

FORTY-SIXTH PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

**PORT MORESBY, PAPUA NEW GUINEA
8 – 10 September 2015**

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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The Forty-Sixth Pacific Islands Forum was held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, from 8 – 10 September 2015 and was attended by Heads of State and Government of Australia, Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The Republic of Fiji and the Republic of the Marshall Islands were represented by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

2. French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Tokelau attended the formal session as Associate Members. Timor-Leste, the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group, the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations (UN), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the International Organization for Migration and the World Bank attended as Observers. The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP): the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA); the Pacific Power Association; the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); the South Pacific Tourism Organisation; the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; and the University of the South Pacific (USP) were represented by their respective Heads of Organisations and senior officials.

3. The Forum Leaders' Retreat was held at Port Moresby on 10 September 2015.

4. Leaders expressed their deep gratitude to the Honourable Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, CMG, MP, and the Government and people of Papua New Guinea for the excellent arrangements made in hosting the 2015 Leaders' meeting, and for the kind hospitality extended to them during their stay in Port Moresby.

5. Leaders warmly welcomed the participation of Fiji at the Leaders meeting.

FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM

6. Leaders welcomed progress made in the implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, including the establishment of the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR). Leaders commended the Sub-Committee on its work, in particular the consideration of 68 submissions lodged by a wide range of proponents from Pacific governments, regional and international organisations, civil society organisations and individuals. Leaders noted that the SSCR had identified five issues it considered met the tests for regionalism as specified in the Framework, which warranted Leaders' consideration.

Fisheries

7. Leaders reaffirmed the central importance of increasing economic returns and ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries. Leaders further reaffirmed strengthening

maritime surveillance and enforcement, noting the multi-dimensional nature of these issues.

8. Leaders acknowledged the current effort based management system (VDS) that has brought significant economic return to Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA). Leaders endorsed the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries and directed that increases in economic return be achieved within five years. Leaders agreed that a joint taskforce of FFA, PNA and the Forum Secretariat would lead the development of a programme to increase the sustainable economic returns of fisheries, including examining a quota management system, and report back to Leaders in 2016. Leaders also welcomed New Zealand's offer for ministers and officials to visit New Zealand to study New Zealand's quota system.

9. Leaders tasked Fisheries, Economic and Foreign Ministers to undertake a joint comprehensive evaluation of the regional monitoring, control and surveillance, and compliance regime and report back to Leaders in 2016. Leaders noted that the evaluation should reflect the importance of sharing technology and information. Leaders expressed their appreciation to Australia and New Zealand for their assistance on surveillance.

Climate Change

10. Leaders reiterated their concerns that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. Leaders called for the adoption of an ambitious and legally binding agreement at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21). They strongly endorsed the *Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on Climate Change Action*, attached as **Annex 1**, in advance of COP21.

11. Leaders extended the current two regional frameworks: the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change; and the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action for one year.

Information Communications Technologies

12. Leaders noted the unprecedented economic and educational opportunities that Information Communications Technologies (ICT) offers, including access to world markets and global knowledge. Leaders also acknowledged the challenges to realising these benefits, which included, among others, under-utilisation of ICT services in Forum Island Countries (FICs), a lack of resources and expertise, and the threat of cyber-attacks and crime.

13. Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat and USP to consider the merit of a regional ICT Advisory Council. The Council should not overlap with existing mechanisms and must deliver real deliverables.

Cervical cancer

14. Leaders noted the substantial burden that cervical cancer places on women and girls in the Pacific region as well as the insufficient response to address it across the region.

15. Leaders agreed, given current regional prioritisation of Non-Communicable Diseases, that developing a regional approach to address cervical cancer would require further consultation with relevant technical organisations and national authorities and consideration of resource allocation for prevention and treatment.

West Papua (Papua)

16. Leaders recalled their decisions and concerns expressed at their meeting in 2006 about reports of violence in Papua, in which they also called on all parties to protect and uphold the human rights of all residents in Papua and to work to address the root causes of such conflicts by peaceful means.

