

**FORTY-SEVENTH PACIFIC ISLANDS
FORUM**

**POHNPEI, FEDERATED STATES OF
MICRONESIA**

**8 – 10 September,
2016**

**FORUM
COMMUNIQUÉ**



**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM
SECRETARIAT**

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The Forty-Seventh Pacific Islands Forum was held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia from 8 – 10 September 2016 and was attended by Heads of State and Government of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The Solomon Islands was represented by their Deputy Prime Minister, the Republic of Fiji, Niue and the Republic of Palau by their Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Kiribati by a Special Envoy. The Forum Leaders' Retreat was held at FSM Congress Chamber in Palikir on 10 September 2016.

2. French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Tokelau attended the formal session as Associate Members. The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Timor-Leste, Wallis and Futuna, the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations (UN), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and the World Bank attended as Observers. The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP): the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (PIFFA); the Pacific Power Association (PPA); the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); and the University of the South Pacific (USP) were represented by their respective Heads of Organisations.

3. Leaders extended their warmest gratitude to His Excellency, President Peter M. Christian, and the Government and the people of the Federated States of Micronesia for the excellent arrangements for the 2016 Forum Leaders' meeting and warmly thanked the hosts for their generous hospitality extended to them during their stay in Pohnpei.

Priorities Identified by the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism

4. Leaders noted that in 2016, the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR) had identified persons with disabilities, oceans, and regional mobility and harmonisation of business practices as having met the tests for regionalism specified in

the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism (Framework)* and warranted Leaders' consideration. Leaders commended the progress made in the implementation of the five priorities endorsed in 2015, which had been identified and proposed by the (SSCR through the public submissions process under the *Framework* - greater economic returns on fisheries and strengthening of maritime surveillance and enforcement; climate change; Information Communication Technologies (ICT); cervical cancer; and West Papua (Papua). Leaders also highly commended the national and regional interagency coordination and cooperation in implementing the priorities, including with international organisations.

FISHERIES

5. Leaders were pleased with the positive collaborative work that has been undertaken by the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Forum Secretariat, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office (PNAO), and the SPC, as the Fisheries Task Force, in implementing their decision on increasing economic returns and ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries. Leaders acknowledged the good work of the PNA in achieving significant increased economic returns.

6. Leaders endorsed the Fisheries Taskforce's Economic Returns Work Programme and Report, and noted that the four areas of work under the Programme: reform of the management of longline fishery; increasing the value of employment and ensuring effective labour standards are in place; facilitating investment and trade; and value chain participation, are consistent with, and expedite implementation of, several of the Goals and Strategies in the Fisheries Roadmap. Leaders concurred with the view of the Task Force that there is no need to change the management of the purse seine Vessel Day Scheme in the foreseeable future. At the same time, Leaders welcomed the PNAO's openness to considering such a change, should it be appropriate at some future time. Leaders acknowledged the importance of ensuring more onshore investment opportunities.

7. Leaders also endorsed the review of the regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) arrangements, and concurred that the combination of MCS tools, programmes, assets and activities at the national and regional level represent a world class MCS Framework that has achieved positive results for FFA members. Leaders noted that there were further improvements that would substantially enhance the MCS at the national and regional level, and which the FFA would pursue.

8. Leaders called for action to ending Illegal Unregulated Unreported fishing and associated activities, including high seas bunkering, human trafficking, and illicit trade. Leaders encouraged FFA to ensure the rapid implementation of the Tokelau

Arrangement. Leaders urged flag states to exercise more diligent efforts in carrying out their flag state responsibilities and control of nationals.

9. Recognising the ongoing importance of increasing economic returns and the sustainable management of fisheries, Leaders agreed that fisheries should remain on their agenda, and the need for ongoing cooperation between members of the Taskforce to implement the Work Programme.

10. In noting that coastal fisheries management continues to receive inadequate attention at the national level, Leaders agreed to expand the broad heading of “fisheries” to include coastal fisheries, noting links to communities, food security, health issues and in particular non-communicable diseases. Leaders also noted the need to ensure ecosystem integrity to address issues such as ciguatera outbreaks and to sustainably manage Beche-de-Mer. To that end, Leaders tasked the SPC to coordinate with National Fisheries Agencies, CROP agencies and regional and national community groups, to strengthen support and resourcing for coastal fisheries management.

