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## **ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY THREATS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE FACED BY THE PACIFIC ISLAND FORUM**

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### ***Abstract***

*Climate change has a detrimental impact on living things, including humans. Starting from extreme weather changes to rising sea levels and all kinds of disasters, not to mention the worst thing is that it can sink an island that is home to humans and other living things. Climate change is a disaster that should be prevented from getting worse. The Pacific Islands are one of the few regions that are threatened with drowning due to rising sea levels every year. With the various interests held by developed countries, especially in the industrial sector, of course, letting the Pacific Islands sink without any action for change is a crime.*

*Keywords: Climate Change, Environmental Safety, South Pacific*

### **Abstract**

Perubahan iklim berdampak buruk bagi makhluk hidup, termasuk manusia. Mulai dari perubahan cuaca yang ekstrim hingga naiknya permukaan air laut, dan berbagai bencana, serta yang terparah dapat menenggelamkan pulau yang menjadi tempat tinggal manusia dan makhluk hidup lainnya. Perubahan iklim merupakan bencana yang harus dicegah agar tidak semakin parah. Kepulauan Pasifik adalah salah satu dari sedikit kawasan yang terancam tenggelam akibat naiknya permukaan laut setiap tahun. Dengan berbagai kepentingan yang dipegang oleh negara-negara maju, khususnya di bidang industri, tentu saja membiarkan Kepulauan yang ada di Pasifik tenggelam tanpa adanya tindakan untuk perubahan adalah sebuah kejahatan.

Kata Kunci: Perubahan Iklim, Keamanan Lingkungan, Pasifik Selatan

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

The climate change that is happening in the world today is already showing increasingly dangerous signs for the lives of living things. Unconsciously, many people still do not feel it, but some people who live on the coast have begun to feel it. The higher sea water rise causes the coast to begin to erode and sink. This causes people who do live in coastal areas to feel threatened because sea water is rising every year. Allegations about the sinking of islands in the Pacific due to global warming have often been heard. But until now there is no action that makes a difference to what is currently happening. This is interesting because on the one hand the Pacific Islands are threatened with sinking, but on the other hand developed countries are increasing their production without thinking about the impact on developing countries.

Developed countries such as America, China, India and some of the largest industrialized countries in the world do not want to take responsibility for climate change. So what do these developed countries want if they cannot cooperate and contribute to making changes to what has happened to date. As one of the three developed countries that have power in the South Pacific Region, Australia has also made many efforts through the distribution of disaster assistance faced by the region.

Since 2001 Australia began to contribute to implementing its leadership and establishing its assertive role in the South Pacific Region. This was done because it was found that there were many failed states in the region. These failed states can cause other crises to emerge (Dion, 2018). Great suspicion has also begun to emerge from developing countries towards the efforts made by developed countries (Syaprin, 2016). Because the impact of greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly worrying for the lives of people in the South Pacific Region. However, the dilemma of developing countries to continue their development without sacrificing nature conservation is an inevitable debate in world politics (Indrawati, 2022).

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

The problems currently faced by countries in the South Pacific regarding the impact of climate change which is increasingly worrying for people's lives and raises the issue of environmental security issues for the stability of the Pacific Area are the main focus of this research. This raises the subject of how the steps taken by the Pacific Island Forum organization in dealing with the threat of climate change in the Pacific Area and the impact that will be experienced by the South Pacific if environmental security issues are not immediately addressed properly.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

This research aims to explore the impact of the threats posed by climate change that are increasingly worrying, especially for countries in the South Pacific. Researchers will collect data from various news sites, journals, official web sources, as well as from other literature studies that can support this research. This

is interesting because the Island Countries in the Pacific are threatened with drowning but developed countries are increasing their production without thinking about the impact on developing countries.

#### 1.4 Research Methods

The research method used to answer this research question is by reviewing various literatures sourced from books, journals, articles, and official websites that are necessary in completing this paper. Thus making this paper rich in perspectives and arguments, but still in line with the main purpose of this paper.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Environmental Safety Concept

The concept of environmental security that reflects the readiness of a country in dealing with threats that occur to the environment in a country is raised in a study entitled "Handling Climate change Issues in the Pacific Region Through the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative" by Abdul Rahman Sagara Prakasa (2017). This research discusses overcoming climate change issues in the South Pacific Region. The use of fossil fuels and excessive greenhouse gas emissions cause an increase in the level of greenhouse gases stored in the atmosphere. This causes higher infrared waves to be stored on Earth which results in the Earth's temperature increasing. The greenhouse effect is amplified and causes global warming and climate change.

