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SUMMARY NOTE:

The Pacific Voice for a Just Transition, Job Creation and Climate Resilience

A High-Level Dialogue of The Republic of Fiji, the COP 23 President, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Fiji Pavilion, 7 November 2017, COP23 in Bonn, 12:00-13:00

The high-level dialogue had two overriding purposes. The first was to highlight the crucial importance of assuring that action on climate change will be strongly linked to action to promote decent work and a just transition to environmental sustainability. The second purpose of the dialogue was to make progress in identifying how best to advance the jobs/social-inclusion side of the climate action, both within the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) process and also in the more applied realm where concrete climate action is taken, often at the national and local levels. The discussions provided fresh momentum for strengthening the interlinkages between climate action and decent job creation, as well as new insights about the next steps that need to be taken and the questions that still remain to be answered.

The dialogue panel included prominent representatives of the current, prior two and next COP presidencies, underlining the emerging consensus that the decent work and social inclusion dimensions of climate action need to be front and centre if environmental sustainability is to be achieved in a sufficiently rapid and equitable manner. The panel also included a high-level ILO official in recognition of that agency's leading role in promoting a just transition to sustainability and decent work. The panellists were:

1. Fiji COP Presidency: Honourable Minister *Inia Seruiratu* (Fijian High-level Climate Champion and Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, and National Disaster Management) initially, but he was replaced part-way through the forum by the Honourable Minister *Semi Koroilavesau* (Minister of Fisheries)
2. French COP Presidency: Mr *Paul Watkinson*, Special Counsellor, Ministry for Ecological and Inclusive Transition
3. Morocco COP Presidency: Ms *Siham B. Ayad*, Principal Advisor on Climate Finance
4. Poland COP Presidency: Mr *Pawel Salek*, Secretary of State, Government Plenipotentiary for Climate Policy
5. ILO: Ms *Tomoko Nishimoto*, Assistant Director General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

There was unanimous support concerning the need to effectively link climate action to jobs and social inclusion in both the interventions of the five panellists and the questions posed by audience members. The vulnerability of the Pacific region countries to extreme weather events and rising sea



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levels, together with high youth unemployment in many Pacific countries, was cited as a vivid illustration of the importance of maximizing the job creation and social inclusion benefits resulting from actions to mitigate or adapt to climate change. The example of a region in Poland -- which faces the challenge to move away from an economy heavily reliant on coal mining and heavy industry -- was also cited as an illustration that vulnerable groups can be found in countries at all income levels, even if less developed countries have a particular need for international support to make a rapid and just transition. That is, the discussion of the need to assure a just transition for the most vulnerable population groups underscored both the universality of this challenge and the need for the mechanisms foreseen in the Paris Agreement through which higher income countries are to assist developing countries to achieve sustainable development.

There was a rich discussion of how progress can be made in advancing interlinkages between climate action and the decent work/just transition agendas. Among the ideas that emerged were that:

1. More needs to be done to assure that decent job creation and the principles of just transition become more prominent in the COP process and the implementation of the Paris agreement more generally. Of particular importance, the national climate plans should seriously address the employment and social inclusion dimensions of the ecological transition. Examples of how this can be done were discussed, including the inclusion of a youth entrepreneurship programme in the Fiji climate plan and the ILO's work with the Philippines to incorporate its guidelines for a just transition into the Philippine plan.
2. Based on the ILO's already considerable experience in working with governments, employers and workers in this policy area, four general keys to success have emerged, namely that governments should: (i) take a "whole of government" approach that ensures coherence across all relevant policy areas, including environmental, employment and educational policy, so as to avoid that they work at cross purposes; (ii) ground policy choices as much as possible in evidence about what works best; (iii) innovate when familiar policy choices prove to be inadequate to meet the unprecedented challenges we are facing; and (iv) adopt an inclusive approach to policy development and implementation that gives a large role to social dialogue.
3. One key to realizing the decent job creation potential of climate action will be to equip the workforce with the "green" skills they will need as the economy transforms. The new French initiative on "green human capital" appears promising and should be watched closely.

In sum, the high-level forum highlighted how efforts to strengthen the linkages between climate action and the promotion of decent work are gaining momentum, but also how vast is the challenge. Moving forward, it will be essential to ensure that the labour market and social dimensions of climate action received sustained attention from all actors. Also, given the unprecedented nature of this challenge, it will be essential to share experiences with different approaches to incorporating the decent work agenda into climate action at all levels.