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# GCF Regional Dialogue with the Pacific and Asian SIDS

*Towards resilient SIDS in Asia Pacific: Advancing climate  
action, sustainable growth and inclusive development*

## Report

6-9 May 2025

Rarotonga, Cook Islands



The Green Climate Fund (GCF) Regional Dialogue with the Pacific and Asian SIDS was held from 6 to 9 May 2025 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

The event aimed to bring together GCF partners and stakeholders to accelerate their engagement with the GCF, and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, share experiences and best practices, and identify and develop climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. It also aimed to serve as a platform for GCF to understand and respond to the region's priorities, challenges and needs, and update partners on the latest policies, tools, and guidance for simpler and faster engagement and easier access to GCF.

The Dialogue highlighted GCF's vital role as both a key and a collaborative partner in tackling climate change and building resilience. Discussions focused on streamlining access to finance and aligning efforts with regional priorities.

The Dialogue was co-hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister, Climate Change Cook Islands, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. Participants included the GCF's government focal points (National Designated Authorities), Accredited Entities (national and international), Civil Society Organisations, and other partners. It was attended by more than 150 participants, including representatives of GCF's National Designated Authorities (NDAs) of 15 Pacific and Asian SIDS<sup>1</sup> governments, (13 Pacific Island countries, plus Maldives and Timor-Leste), representatives of 7 Direct Access Entities (DAEs), representatives of International Accredited Entities (IAEs) active in the region, Readiness delivery partners, and other partner organisations, including civil society.

The Regional Dialogue covered themes such as:

- Regional state of play and overview of GCF's engagement in Pacific and Asian SIDS; key regional climate finance priorities and initiatives in the Pacific; regional programming initiatives currently under development across the region; and updates on GCF policies and strategic frameworks;
- Approaches to Country Programming across the climate finance landscape and the implications for GCF resourcing; financing gaps, financing mechanisms and the need to balance expectations to resources available in a SIDS context; and understanding private sector in the GCF context;
- The GCF Readiness Programme 2024 – 2027 modalities and placement scheme and the new GCF concept note and funding proposal review process and templates; and
- Traditional knowledge for climate action, and Locally Led Climate Action approaches

The Dialogue also offered a platform for a number of bilateral meetings, formal and informal, as well as an opportunity to meet the new GCF Director for Asia Pacific, Mr. Hemant Mandal.

It was launched with powerful welcome remarks from the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Mark Brown: "Our collective goal must be to strengthen coherence, increase scale, and deliver real impact on the ground—faster, more efficiently, and more sustainably. "



“This is where the Green Climate Fund plays such a critical role, not just as a financier, but as a genuine partner; a partner that is responsive to country realities, aligned to regional priorities, and willing to innovate alongside us to overcome persistent challenges.

“The dialogue is an opportunity to move from conversation to action. It is an opportunity to co-design solutions that preserve national and regional ownership while strengthening the delivery of climate finance where it matters most: In our communities, on our lands, and across our oceans.”

The Director of GCF’s Asia Pacific Regional Department, Hemant Mandal, acknowledged the leadership of the Pacific and Asian SIDS on the regional and global climate agenda.

“This region has always punched above its weight. From governance to innovation, Pacific voices have shaped GCF,” he said. “With nearly 20 per cent of our Asia-Pacific portfolio invested in this (Pacific) region, we are proud of what we’ve built together, and we are here to grow that partnership.”

The following is a summary of the event (relevant presentations are available on the event webpage):

### **Day 1: Pacific and Asian SIDS state of play, key regional climate finance priorities and initiatives and GCF policy updates**

On the first day, the GCF provided an evidence-based overview of GCF’s engagement in the Pacific and Asian SIDS, noting key trends, gaps, and challenges in project development and delivery, and highlighting emerging opportunities under GCF-2 to inform strategic programming decisions. The day’s proceedings highlighted the Green Climate Fund’s transformative impact through strategic investments, innovative frameworks, and collaborative partnerships that are reshaping the climate resilience landscape for vulnerable nations in the Pacific and Asia.