Economic activity can also adversely affect nature, and can cause other problems such as loss of livelihoods, scarcity of food resources, and strife between civil society, tribes, and political actors. The South Pacific region is geographically very vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. Of course, this region needs assistance from other countries to help deal with the climate change issues they are currently facing. Australia is helping Pacific countries to address global warming and its impacts through an initiative called the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (ICCAI). Through this body, Australia has channeled funds amounting to Au\$ 328 million. The funds are allocated to various programs created by ICCAI itself, both bilateral programs and other regional programs. The programs launched by Australia and countries in the Pacific region such as Vanuatu and Kiribati have also produced results. ICCAI has three programs that are used to tackle the threat of climate change in the Pacific, namely, the Pacific Climate Change Science Program (PCCSP), the Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Program (PASAP) and the Pacific-Australia Climate Change Science and Adaptation Program (PACCSAP).

The first program of ICCAI is a program that encourages scientific research related to climate change issues in the Pacific, the program is called the Pacific Climate Change Science Program (PCCSP). There is also a second program that assists climate change adaptation planning called the Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Program (PASAP). Both programs were implemented separately from 2009-2011, until two years after 2011. The third program, the Pacific-Australia Climate Change Science and Adaptation Program (PACCSAP), is a combination of both the Pacific Climate Change Science

Program (PCCSP) and the Pacific Adaptation Strategy Assistance Program (PASAP) because PASAP was poorly designed, had changing components, and often unclear outputs. Today, however, environmental conditions and natural disasters are more predictable so that countries that were once highly vulnerable due to a lack of resources, science and funds to deal with these issues can better adapt and improve readiness for countries in the region to deal with the impacts of climate change.

## 2.2 Concept of Environmental Securitization

Environmental securitization is an effort to preserve and maintain the environment, both the local environment and the biosphere on earth. This is discussed in the research "Securitization and Protection of Climate Refugees: Case Study of New Zealand Under the Leadership of Jacinda Ardern" by Almira Ulimaz Kamka (2020). This research discusses one of the impacts of climate change in the South Pacific Region, namely climate refugees who can threaten state security. The Prime Minister of New Zealand acts as the main actor trying to bring this issue as a regional security issue. New Zealand's environmental stance influences its concern about environmental issues and climate change. This issue poses a threat not only to the environment, but also to impacts such as migration due to climate change or the climate refugee phenomenon. Therefore, New Zealand plans a series of policies to protect the status of climate refugees as an effort to securitize climate refugees in New Zealand.

By promoting cooperation between South Pacific countries and New Zealand, New Zealand proposed an action plan as a concrete form of the New Zealand Government's efforts to enact policies that focus on environmental issues. In the context of the transnational action plan issued by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 2, 2018, New Zealand is also preparing options related to population migration from South Pacific countries to New Zealand, including through the creation of humanitarian visas. In addition, New Zealand is on the path to an emissions-resilient and low-emissions future with the government aiming to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050. The New Zealand government is committed to the country becoming a world leader in climate change action. To this end, it has introduced a Zero Carbon Bill that will set a new emissions reduction target by 2050. For New Zealand, climate change is not just an environmental issue, it has social and economic implications too, and moving to a low-emissions economy presents new opportunities for innovation. According to a note from the New Zealand Ministry of Environment, the Government is working with Multinational Corporations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and communities to make a fair and effective transition to a low emissions economy.

## 2.3 Concept of State Existence

The concept of state existence looks at the extent of the Kiribati government's role in responding to and planning future strategies related to the threat of rising sea levels. This is highlighted in a journal article entitled "Climate Change Impacts in the South Pacific: The Threat of Rising Sea Levels to the Existence of the State and People of Kiribati" by Melpayanty Sinaga (2021). This research discusses the impact of climate change on sea level rise that threatens the

existence of countries and populations in the South Pacific, more specifically in the State of Kiribati. The Republic of Kiribati is one of the countries in the South Pacific region that is most threatened and vulnerable to projected future sea level rise. The impacts that have been felt by the people of Kiribati due to climate change so far are storm surges, typhoons, flooding, sea level rise, sea water intrusion and drought; however, sea level rise is the impact that is felt the most by the people of Kiribati. While the sinking of Kiribati is an increasingly real threat, the situation is far more complex. Sea level rise has further encouraged seawater intrusion that has disrupted land fertility and groundwater supplies, making some islands uninhabitable long before they are fully inundated.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1 South Pacific**

