



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

### PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING

Forum Secretariat, Suva, Fiji

11 August 2017

The second standing meeting of Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers was held at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji, on 11 August 2017. The Meeting was chaired by the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, and was attended by the Prime Minister of Cook Islands, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga, and Ministers from Australia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands were represented by officials. The Ulu o Tokelau represented Tokelau, as Associate Member.

2. The meeting was also attended by heads of the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the South Pacific Tourism Organisation, the University of the South Pacific, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

3. Ministers offered their congratulations to French Polynesia and New Caledonia for their participation in the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting for the first time as full Forum Members.

4. Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government of Fiji for the warm hospitality accorded to delegations, including the cocktail reception hosted by the Minister for Defence and National Security of Fiji, the Honourable Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, on Thursday 10 August 2017.

5. Ministers conveyed their condolences to the Government and people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands on the recent passing of the Honourable Matlani Zackhras.

#### **The theme for the 48<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum – *The Blue Pacific***

6. Ministers commended the Government of Samoa, as the incoming Chair for the 48<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, on the theme of 'The Blue Pacific: Our Sea of Islands – Our Security through Sustainable Development, Management and Conservation', and acknowledged the Blue Pacific as a basis for collective Forum diplomacy.

#### **The Pacific's political and security environment**

7. Foreign Ministers discussed a wide range of issues affecting the political and security environment of the Pacific, including current shifts in global power relations, challenges to multilateralism, and increased incidence of transnational crime and illegal fishing. Ministers emphasized the importance of enhancing regional cooperation to address all aspects of existing and emerging security threats (including health, environmental, economic, human and cybersecurity).

8. Foreign Ministers:

- (i) Commended the Secretariat for preparing the State of Pacific Regionalism Report, to inform Members' discussions;

- (ii) Congratulated the Government and the people of Solomon Islands in ensuring the success of RAMSI. Ministers acknowledged RAMSI as a strong example of mutual trust and regional cooperation, and committed to harnessing the lessons learned. Ministers commended the role of all Forum Members in their contributions to RAMSI;
- (iii) Considered that it was timely to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other security related declarations of the Forum. Ministers recommended that Leaders initiate consultations on developing a 'Biketawa Plus' security declaration, as a foundation for future regional responses. Ministers recognised the importance of an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, prioritising environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change;
- (iv) Underlined the importance of the multilateral system to promoting the interests of the Pacific Islands region;
- (v) Reaffirmed their commitment to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as a critical mechanism for global climate change action. Ministers expressed concern at the decision of the US to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Ministers urged the US to remain engaged in international efforts to combat climate change. Ministers also agreed that the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation could erode development gains, undermine economic growth and compound human security challenges;
- (vi) Identified the need for coordinated collective approaches to accessing finance to address climate change issues in the region, particularly smaller island states, and supported the call by the Prime Minister for Papua New Guinea, on behalf of Forum Leaders in 2016, for continued advocacy to multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, to ensure that existing definitions of fragility take into account the specific vulnerabilities faced by Forum Island Countries;
- (vii) Reaffirmed their commitment to collectively promoting peace and stability throughout the Pacific region, and expressed continued support for the government and people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in addressing the ongoing consequences of nuclear testing. Ministers further stressed the importance of upholding the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone established under the Rarotonga Treaty and other disarmament and non-proliferation treaties;
- (viii) Expressed their concern over the instability and current tensions on the Korean Peninsula which are the result of the illegal actions by North Korea in violation of numerous UN Security Council Resolutions. Ministers particularly expressed concern about the threat posed to Guam, which constitutes a threat to the wider Pacific region. Ministers called upon all parties to continue dialogue through the appropriate diplomatic channels to ease tensions; and
- (ix) Agreed on the need for a collective Forum foreign policy to address challenges and harness opportunities to safeguard the Pacific's interests.

## **The role of the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting**

9. Ministers discussed the role of the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting within the Forum architecture, recognizing it as a platform for discussion and strategizing on regional and international issues facing the Pacific region.

10. Foreign Ministers:

- (i) Approved the draft Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting Charter (Attachment A) and referred it to Leaders for endorsement;
- (ii) Committed to ensuring whole-of-government approaches to engaging with Pacific regionalism, and strengthened coordination of Pacific Islands Forum diplomacy, internationally, and commit to reporting back to the next Foreign Ministers Meeting on national efforts; and
- (iii) Committed to strengthening the foundational architecture for effective Forum diplomacy and task the Secretariat to coordinate a Forum Officials Committee sub-committee of Members to develop a rolling Forum strategy and plan for international advocacy.

## **Forum priorities**

11. Ministers agreed to prioritise strategic engagement with partners and the international community on climate change and oceans, and recognised the ‘Blue Pacific’ as a shared narrative for advancing the Leaders’ vision for the region.

