

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE FALEPILI UNION BETWEEN TUVALU AND AUSTRALIA

Today, we, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu and the Prime Minister of Australia, are pleased to announce an elevation of our bilateral relationship to a more advanced, integrated and comprehensive partnership – the Falepili Union.

Falepili is a Tuvaluan word for the traditional values of good neighbourliness, care and mutual respect. These are the values that underpin our partnership and guide our commitments to each other.

Tuvalu faces special and unique challenges which are already exacerbated by the effects of climate change. It is geographically remote, has a fragmented landmass, and a scarcity of natural resources.

Driven by these challenges, Tuvalu commissioned eminent Tuvaluans to undertake a comprehensive examination of partnership options to protect and promote its interests and ensure its continued sovereignty. Following this examination, the Tuvalu Government formally requested Australia consider elevating our bilateral partnership, through transformational and durable arrangements, to safeguard the future of Tuvalu's people, identity and culture.

Respect and support for each other's sovereignty lies at the heart of our Falepili Union. The *Falepili* concept recognises the importance of collective sovereignty, whereby a country's actions can impact on its neighbours. Each member of the neighbourhood has a duty to care for and protect its neighbours.

We have today signed a new bilateral Treaty to give effect to our closer relationship. This embodies our commitment to the collective stewardship of the Blue Pacific continent. We believe in Pacific sovereignty, with the Pacific Islands Forum leading the region in the Pacific way, guided by the 2050 Strategy. Our Falepili Union will better position us to play our part in a shared Pacific that is peaceful, safe and prosperous.

Through our Falepili Union, we will count on each other to support the aspirations and wellbeing of our peoples.

We know there is no prosperity without security and that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of Tuvalu. Australia will support Tuvalu's efforts to enable its people to continue to live and thrive in their territory and retain Tuvalu's deep, ancestral connections to land and sea.

That is why we will extend our partnership through expansion of the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project to reclaim land in Funafuti. This project will expand Funafuti's

land by around six per cent – creating vital space for new housing and essential services for Tuvaluans, and enabling people to remain living in Tuvalu in the face of sea-level rise. We call on others to join us in supporting Tuvalu’s long-term adaptation vision.

At the same time, we believe the people of Tuvalu deserve the choice to live, study and work elsewhere, as climate change impacts worsen. Australia has committed to provide a special pathway for citizens of Tuvalu to come to Australia, with access to Australian services that will enable human mobility with dignity.

Consistent with the Boe Declaration’s expanded concept of security, Australia will continue to provide assistance to Tuvalu in response to major natural disasters, health pandemics and in the event of traditional security threats to Tuvalu. This reflects our understanding that as Pacific countries our interests are intertwined and decisions taken by one can affect the interests of the other.

Under the Falepili Union, we commit to continuing to work closely together to support Tuvalu’s development needs, including through our bilateral development programs, and Australia’s regional programs, budget support and contributions to Tuvalu’s Trust Fund. We will jointly explore opportunities to build capability in Tuvalu, including through collaborations regarding government services and regulation, and support key infrastructure, recognising its important role in economic development.

We recognise that mutual respect and openness with our Pacific family builds trust and understanding. In that spirit, we commit to transparency and engagement on the Falepili Union.