



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

PIFS(24)5

FIFTY-THIRD PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Vava'u, Tonga
26 - 30 August 2024

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Fifty-Third Pacific Islands Forum was held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga from 26 – 30 August 2024 and was attended by Heads of State and Government of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Fiji, French Polynesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and the Republic of Vanuatu. The Republic of Kiribati was represented at Ministerial level.

2. Tokelau attended the formal session as an Associate Member. American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Organisation for Migration, the United Nations and the World Bank attended as Forum Observers. The Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP): the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA); the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO); the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP); the Pacific Power Association (PPA); the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO); 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 and senior officials. The Forum Leaders' Retreat was held on Vava'u Island on 29 August 2024.

3. Leaders **expressed** their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King, the Prime Minister, the Government and people of the Kingdom of Tonga for the excellent arrangements made in hosting the 2024 Leaders' meeting, and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations during their stay in Tonga.

TRANSFORMATIVE AND RESILIENT *PASIFIKI*: BUILD BETTER NOW

4. Leaders **congratulated** the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga for the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting theme, *Transformative and Resilient Pasifiki: Build Better Now*, reaffirming the importance of integrated resilience across all our Pacific communities and sectors including in the areas of climate change and environmental degradation, building economies through collective solution, building the capacity of Pacific people through innovation and technology, and in how continued health and education challenges are addressed by working together.

SECRETARY GENERAL'S OVERVIEW

5. Leaders **considered** an update by the Secretary General on the work of the Secretariat and its efforts to strengthen the organisation to better position it to support the decisions of the Pacific Islands Forum. Leaders **recognised** the centrality of the Forum and noted its critical role in bolstering regional development and regional cooperation.

6. Leaders **reaffirmed** the strength of collective efforts despite varying perspectives and **recognised** the need to be flexible in adapting with the evolving strategic environments. Leaders further **emphasised** the importance of solidarity in the face of many challenges and opportunities before the region, including economic growth, sustainable development, resource

management and partnerships.

7. Leaders **noted** the Secretary General's overview and the Report on the Rarotonga Treaty.

2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

8. Leaders **reaffirmed** the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as the region's collective commitment to a resilient Pacific, thereby elevating the importance of resilience in framing and shaping how Members develop and monitor regional policy priorities.

9. Leaders **welcomed** the progress on the implementation of the 2050 Strategy and **reaffirmed** the value of working together to ensure that the region's interest and priorities are progressed. Leaders **emphasised** the importance of the integration of Smaller Island States priorities in the implementation of the 2050 Strategy.

10. Leaders **endorsed** the Executive Summary of the 2050 Baseline Report which reports on the current state of regionalism and development in the Pacific through the lens of the seven Thematic Areas of the 2050 Strategy. Leaders also **endorsed** the High-Level Summary of the Prioritised Regional Collective Actions which provides updates on progress made towards implementing the Regional Collective Actions as articulated in the Implementation Plan.

REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

11. Leaders **discussed** the progress on the Review of the Regional Architecture (RRA) and **emphasised** the importance of the RRA work in the implementation of the 2050 Strategy. Leaders **highlighted** the need for continued strengthened CROP collaboration to support effective delivery for Members and a more strategic and rationalised partnership mechanism as well as the importance of giving due consideration to the issue of sovereignty.

12. Leaders **further reiterated** the need for the RRA to take into account the decisions outlined in the Suva Agreement and to ensure that the RRA is relevant, practical, fit-for-purpose and aligned to Members' needs.

13. Leaders **endorsed** the recommendations of Phase 2 of the RRA (**Annex A**) and discussed the key issues requiring political guidance as it relates to: political leadership and unity; Forum Membership and Criteria; Strengthened Regionalism; and rationalising the regional architecture to foster increased effectiveness and efficiency.

14. Leaders **endorsed** the framing of Phase 3 (**Annex B**) and **tasked** the Secretariat to progress Phase 3 in consultation with Senior Forum Officials and provide an update to Leaders in 2025. Leaders **tasked** the Secretariat to undertake a review of Forum-related treaties and respective synergies therein.

RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS

15. Leaders **discussed** the vulnerability of the region's health system to climate change effects such as sea level rise and extreme weather, recognising that 62% of the critical health facilities are situated within 500 meters of the coastlines. Leaders acknowledged that improving the climate-resilient healthcare infrastructure is essential to mitigate risks and manage climate sensitive diseases effectively. Leaders also considered the ongoing health workforce crisis as a result of shortages, uneven distribution and outmigration of skilled professionals.

16. Leaders **recognised** the importance of prioritising investment in Climate Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Health Care (CRESHCF) Facilities and to advocate for increased international climate finance to support the transition towards CRESHCF. Leaders further **agreed** develop a comprehensive region-wide health workforce strategy that focuses on quality training and retention measures for consideration by Pacific Health Ministers.

17. Leaders **discussed** prioritising targeted investments in mobile health clinics, tele-medicines and regular outreach programmes specifically designed for remote islands and communities.

18. Leaders **recognised** with concern the ongoing Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) crisis in the Pacific region and strongly **reaffirmed** their commitment to tackle the Pacific NCD crisis through scaling up actions on the Pacific NCD Roadmap, Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity priorities and the Bridgetown Declaration on NCDs and Mental Health.

19. Leaders **reaffirmed** their commitment to build stronger partnerships between government sectors and other relevant sectors to address the root causes of NCDs in a holistic whole of government, whole of society approach.

RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS

20. Leaders **discussed** the importance of resilient education systems in the Pacific region. Leaders considered key areas of focus including investment in climate-resilient and digital education infrastructure, developing a localised and culturally relevant curriculum that incorporates disaster preparedness, and enhancing preparedness to deliver quality learning outcomes, training and capacity for both students and teachers.