The South Pacific is a region located in the Pacific Ocean, consisting of 22 countries and territories. The total population in this region reaches 9.2 million people. In the South Pacific region there are at least 7500 islands, but only about 300 islands are inhabited by humans. The South Pacific Islands region itself consists of 200 highland islands and 2500 lowland islands and atolls (Elisabeth, 2015). For countries with high land masses, the rise in sea level may not mean anything. However, for low-altitude countries, the rise is a serious problem. This is especially true if you add the fact that these countries are islands where the land is surrounded by the sea from all sides. Countries in the Pacific region have very limited natural resources. With less land area than ocean, countries in the region are dependent on other countries such as China and Indonesia.

The issue of climate change in the South Pacific region is currently having a worrying impact on the lives of people in the region, supported by the geographical location of the South Pacific region which is surrounded by oceans making countries in the region not only vulnerable to rising sea levels, but also extreme weather events such as storms and high waves. In 1993-2010, the average sea level rose significantly (PPI MENLHK, 2016). This certainly raises concerns and requires countries in the region to face various future challenges that could threaten their lives.

#### **3.2 Climate Change**

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activity has been a major driver of climate change, mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas (United Nation). Climate change in today's world is already having an alarming impact on the lives of living beings on earth. Perhaps some people in this world still don't realize it, but climate change has an impact that is actually felt every day. While the weather can change in just a few hours, the climate changes over a much longer period of time. Climate change is a significant variation from average weather conditions that becomes, for example, warmer, wetter or drier over decades or more. Such as extreme weather and climate changes, rising seas, prolonged droughts, forest fires, and intensified occurrences of natural disasters.

The cause of climate change, which is now getting worse, is the use of greenhouse gas emissions that are increasing every year and this is what causes climate change to come from all corners of the world and affect all living things on earth. In a series of UN reports, thousands of scientists and government reviewers agreed that limiting global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C would help us avoid the worst climate impacts and maintain a livable climate. But current policies point to a temperature rise of 2.8°C by the end of the century (United Nation).

With greenhouse gas emissions causing global warming, the figures represented are the latest indication of the extent to which the global environment is capable of achieving the goals agreed in Paris 2015 that aim to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. The report was released by the UN in Poland in conjunction with the latest talks to tackle global climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions are expected to rise by 2.7 percent this year.

The predicted emission level from China, which is the country with the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, has increased by 4.7 percent in 2018. This happened because of the efforts of the Chinese government to encourage construction and stimulate the economy by increasing demand for the Steel, Aluminum and cement industries which of course emit greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to intensive. Meanwhile, in the United States, coal energy is starting to be replaced by cleaner natural gas energy, but as a result the winter and summer seasons that occur make the weather more extreme. This also resulted in a 2.5 percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions. The increasing use of fuel oil for transportation is also a factor in the increase of carbon emissions, one result of which is that consumers in the United States are increasingly buying large cars, which also use a large amount of fuel.

Climate change can also affect human health, the ability to grow food, housing, safety and employment. Some of us are already more vulnerable to climate impacts, such as people living in small island nations in the South Pacific and other developing countries. Conditions like sea level rise and saltwater intrusion have increased to the point where entire communities have had to relocate, and prolonged droughts put people at risk of famine. In the future, the number of "climate refugees" is expected to increase.

Climate change also impacts health in a variety of ways, including by causing death and disease from increasingly frequent extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, disruption of food systems, increases in zoonoses and food, clean water shortages and vector-borne diseases, and mental health problems (WHO, 2021). In the short to medium term, the health impacts of climate change will be determined primarily by the vulnerability of the population, its resilience to the current rate of climate change and the level and speed of adaptation. In the long term, the effects will increasingly depend on the extent of transformational action taken now to reduce emissions and avoid breaching dangerous temperature thresholds and potentially irreversible tipping points.

### 3.3 Climate Change Threats in the South Pacific

In the Pacific region, the impact has begun to threaten human life because the existing land area is not comparable to the area of the ocean surrounding the islands in the Pacific. As a result, the high sea level makes the coastline sink slowly. In addition, threats come from natural disasters that often occur in the

region are El Nino and La Nina storms. The occurrence of El Nino is caused by rising temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. This will make the air temperature and humidity above it will increase so that what will happen in the region is that it will rain more often.