#### *Substantial Commitment and Strategic Investment*

The presentation highlighted that GCF has invested 900 USD million in Pacific and Asian SIDS and all countries in this region have accessed GCF resources to date in the form of Readiness, PPF, single- and/or multi-country projects. Pacific and Asian SIDS countries are receiving 20% of the funding of the Asia Pacific GCF portfolio, and by B.42, it is expected that the Pacific and Asian SIDS portfolio will hit 1 billion USD. The commitment demonstrates the Fund’s recognition that Pacific and Asian SIDS face disproportionate climate risks despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions.

This strategic investment approach reflects the Green Climate Fund’s understanding that Pacific and Asian SIDS require tailored financial solutions to build resilience against climate change impacts, including sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ecosystem



degradation. The 900 million USD investment also serves as a foundation for transformative projects that will enhance adaptive capacity and support sustainable development pathways across the region.

### *Innovative Frameworks and Enhanced Access Mechanisms*

Representatives from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the NDA of the Maldives also presented on key regional climate finance priorities and initiatives in the Pacific and Asian SIDS and highlighted what roles GCF can play in supporting these priorities and initiatives. To further empower countries in the region, representatives from PIFS underscore that the Climate Finance Access and Mobilisation Strategy (CFAMS) regional framework supports countries in enhancing accessibility and the effective use of climate finance. Furthermore, the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) supports countries with small grants at scale, focused on community resilience.

Regional programming initiatives currently under development across Pacific and Asian SIDS were also showcased on the first day. These initiatives highlighted opportunities for cross-country collaboration and explored how such initiatives can scale impact, address systemic vulnerabilities, and align with GCF-2 priorities.

Lastly, the GCF provided an update on GCF policies and strategic frameworks, including the GCF's 50 by 30 vision, country ownership, regional presence and the revised accreditation framework.

## **Day 2: Country programming, financing mechanisms, and the private sector in the Pacific and Asian SIDS in the GCF context**

### *Reinforcing Country Ownership Through Strategic Frameworks*

The second day kicked off with a panel discussion with NDA representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea, as well as the Pacific Community on approaches to Country Programming across the climate finance landscape to achieve climate goals, and the implications for GCF resourcing.

There was a strong emphasis on country ownership, and the GCF highlighted the importance of country ownership, including through the "Country Platform" initiative. By creating structured partnerships between governments, development banks, civil society, and the private sector, these platforms aim to harmonise climate investments with nationally determined priorities, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). During the session, it was acknowledged that national and regional programming needs to go beyond GCF and take into account the broader climate finance landscape.



Representatives from development banks in the region, such as the Asian Development Bank, Fiji Development Bank, Federated States of Micronesia Development Bank, Bank of the Cook Islands, and the Tonga Development Bank, led the panel discussion on innovative financing mechanisms for country programming. The topics included understanding financing gaps, financing mechanisms, and the need to balance expectations with resources available in a SIDS context.

There was recognition of the important role that GCF plays in de-risking accredited national development banks' efforts to support green investments, and the importance of having dedicated capacity within DAEs and support from senior management or board. The discussion also highlighted the need to think through the positioning of national DAEs within the broader development landscape at the country level.

GCF Private Sector Facility also presented on unlocking finance for private sector climate action and how GCF can catalyze private sector investments for climate. The session acknowledged key barriers for catalyzing private finance in Pacific and Asian SIDS such as mobilizing private finance at scale; Domestic financial systems and institutions; and policy, market and capacity constraints.

The Day 2 Dialogue wrapped up with representatives from the NDA of Timor-Leste, Palau, Tuvalu and Samoa, and the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) sharing lessons learned and successes through programming, highlighting the effectiveness of GCF programming in the region. The Day 2 dialogue also reaffirmed the GCF's transformative potential as a catalyst for systemic change rather than isolated project funding. By anchoring its operations in country-owned platforms, strengthening DAEs, and fostering inclusive partnerships, the GCF can bridge critical gaps in climate finance accessibility and efficacy. However, realising this vision demands sustained political commitment, innovative financial de-risking tools, and adaptive governance frameworks that respond to the unique vulnerabilities of Pacific and Asian SIDS.

