



IMLI DIRECTOR ADDRESSES THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM CONFERENCE

Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) addressed the Pacific Islands Forum Conference on ‘Securing the Limits of the Blue Pacific - Legal Options and Institutional Responses to the Impact of Sea Level Rise on Baselines in the Context of International Law’ on 9 September 2020. The Conference was held online from 9 to 11 September 2020.

The virtual meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Samuelu Laloni (Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the United Nations). It explored legal options and institutional responses for taking forward the Forum Leaders’ Commitment in 2019 to a collective effort, including the development of international law, and to secure Members’ maritime zones against sea level rise and climate change. Distinguished IMLI graduates were among the panellists, including, The Honourable Simon Kofe (Minister for Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs, Tuvalu), Dr. Filimon M. Manoni (Deputy Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum), and Dr. Pio Manoa (Legal Counsel, Forum Fisheries Agency).

Professor Attard delivered a presentation entitled ‘ICJ and ITLOS Decisions regarding the Recognition of Maritime Boundaries under International Law’. In his address, he highlighted the contribution of these international judicial bodies to the rules regulating the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf. He provided an overview of the jurisprudential developments which have helped design the rules of delimitation of these maritime zones up to 200 nautical miles and, where applicable, beyond that limit. He emphasized that, due to the potential conflict in relation to overlapping maritime claims, the ICJ and ITLOS have made a significant contribution to the peaceful settlement of disputes providing objectivity, consistency, and predictability in the quest to establish an equitable boundary solution.



Professor David Attard (Director, IMLI) and the Panel of Speakers

Dame Meg Taylor, DBE (Secretary-General to the Pacific Islands Forum and Pacific Ocean Commissioner) described the securing of the Blue Pacific Continent against the threats of sea level rise and climate change as a ‘defining issue’ for the Pacific. She urged leaders to reaffirm their commitment to securing the Blue Pacific Continent and to conclude the work on the remaining maritime boundaries and outer limits in a timely manner. The Secretary-General recalled that sea level rise is a challenge for which the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea does not provide a clear way forward.



Dame Meg Taylor, DBE (Secretary-General to the Pacific Islands Forum and Pacific Ocean Commissioner) delivering the Introductory Statement

In his statement, The Honourable Simon Kofe (Minister for Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs, Tuvalu and an IMLI Graduate of 2014) recalled that an important legal question is whether the Pacific Island States can retain their statehood status under international law in the absence of a permanent population or physical land territory. This led the Forum Leaders to commit to a collective effort to develop international law with the aim of ensuring that once a Pacific Islands Forum Member's maritime zones are delineated in accordance with UNCLOS, that Member's maritime zones cannot be challenged or reduced as a result of sea level rise and climate change.



The Honourable Simon Kofe (Minister for Justice, Communication and Foreign Affairs, Tuvalu and an IMLI Graduate of 2014) delivering his Statement

Dr. Filimon M. Manoni (Deputy Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum and an IMLI Graduate of 2007) delivered a presentation on ‘Maximizing Opportunities Under the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention: The Stakes for the Pacific as a Collective – in the Context of Sea-Level Rise’.



Dr. Filimon M. Manoni (Deputy Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum and an IMLI Graduate of 2007) delivering his presentation

Professor Attard noted that he was very pleased to participate in discussions on this important topic not only for the Pacific but for many regions of the world. He was very proud to note the high participation of IMLI graduates who are being at the forefront of the initiatives addressing the challenges posed by climate change and sea level rising.

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