

Island and International Partnerships for a Net-Zero and Climate Resilient Future

November 14, 2022 3:00- 4:00pm EET

U.S. Center, COP 27, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

Summary of Event

During the second week of COP27, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and the Local2030 Islands Network convened an event in the U.S. Center entitled *Island and International Partnerships for a Net-Zero and Climate Resilient Future*. The event featured a dialogue on the potential impact that international partnerships such as the Local2030 Islands Network and the Renewable Energy for Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAC) initiative can have on achieving greater climate ambition and sustainable development through peer-to-peer learning, common goal setting, data for decision making, integrating co-developed climate knowledge and information, accessing lessons and insights from front runners, and leapfrogging technologies. Leaders engaged in a candid discussion on specific opportunities to collaborate, with the Netherlands announcing it would join the Local2030 Islands Network.

The event opened with an introduction from **Mr. Ron Benioff**, Laboratory Program Manager for International Programs, and Executive Director of the Global Climate Action Partnership (GCAP) and Net Zero World Action Center at NREL. Mr. Benioff addressed the immense potential and impact of international partnerships when they develop under the premise of common understanding (for example elevated climate vulnerability, or a regional target) to help increase collective climate ambition, accelerate decarbonization activities, and ensure that no country (big or small) is left behind in our global effort to combat climate change. He highlighted that by working together in an equitable and inclusive manner, through innovative approaches, and ambitious collective targets, we can overcome disciplinary, geographic, and political boundaries, we can achieve more, our voice is louder, and our impact is greater.

Welcome remarks were then presented by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, **Dr. Richard Spinrad**, who highlighted the importance of inclusive and equitable partnerships that foster the co-development of knowledge and shared learning across boundaries. He underscored NOAA's commitment to understanding, monitoring and predicting changes in global climate, weather, oceans and coasts, and sharing this knowledge with others to increase resilience and improve coastal resilience and marine ecosystem management. **Dr. Spinrad** recognized both the climate impacts faced by islands throughout the world and how islands are at the forefront of addressing the climate crisis, by working together to "harness traditional and scientific knowledge and technology to support innovative solutions". He noted that the mission and efforts of NOAA as an agency have inherent connections to islands throughout the world, and emphasized NOAA's continued support for the Local2030 Islands Network through various avenues including technical expertise, data for decision-making, and information in partnership with the U.S. Department of State and NREL.

Mr. Ron Benioff moderated a panel with the Honorable Gustav N. Aitaro, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Palau; Monica Medina, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Ms. Ezra Christopher, Department of Environment, Antigua and Barbuda; Dr. Richard Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, NOAA; and Dr. Marcelino Madrigal, Head of the Energy Division and Electromobility Group at the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Honorable Gustav N. Aitaro, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Palau, highlighted how partnerships are meaningful when they can bring things down to the local level and support local culture. He spoke to the importance of partnerships between developed countries and countries on the forefront of climate change like Palau to voice concerns and host dialogues like at the Our Ocean Conference to show other countries how climate change is impacting islanders. He highlighted how the Government of Australia will assist Palau with its transition to 20% renewable energy. The Minister further noted that the Palau Dashboard developed through a partnership with the Local2030 Islands Network provides Palau with a map on progress on its commitments. He noted that Palau is on the front lines of the climate change challenge but said “we are not here to ‘showcase’ the issue; we are here for our survival.” Later Minister Aitaro noted the changing climate was a common challenge across the globe, saying “Who ever imagined my Pacific island would have common ground with Norway’s melting glaciers.”

Assistant Secretary Monica Medina highlighted the peer-to-peer sharing approach of Local2030 Islands Network noting that it leads to the valuing of traditional knowledge among peers in a natural way. Local2030 Islands Network’s work to develop open-data dashboards is a valuable approach toward public communication and to help build trust. She noted RELAC’s commitment to have 70% renewably-sourced energy by 2030 and Local2030 Islands Network’s Community of Practice on Sustainable and Renewable Tourism to support a blue economy. She stressed the importance of listening to the voices of island leaders on climate change.

Ms. Ezra Christopher, Department of Environment, Antigua and Barbuda noted Antigua and Barbuda’s vulnerability to climate change, and the nation’s ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and transformational goals. She indicated that international partnerships can help overcome constraints of human, institutional, technical and technological capacity. She reiterated that Antigua and Barbuda will collaborate with the Local2030 Islands Network on climate change, capacity building and training, and supporting a blue economy. She went on to draw attention to partnerships with NREL supporting a just clean energy transition, to 100% renewable energy by 2030 using a system of solar arrays and battery resources for schools and clinics, and the development of a community solar plan. She noted valuable partnerships with the NDC Partnership’s Climate Action Enhancement Package, UNDP Climate Promise, and SIDS Lighthouse Initiative.

