Science Diplomacy in Small Islands Developing States
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Yoko Ebisawa, Project Manager, Japan – Caribbean Climate Change Partnership

The UN recognizes a distinct group of 50 developing, low-lying coastal countries as Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). The SIDS member-states are culturally diverse but share similar challenges: scarce resources, vulnerability to natural disasters, dependency on foreign trade, and small but growing populations in narrow and sometimes submerging portions of land. This session reviewed imminent climate change issues within these countries, and explored the role for science diplomacy in SIDS’ international relations and sustainable development.

Leo Trembley opened the session by discussing these diverse islands, many of which are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and in one sense are “paying for the mistakes made by other countries.” This panel covered three different perspectives: islands in Africa that are below sea-level, and those in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Yoko Ebisawa focused on Japan-Caribbean partnerships, and how to promote sustainable development in the face of climate change. She noted that although the Paris agreement aims to keep the global temperature rise below two degrees, 1.5 degrees is more relevant for small islands in the pacific and Caribbean. These islands are already seeing negative effects due to changing climate conditions. In 2014, there was a Japan-Caribbean conference held in Trinidad and Tobago related to the UNDP 2015 project, which, with $15M in funding, aims to support countries to increase resilience to climate change by lowering emissions. Related projects focus on sustainable agriculture and water management as well as renewable energy. Japan and the Caribbean are implementing collaborative solutions and in many cases transferring relevant technology from Japan to the Caribbean.

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