

PACIFIC AGREEMENT ON CLOSER ECONOMIC RELATIONS PLUS

30 JUNE 2021

PP.MIN.003/C/FINAL

COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the Ministerial representatives of the Parties to the *Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus*¹ met virtually on 30 June 2021. Our meeting was chaired by the Hon. Tatafu Toma Moeaki, Tonga's Minister for Trade and Economic Development.

2. We discussed the progress made on the implementation of the Agreement since its entry into force on 13 December 2020 and emphasised the timely delivery of its work programme.

3. We note the unprecedented health, social and economic challenges facing our economies and the region due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Connectivity between our economies is pivotal to the region's ongoing resilience including through the delivery of COVID-19 goods and services. We also recognise the important role that economic integration and access to regional and international markets will play in fostering an inclusive economic recovery for our region.

4. We recall our intentions for PACER Plus to maximise opportunities for Forum Island Countries to use trade and investment as engines of growth, to create jobs, ensuring higher incomes and living standards, and building the necessary capacity to actively participate and benefit from the Agreement.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE PACIFIC

5. We welcome Parties' efforts in the implementation of PACER Plus including through the Readiness Package, Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme and progress to establish the PACER Plus Implementation Unit in Apia, Samoa.

6. We welcome the appointment of the Head of the PACER Plus Implementation Unit, Mr Roy Lagolago, who has extensive experience in supporting trade facilitation in the Pacific. We look forward to working with him to ensure all PACER Plus members make the most of the Agreement in the pursuit of economic integration and cooperation in the region.

7. We note the importance of working closely with other regional and multilateral organisations and development partners in the Pacific. We particularly note the importance for close cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). To that end, we welcome the participation of the Pacific Island Forum Secretary General representative in this

¹ See Annex 1 for the List of Representatives



meeting and look forward to working closely together in our collective efforts towards Pacific economic integration.

8. Recognising our vision for PACER Plus as an inclusive agreement for the Blue Pacific, we encourage the swift ratification of PACER Plus by the remaining signatories — Nauru, Tuvalu, Vanuatu — and encourage the consideration of the Agreement by other Forum Island Countries and partners with an abiding connection to the Pacific.

9. In support of integration and coordination, we welcome progress on processes for observers and strategic partners to PACER Plus. We look forward to working with other economies, development partners and organisations to progress PACER Plus ambitious work programme and facilitate economic integration in the Pacific.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE LINKS AND MOVEMENT ACROSS BORDERS

10. While recognising the current challenges of border closures, we note the profound importance of people-to-people links and the movement of people across our borders for our economies and cultures. We welcome efforts under PACER Plus to advance efforts to explore favourable arrangements for Members to facilitate labour mobility.

11. The Labour Mobility Arrangement was an important outcome from the PACER Plus negotiations. We welcome efforts towards its implementation under PACER Plus and the decision to host the Labour Mobility Secretariat in the PACER Plus Implementation Unit. We welcome efforts to hold the next Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) virtually later this year, and task officials to convene a ministerial dialogue in the second half of 2021 (either through PLMAM or a separate meeting should that not be possible) to discuss how best to support and enhance labour mobility mutual opportunities under PACER Plus now that the Agreement has entered into force.

ACCESSING MARKETS

12. Recognising our desire to address all forms of unnecessary trade barriers and promote transparency, we welcome the establishment of the subsidiary bodies under the Agreement, including the Committees on Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures; Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade; and the Committee on Services, Movement of Natural Persons and Investment.

13. We welcome discussions in these PACER Plus subsidiary bodies to explore areas of mutual interest to facilitate access to markets and the delivery of our Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme. We underscore our desire to use all PACER Plus mechanisms — committees, the Implementation Unit, and its work programme — to



coordinate trade-related technical assistance in the Pacific, supporting existing Aid for Trade programs from Australia and New Zealand.

14. We look forward to the conclusion of the Rapid Needs Assessments of PACER Plus Forum Island Countries by the end of July. Taking into account the results of the Rapid Needs Assessment, we task officials to work with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit to develop and approve a comprehensive work programme, and provide an update of Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme progress by the end of 2021. We also task officials to work with the Implementation Unit to advise and provide options for an early win for swift implementation by the end of August 2021. We acknowledge the PACER Plus principles that will underpin our development and economic cooperation, including that the work programme will contain mutually agreed priorities, complement existing regional activities, represent value for money and be timely to support Parties' economic recovery.

LOOKING FORWARD

15. Noting COVID-19 has exacerbated connectivity challenges affecting trade flow and supply distributions in our region, we commit to work together under PACER Plus to address these challenges and develop new and innovative solutions to facilitate access to markets and support economic recovery. We urge officials to consider how PACER Plus can further support the facilitation of trade of essential goods building on the experience of our region. PACER Plus' entry into force and our strong collective efforts for implementation present us with the opportunity to strengthen connectivity beyond pre-COVID levels.

16. We welcome the launch of PACER Plus' official website (www.PACERPlus.org). This website is an important resource for Pacific businesses, Governments and other interested stakeholders in understanding how PACER Plus can help boost trade and investment in the region.

17. We look forward to our next meeting in 2022 to review PACER Plus implementation after its first year of entry into force. To support PACER Plus governance and its collective ownership across its membership, we task officials to develop a forward hosting calendar for our annual meetings.



ANNEX 1

List of Representatives

Party Representatives

- (i) Hon Dan Tehan, Minister of Trade, Tourism and Investment, Australia
- (ii) Hon Patrick Arioka, Minister of the Business Trade and Investment Board, Cook Islands
- (iii) Hon Taabeta Teakai Amuera, Minister for Employment and Human Resources, Kiribati
- (iv) Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand
- (v) Hon Crossley Tatui, Minister for Infrastructure and Finance, Niue
- (vi) Peseta Noumea Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa
- (vii) Hon Jeremiah Manele, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands
- (viii) Hon Tatafu Toma Moeaki, Minister of Trade and Economic Development, Tonga

Signatory Representatives

- (ix) Ms Loloma Homasi, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Fisheries and Trade, Tuvalu
- (x) Mr Kalfau Kaloris, Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade, Vanuatu

Pacific Island Forum Secretariat Representative

- (xi) Zarak Khan, Director of Programmes and Initiatives, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

