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VANUATU HOLDS FIRST UNFCCC MOCK CLIMATE NEGOTIATION IN THE PACIFIC

Vanuatu's first ever Youth Climate Summit took place in Port Vila on 13 August 2015, attended by over 80 young climate activists. Building on the highly successful Climate Zone quiz from past years, 2015 event simulated the United Nations Climate Change Conference with a goal to negotiate a legally binding global treaty on carbon emissions reductions that would limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

Youth from Malapoa College, Central School, Tekabor College, NamauRi Youth Group, USP students, and 350 Vanuatu assumed the roles of government delegations from the US, China, the EU, other developed countries (Australia, Japan, etc.), India and developing countries such as Vanuatu. Youth participants had researched their country positions thoroughly in advance so they were able to negotiate as if they were citizens of these countries.

The overarching goal was to negotiate a global treaty that would curb greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the dangerous impacts of climate change, while at the same time acknowledging the common but differentiated capacities, roles responsibilities of each country.

In Vanuatu's COP 21 simulation, the youth were asked to make pledges from their country in four areas: the year carbon dioxide emissions will fall, the percent reduction of greenhouse gasses, the rate of afforestation and amount of money contributed to the Green Climate Fund. Seeking to balance global well-being with national self-interest, the youth deliberated within their country groups to produce a pledge. Some groups attached conditions to their offers; India mandated that both China and the United States had to reduce emissions before they began lowering theirs, while Australia was willing to give \$5 billion to the Green Climate Fund provided the money did not go to China. The participants engaged in spirited debate before pledging their final rates of emission reduction and afforestation.

The country pledges were plugged into C-ROADS, a specialized computer program that uses the four factors to calculate future global warming. Despite deals brokered and concessions granted, the first set of country pledges were not enough to meet the goal limited warming to 2°C.

The COP 21 simulation closely mirrored the dynamics of past summits. Youth representing China received criticism for their high emission rates and lack of cooperation. The youth representing the United States gave money, but showed reluctance to reduce their own domestic emissions. The Pacific islands had little incentives to offer other countries, drawing on strong moral arguments for the mitigation of climate change impacts on their livelihoods.

Vanuatu's real COP 21 negotiator Shirley Laban helped break the stalemate between Australia and India: "You powerful industrialized countries worry for your money and your industry – but we in Vanuatu fear for our livelihoods, our food security and our children's future. We must work together to come to an agreement; the human stakes are too high."

After an impassioned second round of negotiations, global altruism triumphed over national self-interest and the youth reached an agreement that confined temperature rise to less than 2 degrees! If Vanuatu's youth can think beyond global divisions and come up with a global climate agreement, so can Parties do the same at the real COP21 to be held in Paris, France in December 2015.

Vanuatu's Youth Climate Summit was the first negotiation simulation of its kind to be held anywhere in the South Pacific. As the generation that will bear the burden of climate change, Vanuatu's youth are poised to spur both national and international leaders to action. 350 leader Emil Samuel said, "Today the youth of Vanuatu united to negotiate a treaty on climate change that will help us preserve our environment, livelihood and customary way of life. We can only hope that real world leaders can do the same."

This innovative climate event for youth was organized by 350 Vanuatu, SPC/GIZ Climate Change, USP, Oxfam, and VCAN. For more information, contact vanuatuclimatechange@gmail.com or call +678 29594