 59 percent of the vote and 32 of the 50 seats in Parliament. The Sodelpa Party, which mainly represents ethnic Fijian interests, came in a distant second with 15 seats and the National Federation Party won the remaining 3 seats.



Prime Minister John Key (right) with National Party lawmaker Simon Bridges. Key has been returned for a third term as prime minister following National's compelling victory in the recent general election. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nznationalparty/3543851343/>

Opposition parties decried alleged irregularities during the election, but a multinational observer group quickly declared the polls largely free and fair. Following the vote, the Commonwealth of Nations moved to reinstate Fiji.

Pacific Islands drive climate change agenda at United Nations, SIDS conference. Marshall Islands president Christopher Loeak opened the September 18 UN climate change summit in New York with a call to delegates to respond to the threat of climate change to his and other low-lying island states. Meanwhile, 26-year old Marshallese poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner stole the show with a moving video message that garnered a rare standing ovation from world leaders. The Marshalls' leadership at the United Nations followed Samoa's successful hosting of a once-a-decade Small Island Developing States (SIDS) conference September 1-4, at which climate change topped the agenda.



Leonardo DiCaprio addresses the opening of the 2014 UN Climate Summit. Marshall Islands president Christopher Loeak also addressed the opening of the summit, and Marshallese poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner spoke on behalf of civil society. https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/15174355559/

Cook Islands ruling party holds precarious majority in Parliament. The Cook Islands' High Court on September 27 overturned an initial vote count showing that Prime Minister Henry Puna's Cook Islands Party had won the Tamarua constituency's parliamentary seat during July national elections and awarded it instead to the main opposition Democratic Party. The decision reduces the ruling party's representation in the new Parliament to 12, while the Democratic Party controls 9 seats and the One Cook Islands party holds the remaining 2 seats. A by-election for the final seat in Parliament—in the traditionally Democratic-leaning Mitiaro constituency—will be held on November 11, potentially leading to Puna's government being unseated.

French Polynesia's president ousted due to corruption. French Polynesia's president, Gaston Flosse, left office on September 6 after failing to obtain a pardon from French president Francois Hollande for a four-year suspended sentence for corruption. A French court convicted Flosse in July of signing off on government payments to employees who did not actually exist in order to support his ruling Tahoeraa Hiuraatira party. Flosse's conviction makes him ineligible to hold political office for three

years, but he will likely continue to exert influence as leader of the ruling party.

Nauru avoids bankruptcy after court overturns freeze on bank accounts. The Supreme Court of Australia's New South Wales on October 3 overturned a lower court decision a week earlier to freeze Nauru's foreign bank accounts after the nation failed to pay \$26 million owed to U.S. funds management company Firebird. Government services remain at risk as authorities cannot access Nauru's bank accounts until mid-October. Australia voiced support for the new court ruling amid concerns that the freeze could have forced Nauru to divert nearly \$10 million in recent aid from Canberra.

Papua New Guinea court rules that police commissioner cannot block prime minister's arrest. Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court on October 2 ruled that Police Commissioner Geoffrey Vaki exceeded his authority by preventing officers from carrying out an arrest warrant issued in June against Prime Minister Peter O'Neill for corruption. Sam Koim, the head of an anticorruption task force, had sought O'Neill's arrest amid allegations that he arranged fraudulent payments to a law firm, sparking a months-long political crisis. Both sides claimed victory following the court's ruling. It remains unclear whether Koim will again seek O'Neill's arrest following the court's ruling. ▲

The TPP, Taiwan, and its role in the Asia Pacific. The George Washington University's Sigur Center for Asian Studies and the Annual Conference of the American Association of Chinese Studies will cohost a conference October 10 on Taiwan titled "TRA and TPP: Past and Present." Panelists will discuss the future of the Taiwan Relations Act, the prospects for Taipei to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Taiwan's role in the wider Asia Pacific. The event will be held from 12:00 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. at the Elliot School of International Affairs, 1957 E St., NW, Room 602. For more information and to RSVP, [click here](#).

Discussion of the slowing convergence between nations. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace will host a discussion October 15 on the results of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's *Perspectives on Global Development* report showing that the pace of convergence between developed and developing nations has slowed. Carl J. Dahlman, who oversaw the report, will present its key findings, which include that productivity in developing countries is not rising rapidly enough to close the development gap. The event will be held from 2.30 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. at the Carnegie Endowment, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW. For more information and to RSVP, [click here](#).

Briefing on U.S.-Australia partnership report. The East-West Center will host a special briefing October 17 on its recently released report *Alliance 21: The Australia-United States Partnership*. The report contains findings and recommendations to help the two countries address the challenges and opportunities of the coming years. Bates Gill, CEO of the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, will discuss the report's findings. The event will take place from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the East-West Center, Sixth Floor, 1819 L St., NW. For more information and to RSVP, [click here](#).

Global Security Forum 2014. CSIS will hold its annual Global Security Forum on November 12 with the theme "The Top Challenges Facing U.S. and Global Security." Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work will deliver a keynote address, and there will be a series of panel discussions throughout the day. The forum will take place from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at CSIS, 1616 Rhode Island Ave., NW. A detailed agenda and RSVP information are not yet available, but will follow in the coming weeks. ▲

PACIFIC PARTNERS OUTLOOK

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