17. Leaders recognised Indonesia's sovereignty over the Papuan provinces but noted concerns about the human rights situation, calling on all parties to protect and uphold the human rights of all residents in Papua. Leaders requested the Forum Chair to convey the views of the Forum to the Indonesian Government, and to consult on a fact finding mission to discuss the situation in Papua with the parties involved.

HIRI DECLARATION

18. Leaders endorsed the *Hiri Declaration on Strengthening Connections to Enhance Pacific Regionalism* attached at **Annex 2**. The Declaration resonates strongly with the theme of the 46th Pacific Islands Forum and is intended for Leaders to deliver an overarching statement which complements the Framework for Pacific Regionalism by meaningfully and effectively connecting Forum countries to collectively address immediate and long term challenges.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING

19. Leaders directed the commencement of the analysis of governance and financing options for collective action in pursuit of Pacific regionalism be completed in 2016, and for this work to be led by the Forum Secretariat in consultation with CROP and other stakeholders.

FORUM FOREIGN MINISTERS

20. Leaders welcomed the convening of the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting in early July 2015 in Sydney, Australia where discussions focussed on disaster management and international engagement of the Forum. In considering the recommendations put forward by the Foreign Ministers for their consideration, Leaders also reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of convening an annual meeting of Foreign Ministers.

21. Leaders agreed that Forum Foreign Ministers will meet annually from 2016, after the Forum Officials Committee Meeting, to assist and inform Leaders of relevant regional and international issues facing the region.

MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

22. Leaders agreed that decisions of regional ministerial meetings be provided to Leaders for oversight and where required, for endorsement.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

23. Leaders considered the report of the Forum Ministerial Mission to French Polynesia which took place from 20 to 23 July 2015 to assess its application for full membership of the Pacific Islands Forum. Leaders considered the key observations of the Mission, including

whether the existing governance arrangements of French Polynesia formed the basis for its eligibility for full membership of the Forum, and to participate independently and effectively as a full member, in the full complement of political deliberation, decision making and commitments of the Forum. Leaders deferred the decision on the application of French Polynesia on full membership pending a review of the criteria for admission of new members to the Forum.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS

24. Leaders recalled that the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) drawdown, which is being progressed in accordance with the RAMSI Participating Police Force Drawdown Strategy 2013 – 2017, is due to be finalised by 30 June 2017. Under the Strategy, the primary area of focus is the development of leadership and accountability at all levels, with the objective of developing a modern, effective, accountable, and independent Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

25. In commending the joint achievements made by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI to date, Leaders welcomed assurance by the Government and RAMSI, provided through the Enhanced Consultative Mechanism, that the Drawdown Strategy was a living document and as such would continue to work together to ensure that RAMSI's activities remain aligned to the Solomon Islands Government's priorities to ensure that gains achieved would be sustained into the future.

26. Leaders also noted the Solomon Islands Government's appreciation to members for work undertaken under RAMSI, as well as to Australia and New Zealand for their financial support over the last 12 years, and to personnel from around the region that contributed to the mission. The Government has seen significant achievement in the restoration of law and order; improved financial systems; and benefits it has brought other Forum Island Countries in terms of skills learned in Solomon Islands.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHAL ISLANDS

27. Leaders agreed to continue to support bilateral, regional and multilateral action to assist the Republic of the Marshall Islands in its efforts to engage the United States towards a justified resolution to the U.S. Nuclear Testing Programme. Leaders also considered submitting another letter to the U.S. Government urging the U.S. to take action to address meaningfully the lingering needs resulting from the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing Programme.

STRENGTHENING THE POST-FORUM DIALOGUE

28. Leaders considered the key findings of the 2015 reassessment of Post-Forum Dialogue (PFD) partners and noted with concern, among others, that there was limited regional cohesion by PFD partners due to varying levels of regional engagement, therefore making it difficult to identify where the Forum has formed clear issues-based coalitions with partners. Leaders also noted that financing of the regional agenda is fragmented through CROP agencies, the UN system and multi-country programming, and while trade and levels of aid were the primary measures of engagement for the majority of partners, this did not provide a complete picture of the political aspects of the Forum's PFD relations.