### **Day 3: GCF Readiness Programme 2024 – 2027: Modalities and Placement Scheme and the New GCF Concept Note and Funding Proposal Review Process and Templates**

#### *Expanding Readiness Support and Strategic Country Engagement*

On Day 3 of the dialogue, GCF presented on the Readiness Programme 2024-2027 modalities as a strategic tool for building climate investments in the Pacific and Asian SIDS. Each country is eligible to access USD 7M for Readiness through GCF-2 programming cycle 2024-2027. Countries can submit a single readiness proposal or up to two proposals. The session stressed that readiness support under GCF-2 needs to be approved by the Secretariat before the end of 2027, and implementation can carry over beyond 2027. This structure enables the countries to have the resources and the time needed to plan and implement impactful climate actions. The session also highlighted the need for strategic planning at the country level and countries and DAEs are encouraged to engage closely with the Regional Desk team.



### *Readiness Expert Placement: Dedicated Technical Capacity*

There was a dedicated clinic held on the GCF Readiness Expert Placement, which is an additional opportunity for countries to have dedicated technical capacity for engagement with the GCF. To further strengthen country engagement, GCF offers the Readiness Expert Placement program, enabling countries to access up to USD 320,000 for consultant fees and activity costs. A standard TOR template is available on the GCF website, and it needs to be contextualised by each NDA to reflect the country's specific needs. The recruitment takes up to 8 weeks, and the NDA will be part of recruitment process. There is flexibility in how the Readiness Expert Placement grant is used, as there is no indicative breakdown of the use of the Readiness Expert Placement grant and the GCF will follow up on tracking/tagging of the utilisation of approved Readiness Expert Placement grant and to advise if unspent funds approved under GCF-2 can be spent beyond 2027.

GCF also led a session on climate narrative analysis to equip participants with recommended steps and processes to do a proper analysis of climate narrative for the development of Concept Notes and Funding Proposals for the GCF, tailoring to specific circumstance of countries in the Pacific and Asian SIDS. Some tips to align the climate narrative with project's Theory of Change and how to write the climate narrative in the new GCF's concept note template were also shared in the interactive session.

The session highlighted that concept notes and funding proposals need to have a clear 'climate narrative' and link to the theory of change. The session also stressed the importance to outline the problem, driver, gaps, barriers and intended actions, which requires specialized technical expertise, and can be time consuming and need follow up support from the GCF.

### *Accelerating Access and Improving Processes*

GCF also led a session on funded activities development, particularly in understanding the key steps and what GCF looks for when assessing proposals. During the session, it was highlighted that country ownership, climate narrative, choice of financial instruments, paradigm shift, and additionality are some aspects that need to be addressed in the articulation and development of projects being proposed to GCF.

The Funded Activities clinic provided information on the project cycle focusing on bringing proposal ideas to GCF, developing Concept Notes, Funding Proposals, going to CIC-3 and iTAP. The dialogue allowed participants to raise issues to further understand timelines, the need for context-oriented review questions and working in a meaningful way with iTAP.

During the Day 3 sessions, participants requested more practical guidance from the GCF, particularly on ensuring timely processes and addressing region-specific needs. During the discussion, countries expressed concerns such as on timeliness and long delays in bringing proposals to the GCF Board. GCF highlighted how it is moving towards a GCF nine-month approval process from a digitized concept submittal to FP assessment, which includes a new concept note template that has been rolled out and is being utilized.



There were also concerns on transparency and the lack of clarity on proposal status in the pipeline. GCF explained that under the new process, stakeholders will be able to see the status of the project through the digitized platform.

Lastly, participants raised the important issue of GCF being fit for purpose such as in the Simplified Approval Process (SAP) of the GCF, which, despite being designed with SIDS in mind, remains disproportionately burdensome in terms of the assessment process.

GCF highlighted that it remains committed to speed up access to climate finance. The new digital concept note template is based on a commitment to facilitate processing of concept to funded proposal approval (iTAP) in 9 months. This process is designed as a fit for purpose assessment and to improve quality at entry and reduce Funding Proposal appraisal times.

The Funded Activities clinic provided valuable insights into the project cycle, including the development of concept notes and funding proposals, and navigating key steps such as CIC-3 and iTAP reviews. GCF also carefully noted the request for GCF to provide practical guidance, including on ensuring timeliness, and addressing regional specific needs.