Acknowledging that the global ocean does not recognize geopolitical boundaries, **Dr. Richard Spinrad** posited that as climate change continues to impact people and places around the

world, we should seek to work across and leverage partnerships such as Local2030 Islands Network and RELAC to address country-identified priorities. He spoke to the potential connections across these partnerships, including ocean-based climate solutions and the types of data necessary for informing increased renewable energy development. He also highlighted key Network accomplishments that NOAA has been involved with including the development of an open-data dashboard which resulted through collaboration between the Network, Palau and NOAA-supported Pacific Climate Adaptation Partnerships (CAP) Team (formerly the Pacific RISA Team). In addition, Dr. Spinrad announced that through a partnership with the Department of State, NOAA is expanding its support for and collaboration with the Local2030 Islands Network in the coming year through the National Sea Grant College Program. Closing thoughts from Dr. Spinrad recognized the importance of co-developing knowledge and information, the benefits of building on the “things that work” such as the Local2030 Islands Network and RELAC and the value of ocean based solutions with multiple benefits. Furthermore, he expressed the importance of collaborative observations and monitoring efforts to generate useful data and information to support climate resilience.

Dr. Marcelino Madrigal, Head of the Energy Division and Electromobility Group at the Inter-American Development Bank, shared that Latin America has been pioneering auctioning mechanisms to bring large solar and wind power plants and through RELAC has been helping islands competitive procurement of renewable energy to decrease costs. In addition, countries and islands power grid operators are working together to share information and decrease vulnerability through technical instruments. He stated that the IDB has funded \$26B in climate finance over the last six years. Islands are challenging other countries with very ambitious goals. For example, Barbados has the highest per capita density of electric vehicle charging stations out of any country in Latin America and has a high density of solar hot water heaters. IDB has partnered with Barbados on a smart fund financing facility of \$30M and it recently partnered on the importation of 35 electric buses. It has also helped the Regulatory Authority develop the regulatory framework for solar photovoltaics. He concluded that champions matter at the beginning of initiatives and that goals need to be clear, simple, and meaningful. He also stated that structure and resources are necessary to move climate ambition.

Netherlands Joins the Local2030 Islands Network

His Royal Highness Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, Climate Envoy of Netherlands, announced that the Netherlands would join the Local2030 Islands Network to support the transition of its islands to renewable energy, to later help other islands. He acknowledged the leadership of islands on climate action and cited Bonaire’s climate roundtables and the Living Lab Curaçao. Bonaire, Curaçao and Aruba are members of the Local2030 Islands Network and Netherlands joining will also enable its other islands of Saba, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten to take part. Minister Aitaro responded that Palau is here to help the Netherlands and stated “It takes a farmer to teach a farmer.”

Background of Initiatives

The Renewable Energy in Latin America and Caribbean (RELAC) initiative was created in 2019 under the framework of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's Climate Action Summit, and represents an increase in climate ambition by aligning economic growth and greenhouse gas emissions reduction in the energy sector. The main objective of the initiative is to achieve a regional target of at least 70% participation of renewable energy (RE) sources in the electricity matrix of Latin America and the Caribbean by 2030. RELAC is the first initiative of its kind in Latin America and the Caribbean aiming to track and achieve a regional target in terms of sustainable energy. For the first time, a group of countries in the LAC region have voluntarily agreed to promote renewables with: (1) a concrete goal; (2) a functioning and support structure; (3) a robust monitoring mechanism. Although Latin America has shown significant progress in the deployment of RE in recent years, such as through competitive public auctions in some countries, there are still several obstacles that hinder its accelerated deployment. Local and regional actions are necessary to overcome them to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The scope of the RELAC platform is focused on the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the integration of renewable energies into electricity grids, together with the channeling of financial resources to support capacity building, sector reform and the acceleration of RE investments. This level of regional ambition requires collaboration, international support, and involvement of the private sector and civil society to be truly successful.

The Local2030 Islands Network is the world's-first global, island-led, peer-to-peer network committed to actualizing the Sustainable Development Goals through local and culturally informed solutions. As members, developed and developing island economies across all regions engage through regular meetings, knowledge sharing, and dialogue via the Communities of Practice, bolstered by technical partners, on areas related to data, climate resilience, clean and renewable energy, and sustainable tourism. The Local2030 Islands Network champions robust data to achieve the SDGs, and has pioneered the creation of SDG Dashboards to monitor member islands national and sub-national progress on these goals. The Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) and Hawai'i Green Growth (HGG) serve as the secretariat for the Local2030 Islands Network.