



A misguided pair of diplomats: Ban Ki-Moon (left) and Tuiloma Neroni Slade in discussions at a recent Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland, New Zealand.



Pacific Islands Forum

The Mirage of Rising Sea Levels

A non-problem that is stealing the limelight from real problems in the real world.

by Nils-Axel Mörner

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, have recently claimed that serious sea-level-rise problems occur both in Tuvalu and Kiribati. This is what two misguided politicians may say. But, we must ask, what is the reality?

The answer is clear and straightforward: There is no sea-level rise going on now, nor for at least the last 18 years, either in Tuvalu or in Kiribati. Over and over again, I have tried to demonstrate (Mörner 2007, 2010, 2011) that sea level is not in a rising mode in Tuvalu, judging from the only observational information there is: the tide gauge records.

The same documentation has been made by others, especially New Zealand climate scientist Dr. Vincent Gray (2010). This is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, where there are no signs of any sea level rise.

So, if our observational facts say that there is no rise in sea level, why are people continuing to drive the sea-level-rise

illusion. It doesn't become better (rather the opposite) if you are the secretary-general for the United Nations, or the Pacific Island Forum. It is simply wrong. But what is worse: It steals the limelight from real problems in the real world.

The same is true for the island nation of Kiribati. It lies in an area of the Southwest Pacific where satellite altimetry proposes a sea level rise in the order of 5 mm/year. Gray, in a 2010 article, showed that this indeed does not concur with the last SEAFRAME tide gauge record from Kiribati (Figure 3), a record that spans 17 years. The observed measurements do not record any long-term

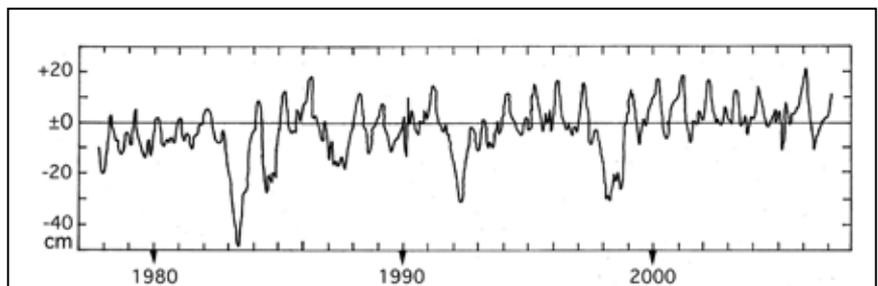


Figure 1
TIDE GAUGE RECORD FOR TUVALU (1978-2007)

The total tide gauge record for Tuvalu from 1978 shows that since 1985 there are no signs of any sea level rise. Three major ENSO events with significant drops in sea level are recorded in 1983, 1992, and 1998. ENSO refers to El Niño/La Niña-Southern Oscillation, a somewhat periodic climate pattern that occurs across the tropical Pacific Ocean.

Source: Mörner 2010

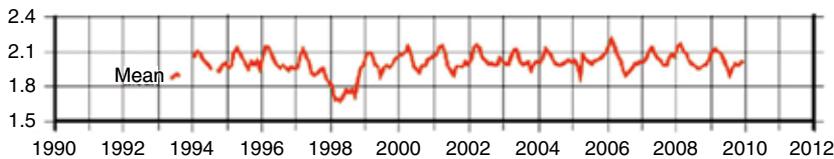


Figure 2

SEAFRAME TIDE GAUGE RECORD FOR TUVALU (1990-2010)

The SEAFRAME tide gauge record from Tuvalu, showing no sign of any ongoing sea-level rise. SEAFRAME, or Sea Level Fine Resolution Acoustic Measuring Equipment, is a network of monitoring stations throughout the South Pacific region that provides data on sea level.

Source: Adapted from Gray 2010

sea level rise, just a stability.

Vanuatu is another famous site in the sea-level debate. Here, too, there is a total absence of indications of any sea-level rise over the past 17-18 years (Mörner 2007, 2011; Gray 2010).

The list of sites with no observed sea-level rise can be enlarged over wider areas (the Indian Ocean with places like the Maldives and Bangladesh) and even wider areas all over the globe. Not the least of these is Northwestern Europe, where it all can be put to a test, even in Venice.

Obviously, there is a major clash between scenario-based computer simulations and reality, in the form of measured data and observations in nature itself. Therefore, logically, there are scientific reasons to turn away from the propaganda, and concentrate all attention and interest on observational facts. In this case, those facts give a very clear and irrefutable message: There is no alarming sea level rise either in Tuvalu or Kiribati.

Ban Ki-moon and his colleague from the Pacific Islands Forum should both feel ashamed of their claims and statements with respect to Tuvalu and Kiribati.

Nils-Axel Mörner is a renowned oceanographic expert who has studied sea level and its effects on coastal areas for some 45 years. He recently retired as director of the Paleogeophysics and Geodynamics Department at Stockholm University, and can be reached at Paleogeophysics & Geodynamics, in Stockholm, morner@pog.nu.

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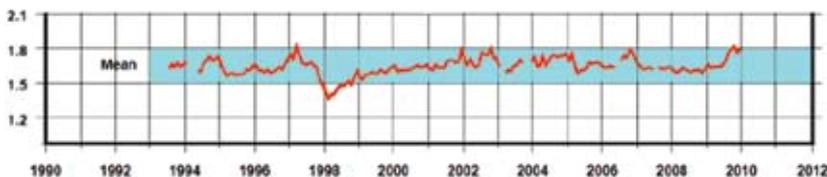


Figure 3

SEAFRAME TIDE GAUGE RECORD FOR KIRIBATI (1994-2010)

The SEAFRAME tide-gauge record from Kiribati documents that there is no long-term sea-level rise. It shows only the stability of the past 17 years.

Source: Adapted from Gray 2010

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