



**Statement by
Hon. Peter O'Neill CMG MP
Prime Minister**

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(COP21) Session**

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Mr President,

Today I speak as both the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and as the Chair of the Pacific Islands' Forum.

Our country, and our Pacific Islands community, have already seen people displaced, and people die, because of climate change.

Sadly, Papua New Guinea is home to the world's first climate refugees - the people of the Carteret Islands have already been forced from their homes by rising sea levels and salt inundation in drinking water.

Right now there are entire Pacific island nations are facing extinction – some of these countries will be gone within our lifetime.

Their people will become refugees, and tens of thousands of years of culture and tradition will be lost.

These countries have a right to exist.

In the Pacific, lives are being lost to extreme drought and frost, and the most devastating tropical storms in recorded history strike each year.

This ongoing disaster must be stopped, and support given to the victims of climate change to help those who have survived to try to rebuild their lives.

We in this room have the power to do this.

We must set targets and plans of action to reduce emissions.

The countries of the Pacific Islands Forum are seeking a legally binding Paris Agreement—that sets a temperature ceiling of well below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

We must all do our part – big and small nations.

Papua New Guinea is a nation of 8 million people, and we are seeking to go beyond our size in fighting global warming.

Papua New Guinea supports a Paris Agreement that anchors the REDD Plus Mechanism and its accompanying decisions.

This is one of the most cost effective mitigation options available to the world.

Papua New Guinea is committing 2 million hectares of our forest for the REDD Plus initiative – and the reforestation of another eight hundred thousand hectares by the year 2050.

Mr President,

We in the Pacific Islands did not cause climate change – but our people are dying and losing their homes because of climate change.

As leaders, today, we must be bold and decisive, to set a new legally binding climate agreement that will assure the future of our people's who are now at the frontlines of the adverse impacts of climate change.

Thank you.