The occurrence of El Nino is caused by increasing water temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific which results in increased temperature and humidity in the atmosphere above it. This event causes cloud formation which also increases rainfall in the region and also results in air pressure in the western Pacific Ocean which inhibits cloud growth in the eastern Indonesian sea which makes rainfall decrease abnormally in several regions in Indonesia. La Nina, on the other hand, is caused by sea surface temperatures in the western and eastern Pacific becoming higher than usual. The event causes air pressure in the western Pacific equator to decrease which encourages excessive cloud formation and causes heavy rainfall in the affected areas (HCIMH, 2017).

Of course, people can be disadvantaged because they cannot grow crops due to high rainfall, people who work as fishermen cannot carry out activities as usual because they are hampered by weather that occurs reduced clean water reserves due to reduced available land area. It is estimated that about 50% of clean water reserves in the South Pacific region will disappear along with high sea levels. Pacific Island countries, such as Samoa, Fiji and Tonga, are the most vulnerable regions in the world due to extreme disasters caused by climate change.

Although climate change is a real threat to South Pacific Island countries, debates about climate change often exclude them. The debate only involves big countries, which are the world's biggest emitters. Countries like the United States refuse to join a regime where large emitters like China and India do not share the same obligations. China and India themselves argue that they still need to develop their existing industries without the burden of reducing emissions for development (Friedman, 2009).

Actually, the current Climate Change is the result of excessive use of greenhouse gas emissions, especially in developed countries, but it is small and developing countries that feel the impact directly. From this, problems do not only arise in one area, but can also lead to the occurrence of other more serious problems. For the millions of people who live in areas threatened by climate change, the question is one of environmental and climate justice. The big question mark should not only be how to deal with the dangers that lurk now and in the future, but also why those who want to remain in small island states also do not have the resources and authority to deal with the problem by themselves without the help of other parties, be it their governments, NGOs, the UN, or other friendly countries.

As greenhouse gas emissions cause global warming, the figures represented are the latest indication of the extent to which the global environment is able to achieve the goals agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement which aims to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. The Paris Agreement is an international treaty that focuses on tackling the global climate problem. This agreement has been adopted by nearly 200 countries spread across the world. A report released by the United Nations in Poland in conjunction with the latest talks to tackle global climate change states that greenhouse gas emissions are predicted to rise by 2.7 percent this year.

Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu, and several other countries in the South Pacific region have done a lot to save their islands from the worsening impacts of global



climate change. Basically, these countries in the South Pacific Region are the least carbon gas emitters in the world, but they must face the impact of the use of greenhouse gas emissions from large countries. Tuvalu's position exemplifies the injustice of climate change: the least polluting country is one of the most vulnerable to global warming. Tuvalu is a victim of emissions from other countries and the absence of limits to global warming due to its low average altitude above sea level. This creates an injustice for a country in the South Pacific with the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters such as China, the United States, and India.

Years of efforts from countries in the region have begun. As is the case with the country of Tuvalu, for more than 25 years, representatives of this country have been voicing the impact of climate change that will increase sea levels and could submerge the country. Tuvalu is threatened with uninhabitability even if sea levels never rise that high because rising sea levels have poisoned the country's groundwater sources with salt and led to declining food yields. On the other hand the country of Kiribati also has the same threat, this country is predicted to be the country most likely to disappear due to rising sea levels in the coming years, with a height of almost 3 meters and water growing at a rate of 1.2 millimeters per year (four times faster than the global average). While the sinking of Kiribati is an increasingly real threat, the situation is far more complex. Sea level rise has further driven seawater intrusion that is disrupting land fertility and groundwater supplies, making some islands uninhabitable long before they are completely inundated. Not to mention the economic impact it can have. Efforts are being made by the government, namely adaptation, mitigation and relocation. Adaptation and mitigation are prioritized, while considering relocation as a last resort.

### 3.4 Pacific Island Forum

The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) is the region's main political grouping. Established in 1971 at the initiative of New Zealand, its membership comprises Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Tokelau is an associate member of PIF. Associate member status can be granted to territories in the Pacific region if approved by the Leaders in the Summit in accordance with the requirements specified in the meeting. PIF was originally called the South Pacific Forum, until it was changed to PIF in 2000 to reflect the geographical location of countries in the North and South Pacific. The purpose of establishing PIF is to strengthen cooperation and integration, by pooling local resources and unifying policies to achieve economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security as stated in Article II, Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum.

