Summary for Bridging Science, Policy and Finance for Resilient Coastal Futures: Official Virtual Side Event of the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) 2025

13 June 2025 6:30 PM

Quick recap

The virtual side event focused on enhancing coastal resilience through science, policy, and finance, addressing challenges faced by coastal regions and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Discussions covered topics such as translating national climate policies into local implementation, improving tsunami early warning systems, strengthening coastal city planning through data-driven risk assessments, and exploring financial mechanisms for climate-resilient infrastructure development. The meeting emphasized the importance of capacity building, community engagement, and evidence-based approaches to secure funding and implement effective adaptation strategies in vulnerable coastal areas.

Summary

The virtual side event, hosted by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), focused on enhancing coastal resilience through science, policy, and finance. Mr Abhishek Jain, Fellow and Director at CEEW, highlighted the urgent need for resilient infrastructure in coastal regions, emphasizing the economic and environmental threats posed by climate change. Ms Aishwarya Pillai, moderator and Lead - Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) programme, outlined CDRI's commitment to supporting SIDS and introduced the panellists. The session aimed to explore solutions, including data-driven assessments, localized adaptation strategies, and sustainable finance models, to enhance resilience of coastal infrastructure and protect vulnerable communities.

Localizing National Climate Policies

Ms Somya Bhatt, Project Specialist, UN Development Programme, discussed the challenges and enablers of translating national climate policies into local implementation, focusing on data interpretation and capacity building as significant barriers. She highlighted the importance of climate budget tagging, identifying climate champions, and involving communities in adaptation planning. Somya also emphasized the need for institutionalizing climate vulnerability assessments and designing state-specific climate finance units to support the translation of national adaptation plans to local levels.

Tsunami Warning Systems: Challenges and Solutions

The meeting focused on addressing challenges and solutions for tsunami early warning systems, particularly in coastal and small island communities. Somya highlighted data capacity barriers, while Professor Harkunti Rahayu from Institute Technology Sumatera, Indonesia, discussed the importance of reaching the "last mile" and developing inclusive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. Harkunti shared examples from Padang City, where they increased warning system coverage from 71 to 100 percent through community engagement and infrastructure improvements. The discussion emphasized the need for both technological advancements and human-centred approaches to ensure effective evacuation and response strategies.

Supporting SIDS in Ocean Challenges

Ms Louise Foulkes, Caribbean Director and Engineering Program Manager at Build Change, discussed the challenges faced by SIDS and emphasized the importance of

financial assistance, global cooperation, and technical support from global platforms like the UN Ocean Conference. She highlighted the need for simplified access to finance and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned to address the unique challenges of SIDS. Aishwarya acknowledged Louise's partnership in the IRIS programme, which collaborates with governments to address SIDS' needs.

Data-Driven Coastal Risk Assessments

The discussion focused on strengthening coastal city planning through data-driven climate risk assessments. Dr Pushp Bajaj, Programme Lead in Climate Resilience at CEEW, emphasized the need for dynamic, mainstreamed risk assessments that can be communicated effectively to policymakers, using examples from Mumbai's recent cyclones. Mr Raj Vikram Singh, Senior Specialist – Disaster Risk Financing at CDRI, shared insights from CDRI's work on fiscal risk assessment in SIDS, highlighting the development of probabilistic risk models and the importance of building accurate data sets over time, despite initial data paucity. Both speakers agreed that climate risk assessments need to be integrated into environmental impact assessments and that capacity building at various government levels is essential for effective implementation.

Climate Finance for Resilient Infrastructure

Ms Camille Severac, Deputy Country Director India at the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), discussed financial mechanisms for climate resilient infrastructure development in low resource settings, highlighting blending finance and capacity building as key approaches. She explained how AFD supports project preparation, technical expertise sharing, and public investment in infrastructure like coastal protection. The discussion touched on public development banks' role in financing adaptation, with Camille mentioning AFD's support for the Finance in Common Summits (FiCS), FiCS Ocean Coalition and biodiversity credits. The conversation ended with questions about improving access to adaptation finance for local governments and developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for resilience projects, with Dr Pushp emphasizing the importance of quantifying adaptation measures for securing funding.

Climate Adaptation Financing Strategies

The meeting focused on risk assessment and financing for climate adaptation, with Raj emphasizing the need for scientific and evidence-based approaches to build confidence among investors. Louise highlighted practical lessons from implementing resilient housing, including the importance of local building codes, retrofitting existing buildings, and using technology to improve efficiency. Camille suggested exploring insurance as a way to involve the private sector in financing adaptation. Somya stressed the need for standardized toolkits for coastal adaptation measures and link them with climate risk assessments, suggesting the establishment of project preparation facilities to design bankable adaptation projects.

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