11. With regard the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries and its report cards, Leaders noted the good progress and performance on indicators related to sustainability of tuna stocks, access revenue to Governments and employment rates; the continued commitment to progress work on harvest strategies for tuna stocks; ongoing concerns about the impacts of fish price volatility on indicators such as proportional fishery value, contribution of domestic fleets to Gross Domestic Product and value of exports to other Countries; and the need to better understand and improve the contribution of offshore fisheries to food security.

12. Leaders noted the progress in planning for the implementation of work to achieve the Goals of the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Fisheries over its 10 year window.

13. Leaders noted the positive outcomes from the final renegotiation session of the Treaty between the United States of America and Certain Pacific Island Parties, noting that the outcomes provide flexible yet commercially valuable arrangements, as well as a sustainable long term basis for delivery of Economic Assistance from the US Government. Leaders congratulated Forum Fisheries Ministers for the successful renegotiation of the Treaty and acknowledged the leadership of the late Hon. Minister Elisala Pita.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

14. Leaders reiterated the importance of the Pacific Islands Forum in maintaining a strong voice considering the region’s vulnerabilities to the impact of climate change. Leaders welcomed the Paris Agreement and reinforced that achieving the Agreement goal

of limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrialised levels is an existential matter for many Forum Members which must be addressed with urgency. Leaders congratulated the eight Forum countries that have ratified the Agreement and encouraged remaining Members and all other countries to sign and ratify the Agreement before the end of 2016 or as soon as possible. Leaders called for ambitious climate change action in and across all sectors and encouraged key stakeholders to prioritise their support for the implementation of key obligations under the Agreement.

15. Leaders endorsed the *Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)* and agreed for it to be fully elaborated and operationalised upon the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and recognised its potential to support coordination and action on a number of key issues related to climate change and disaster risk management. Leaders noted that the FRDP (attached at **Annex 1**), is a voluntary non-political framework which does not replace the role of existing regional political statements or declarations on climate change and disaster risk management. Leaders agreed that the *Pohnpei Statement: Strengthening Pacific Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risk* would complement the FRDP (attached at **Annex 2**), and tasked the Forum Secretariat to convene a Working Group, including Members, CROP agencies, and relevant stakeholders, to elaborate on the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) process by December 2016 to implement the FRDP.

16. Leaders welcomed last year's Dubai Pathway on Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), in which Parties to the Montreal Protocol agreed to work to an amendment this year to phase down HFCs under the treaty. They highlighted the progress made by Parties at the recent Montreal Protocol meetings in Vienna, and they reiterated their support for an amendment to be agreed at the Meeting of the Parties in Kigali this October. The Leaders highlighted that such an amendment could prevent warming of up to 0.5 C by 2100 and is therefore critical for achieving the long-term temperature goals of the Paris Agreement.

17. Leaders stressed that the amendment should include an early freeze date for HFC production and an early freeze date for HFC production and consumption followed by a rapid phase down of HFCs. They also emphasised the need to maximise the climate benefits of an HFC phase down by providing incentives to secure the major energy efficiency gains in applications that can be achieved concomitant with the global phase down of HFCs.

WEST PAPUA (PAPUA)

18. Leaders recognised the political sensitivities of the issue of West Papua (Papua) and agreed the issue of alleged human rights violations in West Papua (Papua) should remain on their agenda. Leaders also agreed on the importance of an open and constructive dialogue with Indonesia on the issue.

CERVICAL CANCER

19. Leaders considered the need for the development of a regional bulk procurement programme for the cervical cancer vaccine (and screening and related equipment where possible). Leaders noted the existing bulk procurement programme managed by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and urged Members to avail themselves of the UNICEF programme.

REGIONAL MOBILITY AND HARMONISATION OF BUSINESS PRACTICE

20. While recognising the potential of initiatives on ‘Regional Mobility and Harmonisation of Business Practice’, to contribute to increased economic integration, greater investment and improved business practices, Leaders noted the potential to duplicate processes already underway through the PACER Plus Agreement, Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement, and the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting. Leaders tasked the Secretariat to work with Forum Members, relevant technical agencies and the private sector to coordinate efforts for increased mobility and harmonisation of business practices in the region.