PIF organizes annual summits, ministerial conferences, Forum Officials Committee (FOC) and Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR). At the 44th Summit of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) held in Majuro, Marshall Islands on September 5, 2013, the South Pacific countries declared the Majuro Declaration. This declaration is a statement as well as a commitment of Pacific Island countries to lead the issue of climate change (climate leader). Through this declaration, Pacific Island countries are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This declaration is ironic because Pacific Island countries are the group

of countries with the smallest greenhouse gas emissions in the world. The 50th PIF Summit discussed issues of common concern in the Pacific, including regional security, climate change, and maritime security. PIF endorsed the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action and agreed to develop a 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The meeting also marked the handover of the PIF chairmanship from Nauru (2018-2019) to Tuvalu (2019-2020). Climate change issues dominated the PIF Summit in 2019. Pacific island countries are highly vulnerable to the threat of climate change that results in enormous losses, especially as a result of the threat of sea level rise, intensified natural disaster events, and creating humanitarian issues where island communities are threatened to survive by migrating to other countries. Since 2001, Indonesia has regularly attended PIF annual meetings together with other Dialogue Partners, including the US, China, South Korea, Japan, and the European Union. Indonesia is always present and actively contributes by exchanging views, sharing experiences, and offering technical assistance in the form of training and capacity building to Pacific countries.

Through a triangular cooperation initiative, Indonesia and the Netherlands embrace Pacific Island countries to develop concrete cooperation in the field of mitigating the impacts of climate change. On October 10, 2021 Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Pacific Islands organized the "Indonesia-Netherlands-Pacific Workshop: Learning and Sharing Experiences, Identifying Potential Areas for Collaboration in Tackling the Impact of Climate Change" in Bali on a hybrid basis. The workshop was organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by the Netherlands Embassy in Jakarta and all Indonesian Representatives in the Pacific Region, as part of a joint effort to address one of the world's biggest challenges today, climate change. This initiative is a means to strengthen the partnership between Indonesia, the Netherlands and countries in the Pacific Region.

The activity was attended by more than 100 participants from various backgrounds, including government officials, academics and experts from Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Pacific. The activity presented six resource persons, including the Ambassador of Fiji in Jakarta, the Director of Climate Change Adaptation of the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, experts in the field of environment and climate change from Indonesia, the Netherlands, UNEP and the PIF Secretariat. This activity produced three main recommendations. First, the commitment to establish the Indonesia-Dutch-Pacific triangular cooperation. Second, the establishment of the Pacific-Indonesia-Netherlands Network (PINN), which consists of elements of government, society, academics and experts, and civil society. The third recommendation is to prioritize cooperation on climate change impact mitigation in the fields of coastal rehabilitation, tourism and fisheries.

Various efforts and endeavors have been made by the Pacific Island Forum and various countries around the South Pacific region that provide assistance to deal with the issue of climate change and environmental security. These efforts must continue to develop in order to have an impact that can prevent climate change from threatening people's lives. The threat to the stability of other regions will also be a problem that will arise in the future because of the emergence of climate refugees who are victims of climate change. Climate refugees began to migrate to developed countries in other Pacific Regions such as New Zealand, because the environment where climate refugees previously lived was

uninhabitable or even in a stage that threatened people's lives if they continued to force them to live and do their activities as usual. Climate refugees are a problem and threat to the stability of the Pacific region because their illegal presence can threaten the security of the destination country. The New Zealand Minister of Defense also views climate refugees as one of the causes of political and social chaos in the Pacific, while their legal status continues to be debated.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The game of global political elites makes the Pacific Islands not get much attention from developed countries even though the level of carbon emissions produced by the Pacific Islands is the lowest in the world, but the impact of climate change cannot be avoided. Changes in systems and technologies used today should be updated to become environmentally friendly technologies that produce less carbon emissions than usual. However, this is not the case for developed countries, which continue to boost production rates for their economic benefit.

Countries in the South Pacific are now taking the issue of climate change more seriously, threatening their lives in terms of economy, health and security. As countries that do not have the power to make changes, these countries can only wait for help from other countries or neighboring countries to survive. The United Nations should take more decisive action regarding the design of greenhouse gas carbon emissions used by countries that have the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the world.

In addition, conservation of the environment and natural resources must continue to be carried out to avoid scarcity. Various efforts that can be made are to cooperate with developed countries that have begun to implement the reduction of the use of disposable goods and countries that have reduced the use of coal as industrial fuel. This should indeed be an awareness for others because the impact caused can disrupt global security.

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