



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Occupy Vanuatu!
Vegetable Market Climate Protest Against New Global Coal**

18 August 2015

Today in Port Vila over 200 people, including youth and secondary school students, occupied the central vegetable market in protest against new coal mines and their role in climate impacts on Vanuatu's people. Vanuatu's vegetable market had been closed for months after severe category 5 Cyclone Pam devastated the country in March 2015.

Led by 350 Vanuatu, the youth activists made calls for a global moratorium on the development of new coal mining operations. This call is in support of the letter of appeal sent yesterday by the President of Kiribati Anote Tong to all global leaders. Mr. Emil Samuel, co-coordinator of 350 Vanuatu captured the frustration of ni-Vanuatu women at the market, "they come to the market week after week to earn a few dollars to rebuild their agricultural livelihoods that were destroyed in the cyclone and now ravaged by the current El Nino drought. Enough is enough with climate change."

To support the youth-led climate action, Dr. Kumi Naidoo, International Executive Director of Greenpeace, was on-hand to encourage Vanuatu "never to give up fighting for climate justice." He reminded market vendors and the youth alike that the struggle for climate change is a matter of life and death for countries in the Pacific like Vanuatu. Dr. Naidoo called on all leaders to publically endorse Kiribati's call for moratoriums on new coal.

During the protest, Dr. Naidoo met with students from Malapoa College, Central School and Tebakor College. He urged them to remember that "this planet's future belongs to you." The students, a part of the wider 350 global movement have been campaigning for years against the rise of global greenhouse gas emissions. In 2014, 350 Vanuatu members travelled to Australia to block the Newcastle port for coal ships. 350 Vanuatu members are now gearing up for a historic visit to the Vatican to lobby the Catholic Church to remove its investments in fossil fuels.

Student Sam Jake summed it all up, "we in Vanuatu are fighting for our lives, the world has to listen to us in the Pacific. Our lives matter! Even though we are poor, even though we are far away from powerful countries, even though we are small, and even though our skin is dark. Climate change is killing our people and our culture."

This Occupy Vanuatu youth climate action was organized by 350 Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Climate Action Network -VCAN, and the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network PICAN. For more information, contact vanuatuclimatechange@gmail.com.