21. Leaders noted the messages conveyed by the private sector through the Private Sector Dialogue. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to support private sector development in the region with a focus on improved mobility of businesses and skilled personnel, including the streamlining of business processes to support the ease of doing business in the Pacific. Leaders directed relevant Ministerial Meetings to lead and monitor progress on the implementation of these initiatives as appropriate.

22. Leaders discussed the importance of remittances to the economic wellbeing of Forum Island Countries and expressed concern with the proposed wholesale closure of money transfer agents’ bank accounts abroad without due de-risking consideration and proper understanding on the impacts on Members.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

23. Leaders acknowledged that disability continues to be an issue of significance for the region - reflecting on the region’s ability to protect the marginalised, as well as those that have been left behind in development processes. Leaders recognised that persons living with disabilities, and their families, continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty due to inaccessible services and the built environment, which prevent them from participating independently and being included in their own societies.

24. Leaders endorsed the *Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD) 2016 – 2025* to support Pacific governments promote and protect

the rights of persons with disabilities as outlined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, and provide a regional modality to strengthen coordination and collaboration in support of national initiatives. Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat to coordinate the effective implementation of the PFRPD and work with Forum Member countries, CROP agencies, the Pacific Disability Forum, and development partners to mainstream the PFRPD at regional and national levels.

2015 priorities for referral for Ministerial Oversight and Crosscutting themes

25. Leaders endorsed the SSCR's recommendation that the 2015 priorities relating to ICT; and cervical cancer (national policy responses), be referred to the relevant ministries for discussion and oversight. Leaders agreed that while important, these issues do not require their continued discussion to be progressed. Leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to continue to focus on the issues of gender and poverty, and encouraged Ministers and Officials to mainstream both gender and poverty across all sectoral and thematic areas of work.

OCEANS

26. Leaders reaffirmed that the Pacific region's most important natural resource is the ocean. Leaders recalled that the Pacific had shown strong global leadership on oceans through the SAMOA Pathway and in ensuring a stand-alone SDG on the ocean and seas (SDG14). Leaders noted that the UN Conference on Oceans and Seas to support the implementation of SDG14, 5 – 9 June 2017, will now be held in New York. The Conference will provide the Pacific with another opportunity to lead the way and demonstrate its collective interest in the sustainable development, management and conservation of the Pacific Ocean and its resources, including through the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC).

27. Leaders recalled their support for negotiations towards implementing a new agreement to deal with biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, and acknowledged the technical support coordinated through the OPOC at discussions underway on the issue at the UN. Leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining the Pacific momentum towards a swift conclusion of the Preparatory Committee, to ensure approaches to ocean management across jurisdictions that do not undermine existing regional fisheries management arrangements. To that end and noting the global attention on oceans, Leaders endorsed the *Pohnpei Oceans Statement: A Course to Sustainability* (attached at **Annex 3**), and reaffirmed their support to the OPOC, given its central coordination role with respect to ocean governance and integrated ocean management in the region, under the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

28. Leaders commended progress by the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Taskforce and Reference Group on the development of a draft Outline of the Pacific SDGs Roadmap for regional reporting and implementation of the SDGs, SAMOA Pathway and the *Framework*. Leaders noted that the final Roadmap will be submitted for approval in September 2017.

29. Leaders acknowledged the regional leadership role by Samoa in being the first Pacific country and Small Island Developing State to submit its National Voluntary Report on the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum in July 2016.

MEMBERSHIP

30. Leaders accepted French Polynesia and New Caledonia as full Members of the Pacific Islands Forum.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS

31. Leaders applauded RAMSI as a regional success story that has also contributed to strengthening regional cooperation and capacity building on security. Leaders welcomed the initiative taken by the Solomon Islands Government in addressing the underlying causes of the ethnic tension, which include prioritisation and sequencing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, land reform initiatives, legislative reforms, economic development initiatives and healing processes. Leaders welcomed commitments from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand that support to Solomon Islands will continue post-RAMSI, including to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, and will be developed in close consultation and coordination with the Solomon Islands Government. Leaders applauded the significant progress made so far in the drawdown of RAMSI and supported the oversight role of the Pacific Islands Forum on the eventual withdrawal of RAMSI in June 2017.