29. Recognising the importance of partnerships and the opportunity provided by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism to further articulate the role that PFD partners can play with regard to the regional agenda, Leaders agreed to the need for Post-Forum Dialogue partners to align to the priorities presented by the Framework process.

30. Leaders endorsed the outcomes of the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting held in early July 2015 regarding a strengthened annual Post-Forum Dialogue Plenary which focuses on key Forum priorities, as well as the opportunities for Forum Members to further engage with partners in the margins of international meetings.

PACER PLUS

31. Considerable progress has been made since the launch of negotiations for PACER Plus in 2009, with negotiations on most chapters close to conclusion and continuing positive engagement and flexibility shown by all parties. Leaders renewed their commitment to the PACER Plus negotiations as an instrument for promoting regional integration in the Pacific and assisting Forum Island Countries to achieve robust economic growth and sustainable development.

32. In noting the substantive progress made in the PACER Plus negotiations, Leaders requested Ministers responsible for international trade to ensure that their negotiators exercise the necessary flexibility in the negotiations to facilitate the rapid conclusion of a high quality trade and investment agreement, at the latest, by June 2016.

THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

33. Leaders acknowledged that while the Pacific region recorded mixed outcomes in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, the majority of Forum Island Countries managed to reduce child mortality and achieve universal primary education, and very few countries made gains in reducing poverty, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. Leaders expressed their support for a successful UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2015 and committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular attention to the region's 'unfinished business' on the MDGs.

34. Leaders called for the support of development partners, consistent with their commitments under the SAMOA Pathway and Addis Ababa Action Agenda, particularly in the areas of financing, statistics, partnerships, SDGs integration, and follow up and review, as well as acknowledging the special case of Small Island Developing States. They also recognised the ongoing global discussions on the SDGs indicators through the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the SDGs Indicators and called for the active participation of the region to influence these discussions through Fiji and Samoa who are members of this Expert Group.

35. Leaders emphasised a country-driven process in tailoring the global indicators to their national context. They noted that once UN member governments agree to the global set of indicators, there is merit in tailoring the global indicators to better reflect the Pacific context and to use these regional indicators to monitor the Pacific's progress on the SDGs, including towards the high-level objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

36. Leaders called for an open and inclusive consultation process, accounting for national priorities, to select the relevant global SDGs indicators to the Pacific context to ensure regional ownership. They also task the Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with CROP and UN agencies, to lead this consultation process, building on existing work streams to avoid duplication, with the aim of adopting regional indicators at the next Forum Leaders' meeting in 2016, as well as outline a regional process for the follow up and review of the SDGs and SAMOA Pathway that would seek to reduce the burden of reporting at the country level.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FORUM COMPACT

37. Leaders endorsed the 2015 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report and the 2015 Tracking the Effectiveness of Development Efforts in the Pacific Report. They also considered future reporting arrangements of the Forum Compact, and decided that future reports of the Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report and the Tracking the Effectiveness of Development Efforts in the Pacific Report be referred to the Forum Economic Ministers for endorsement and to provide updates, if so required.

PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION

38. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. Leaders noted that while there has been notable progress on gender equality in three of the six key Declaration areas: gender responsive policies and programmes, gender parity on education and ending violence against women, there has been less progress on women's economic empowerment, and sexual reproductive and health services.

SMALLER ISLAND STATES LEADERS MEETING

39. Leaders noted the decisions of the Smaller Island States (SIS) Leaders Meeting held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on 7 September 2015 including the *SIS Leaders' Port Moresby Declaration on Climate Change*.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION DIALOGUE

40. Leaders noted the substantive dialogue and valuable exchange of ideas between the Forum Troika and representatives of Pacific Civil Society Organisations in the margins of the Forum Leaders meeting.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

41. Leaders welcomed and confirmed the future hosts of the Forum as follows: the Federated States of Micronesia in 2016; Samoa in 2017; Nauru in 2018; and Tuvalu in 2019.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

10 September 2015