12. Ministers:

- (i) Congratulated Fiji on its selection as incoming president of COP23, and committed to working towards advancing the Pacific’s priorities, as identified at the Climate Action Pacific Partnership Event, 3-4 July 2017;
- (ii) Congratulated Fiji and Sweden for the successful UN Oceans Conference, held in New York, 5-9 June 2017, and committed to ensuring the effective implementation of the outcomes of the Conference;
- (iii) Commended the role played by the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner in ensuring the profile of the Pacific on oceans, and committed to strengthening support for the Office;
- (iv) Called for support to commence negotiations in the UN for a new Implementing Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity on Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction;
- (v) Discussed the critical issue of possible loss of sovereignty due to climate change and sea level rise and the implications for this issue with respect to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- (vi) Underscored the challenges in fisheries, in particular Illegal Unreported and Unregulated fishing, and discussed bilateral and regional approaches that can be taken to address the growing threats to fisheries, and recommended the need to lobby WTO to take action towards eliminating illicit fisheries subsidies;

- (vii) Welcomed the conclusion and signature of PACER Plus which will support economic growth and jobs in the region;
- (viii) Encouraged open and constructive dialogue with Indonesia on alleged human rights violations in West Papua (Papua). Ministers welcomed Indonesia's invitation, and the Secretariat's participation in observing local elections in February 2017;
- (ix) Emphasised the ongoing importance of ICT connectivity and cybersecurity, and welcomed and encouraged sub-regional and regional initiatives for cybersecurity cooperation, such as Australia's initiative for a Pacific Cybersecurity Operations Network; and
- (x) Noted the interest of New Zealand and Australia to become full members of the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting process, and looked forward to a decision on the matter at this year's meeting in Rarotonga on 28 – 30 August 2017.

### **New Caledonia and French Polynesia's admission to the Pacific Islands Forum**

13. Ministers recalled the decision of Forum Leaders at the 47<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum to admit French Polynesia and New Caledonia as full Members of the Forum.

14. Ministers:

- (i) Welcomed the progress made by French Polynesia and New Caledonia in progressing their respective accessions to the Forum's constituent treaties;
- (ii) Noted that the issue of adjusting French Polynesia and New Caledonia's membership contribution to reflect their status as full members is addressed in the proposed Sustainable Funding Strategy for the Secretariat; and
- (iii) Convey to Forum Dialogue Partners that French Polynesia and New Caledonia are full Forum Members and therefore should be treated as such.

### **International candidacies**

15. Ministers acknowledged the opportunity that representation on international bodies provides to champion the Pacific's interests.

16. Ministers:

- (i) Supported Cook Islands' candidacy for a position on the Executive Board of UNESCO;
- (ii) Noted the upcoming vacancy for the position of Regional Director of Western Pacific Division of the World Health Organisation, and suggested that the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting offers an opportunity for the region to discuss a process to nominate a strong Pacific candidate to this position; and
- (iii) Supported Australia's candidacy, as endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2016, for the UN Human Rights Council for 2018 – 20.

**Charter for the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting (DRAFT)**

*Purpose and Role of the Meeting*

1. Forum Leaders have recognised that Foreign Ministers have a key role to play in deepening regionalism through strengthening policy cohesion on agreed regional political priorities and policy positions, and engaging on these in regional and international fora.
2. This Charter reflects the decision by Forum Leaders to establish a standing meeting of Forum Foreign Ministers (FFMM) and to assist and inform Leaders of relevant regional and international issues facing the region.
3. The purpose and role of the FFMM is to discuss and direct action on:
  - foreign policy issues affecting Forum priorities and the pursuit of deeper regionalism;
  - regional security and governance issues, including the development and implementation of regional norms and standards;
  - opportunities presented by regional and international meetings to engage on agreed Forum political priorities and policy positions;
  - partnership arrangements with non-Forum members, including for example all Forum Dialogue partners, relevant inter-governmental organisations and the development of relevant multi-stakeholder partnerships;
  - applications for membership of the Forum, including admission of Associate Members and accreditation as Observers;
  - High level international candidacies by Forum members; and
  - Ensuring policy coherence and cohesion across regional Ministerial meetings on relevant political priorities and policy issues.

*Governance arrangements*

4. The FFMM will be chaired by the relevant Ministerial representative of the incumbent Forum Chair. This alignment of chairing arrangements serves to support the Forum Chair in their representational responsibilities, which include leading Forum delegations in summities with Forum Dialogue partners and in international conferences and negotiations.
5. The Chair shall manage the meeting and ensure that decisions are recorded in writing.
6. Forum Foreign Ministers shall receive, examine and comment on recommendations made by the Forum Officials Committee and report their meeting outcomes to Forum Leaders, through the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
7. The FFMM may, as necessary, oversee and task intermittent or ad hoc ministerial, officials or multi-stakeholder groups as needed to advance the Forum's political and security interests.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

8. The FFMM will identify opportunities for engagement with relevant external stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, development partners, CROP Agencies or Working Groups.

### *Meeting Arrangements*

9. The FFMM will be convened by the Secretary General on an annual basis, prior to the Forum Leaders' Meeting and immediately after the pre-Forum session of the Forum Officials Committee.
10. Additional meetings of the FFMM may be convened in special circumstances as necessary.
11. All other arrangements and procedures for the FFMM shall be consistent with the Forum Secretariat Meetings Policy.

### *Resourcing*

12. The financial and staff resources required to support the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting are provided from within the primary budget of the Secretariat. Member countries will be responsible for funding the attendance of their delegations to the meeting.

### *Review and amendment*

13. The Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting Charter will be reviewed every three years or at the discretion of Forum Leaders, and may be amended as and when deemed necessary.

[End]