PACER PLUS

32. Leaders reiterated the need for PACER Plus to promote regional integration in the Pacific, and to assist the Forum Island Countries to achieve robust economic growth and sustainable development. In that regard, Leaders welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on all fifteen chapters of the PACER Plus text and called on all participants to continue to demonstrate good will and flexibility. Leaders noted that a timetable has been agreed for the conclusion of market access negotiations by the end of October 2016,

and for the Agreement to be signed by the end of 2016. Leaders noted the withdrawal by Papua New Guinea from PACER Plus and reservations by Fiji on the current legal text.

33. Leaders welcomed the commitment by Australia and New Zealand to provide appropriate resources for the implementation of PACER Plus with respect to the development and economic cooperation chapter of the text, and for the broader trade related assistance needs of the FICs. This includes an initial joint A\$7.7 million Readiness Package to be available to signatories between signature and entry into force, to assist in undertaking necessary work for the ratification process of PACER Plus.

34. Leaders noted that the conclusions and recommendations of the Sustainable Impact Assessment prepared by the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser in consultation with relevant stakeholders, would be used as a basis for ongoing engagement with stakeholders on the possible economic, social and environmental impacts of trade liberalisation under PACER Plus.

PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION

35. Leaders noted that since the adoption of the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), regional progress on achieving gender equality has generally improved, albeit slowly. Common challenges include attitudinal and behavioural barriers, insufficient funding, and fragmentation and lack of coordination amongst agencies.

36. Leaders agreed that future reporting on the PLGED would comprise: a full report on progress against the PLGED incorporated into the proposed quadrennial regional reporting of progress against the SDGs, with the first regional report proposed for 2018; and a report on a particular theme/area of the PLGED prepared biennially, between the full regional SDGs report, to maintain a focus on progressing gender-related commitments.

CYBER SECURITY

37. Leaders welcomed the exponential growth in internet connectivity in the region and access to world markets and global knowledge it brings. Leaders agreed Forum members should work together to establish a Computer Emergency Response Team capacity for the region to combat cyber threats and cybercrime.

CRIMINAL DEPORTEES

38. Leaders noted the challenges and inherent security risks faced by Forum Members relating to the growing number of criminal deportations from metropolitan countries.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

39. Leaders recalled that the Republic of the Marshall Islands was placed by the international community under the trusteeship of the United Nations administered by the United States of America, both of which therefore have ongoing obligations to encourage a final and just resolution for the Marshallese people. Leaders welcomed the recommendations in the Special Rapporteur's report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2012.

40. Leaders supported bilateral, regional and multilateral action to assist the Republic of the Marshall Islands in its efforts to engage the United States towards a justified fair and just resolution to the U.S. Nuclear Testing Programme and agreed to submit letters to the U.S. Government urging the United States to take further action to meaningfully address the ongoing impacts resulting from the U.S. Nuclear Testing Programme, and to the United Nations Secretary-General seeking action in response to the recommendations contained in the 2012 report of the UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur for "the international community, including relevant United Nations departments, funds and agencies" to address the ongoing impacts of nuclear testing in the Pacific.

41. Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat to coordinate assistance by CROP Agencies to the Republic of the Marshall Islands in addressing ongoing impacts of nuclear testing, including, *inter alia*, human rights, environmental contamination, and health impacts. Leaders also tasked the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General to report to the 48th Pacific Islands Forum on actions taken in this regard.

POST-FORUM DIALOGUE APPLICATION

42. Leaders agreed to admit the Federal Republic of Germany as the seventeenth Post-Forum Dialogue Partner, and noted that it will attend the 2016 28th Post-Forum Dialogue Plenary Meeting.

CANDIDACIES

43. Leaders supported the candidacies of Australia to the Human Rights Council 2018-2020 and the Cook Islands to the UNESCO Executive Board 2017.

OUTCOMES OF THE SMALLER ISLANDS STATES LEADERS MEETING

44. Leaders endorsed the SIS Regional Strategy as the basis for articulating SIS regional priorities and aspirations with the *Framework*.

45. Leaders noted the outcomes of the SIS Leaders Meeting held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia on 7 September 2016 and welcomed the SIS Leaders' decision to admit the Federated States of Micronesia in the SIS Group.

VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

46. Leaders confirmed Samoa as the host for the 2017 Forum, Nauru in 2018, and Tuvalu in 2019.