#### Strengthening Partnerships for Climate Action

Day 3's dialogue highlighted the Green Climate Fund's positive, proactive role in supporting Pacific and Asian SIDS. By expanding readiness support, offering dedicated technical capacity, and streamlining access to climate finance, the GCF is deepening its partnership with countries and regional stakeholders. The Fund's ongoing commitment to practical guidance, capacity building, and responsive engagement is helping countries turn climate ambitions into transformative action, building resilience and sustainable development for the region.

#### **Day 4: Traditional Knowledge and Locally Led Climate Action in the Pacific and Asian SIDS**

The last day kicked off with a session on mobilizing traditional knowledge at the GCF, highlighting the experiences of Pacific nations and Indigenous Peoples in mobilizing local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for climate action at the GCF. There was an information sharing on the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group and opportunities for engagement.

The session highlighted how essential traditional knowledge is for peoples' survival from the impacts of climate change. Leveraging traditional knowledge to inform weather and climate information services is a powerful tool for translating science to information that can be easily understood by communities.

During the session, it was stressed that scaling up efforts to document traditional knowledge in the remote outer islands of Pacific and Asian SIDS as a climate change adaptation measure is costly, but very critical to minimise the loss of a wealth of traditional knowledge library.



Furthermore, co-designing traditional knowledge approaches to address Climate Change and transfer of traditional knowledge is a gradual process that does not happen overnight. There is no 'copyright' of traditional knowledge. Only 'copyleft' of traditional knowledge which builds on the values of trust and continuity. Such is seen as an urgent climate adaptation measure, ensuring that valuable knowledge is preserved and passed on to future generations.

The session wrapped up with an invitation to Pacific and Asian SIDS to participate at the upcoming first GCF Global Conference with Indigenous Peoples on 10-12 September in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Pacific is also encouraged to consider the next cycle of selection of GCF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG).

The fourth day also provided a platform to present GCF approach to Locally Led Climate Action (LLCA) and highlighted its relevance to the SIDS context in Pacific and Asian SIDS. Practical examples of locally led action from the region were showcased and a productive dialogue among stakeholders to share insights, challenges, and opportunities related to locally led approaches

GCF reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable and inclusive programming through Locally Led Climate Actions (LLCA) as it is core to achieving GCF's mandate of 'empowering climate action for peoples on the frontline of the climate crisis' LLCA is about reaching the unreached communities most at risk. During the session, it was highlighted that building in genuine flexibility and adaptive management in climate programming is crucial, and to put the wellbeing and future of our children at the center of it.

On the fourth day, the importance of technology incubation and acceleration for Pacific and Asian SIDS was also highlighted, with the active participation of Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). The session stressed the need for speed, improved collaboration between GCF & CTCN, contextualization of relevant technology and for GCF to consider a contingency for technology in the Funding Proposal template. Speed, flexibility, and partnership are seen as key to ensuring that the latest innovations reach those who need them most.

## **Bilateral Meetings**

Around 20 formal organizational bilateral meetings were organized with the GCF, providing every country and direct access entity present an opportunity to not only meet face to face with the new Pacific and Asian SIDS subregional team supporting them, but also with other GCF specialists who were part of the GCF delegation. In addition to these institutional bilaterals, a wealth of informal discussions were held, with peer-to-peer exchanges involving countries and entities.

## **Closing Remarks and Next Steps**

In his concluding remarks, the Asia Pacific Regional Director, Mr. Hemant Mandal expressed GCF's sincere gratitude to the active participation, insightful contributions, and dedication of



all participants. He also thanked the Government of the Cook Islands for their warm and gracious hospitality as Host Country. He informed participants that the team had taken detailed notes during the event and that action points that had stemmed from these conversations, including the bilateral meetings, would be systematically recorded, and tracked. It was hoped that countries would build upon the rich conversations to enhance their programmes as GCF moved into the GCF-2, and that particular attention would be paid to the suggestions on reforms as the GCF continued to grow and work towards becoming a more fit for purpose organization.

For more information and further updates, please visit the official GCF website or contact the GCF Pacific and Asian SIDS team.

<sup>1</sup> Pacific and Asian SIDS countries invited to this event were as follows: Cook Islands, Republic of Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Maldives, Republic of Nauru, Niue, Republic of Palau, Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Independent State of Samoa, Solomon Islands, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, and Republic of Vanuatu.