21. Leaders **recognised** and **supported** the prioritisation of investment in climate-resilient education infrastructure and digital platform to ensure continuity and equity in learning across the Pacific region. Leaders also supported the need to develop and implement a localized, culturally relevant curriculum that integrates disaster preparedness and environmental education in the Pacific.

22. Recognising the importance of a dedicated and skilled workforce, Leaders **supported** the prioritisation of pathways for degree attainment for teachers and continuous professional development and leadership training for teachers and school administrators. Emphasising the importance of regional collaboration and knowledge sharing to address common challenges, improved education outcomes and workforce retention, Leaders **reaffirmed** their support for the implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) as a key driver for achieving resilient, inclusive, and high-quality education systems that align with the region's 2050 Strategy.

23. Leaders **supported** the inclusion of Health and Education as a standing agenda item for the consideration of Leaders, annually.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

24. Climate Change continues to be a matter of priority to the Pacific region and relatedly, the issue of resilient development. Leaders **reaffirmed** the *Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific* (FRDP) as their commitment to inclusive and innovative approaches and solutions to the enhancement of resilience in well-being. Accordingly, Leaders **noted** the findings and recommendations from the FRDP mid-term review, including the

progress achieved under the Pacific Resilience Partnership.

25. Leaders **welcomed** the adoption of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and **strongly urged** all development institutions to build on this tool to better integrate factors for vulnerability into their consideration and decision-making processes.

Negotiations at the International Maritime Organisation

26. Leaders **noted** the update by the Republic of the Marshall Islands on the 6Pac+ Coalition proposal in the International Maritime Organization on the universal mandatory levy that aligns with the 1.5C trajectory pathway and noted the ongoing efforts.

27. Leaders **recognised** the urgency to complete these negotiations.

Bid to host COP 31 by Australia in partnership with the Pacific

28. Leaders **welcomed** the update by the Government of Australia on its bid to host the 31st United Nations Climate Change Convention Conference of the Parties (COP 31) in 2026, and further, its commitment to hosting it in partnership with the Pacific region.

Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction Ministers Meeting

29. Leaders **recognised** the need to coordinate regional efforts to effectively address disaster risks, manage humanitarian action and response, advocate for timely access to disaster risk finance, and meaningfully engage in international meetings. Building on this recognition, Leaders **endorsed** the Declaration by the Inaugural Pacific Disaster Risk Management Ministers Meeting. Leaders also **endorsed** the regularisation of the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Ministers Meeting on a biennial basis (every two years) supported by the Pacific Regional Disaster Managers Meeting, and further **supported** the role of a Pacific Ministerial Champion for Disaster Risk Management.

Sea Level Rise

30. Leaders **discussed** the broad-ranging nature of climate change and recognised that sea level rise is a severe manifestation of climate change that threatens Pacific communities, especially in low-lying nations. Accordingly, Leaders **agreed** to elevate the issue of sea level rise politically, including at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Leaders **welcomed** the dedicated High-Level Plenary Meeting on the theme “Addressing the Existential Threats posed by Sea-level Rise,” to take place on 25 September 2024 in New York.

31. Leaders **reaffirmed** the *2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise*, which affirms that “our maritime zones, as established and notified to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, shall continue to apply, without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate change-related sea-level rise”.

32. Leaders **further reaffirmed** the *2023 Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise*, which affirms that the “continuity of statehood in the face of climate change-related sea-level rise is consistent with important principles and rights of international law, including the right of peoples to self-determination, the right to a nationality, the protection of territorial integrity and political independence, principles of equity and fairness, the maintenance of international peace and

security”

33. Leaders **acknowledged** the unanimous Advisory Opinion delivered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in May 2024, clarifying obligations of all States relating to protection of the marine environment, which is of critical importance to addressing the threats posed by climate change-related sea-level rise.

34. Leaders **strongly called** for the inclusion of sea-level rise as a standalone agenda item in the UNGA and other relevant UN processes.

PACIFIC RESILIENCE FACILITY

35. Leaders **reaffirmed** their support and commitment for the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF), recognising it as the first Pacific-led, member-owned and managed and people-centred climate and disaster resilience financing facility. Leaders **warmly welcomed** the commitment by the UN Secretary General, H.E Antonio Guterres to Forum Leaders to support the capitalisation of the Pacific Resilience Facility.

36. Leaders **noted** the update on the PRF legal establishment and transnational arrangement and **directed** the convening of a Special Forum Economic Ministers Meeting to finalise the PRF legal establishment and transitional arrangements in consultation with Members.

37. Leaders **welcomed** the commitment by Australia (AUD\$100 million), Saudi Arabia (USD\$50 million), the People’s Republic of China (USD\$500,000), and the United States (USD\$5 million) to the facility in 2023 and further **urged** Forum Dialogue Partners to pledge its contributions to ensure the PRF initial financing target of USD\$500 million is met before 1 January 2026, with a longer term goal of USD\$1.5billion in capitalisation.

38. Leaders **further acknowledged** and **welcomed** the contribution by the Government of the Republic of Nauru on its pledge of AUD\$1million to be phased over 5 years towards the capitalisation of the PRF, the pledge on the provision of technical support by the United Kingdom valued at GBP1.3 million and an additional pledge by the United States of USD\$20 million.

39. Leaders **endorsed** the Kingdom of Tonga as the country of domicile for the Pacific Resilience Facility.

REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Ocean of Peace

40. Leaders **discussed** and **reflected** on the concept of the Ocean of Peace as developed by the Government of Fiji since its consideration by Leaders in 2023, noting the emphasis on increasing the region’s focus on the “peace” element of the “peace and security” efforts. Leaders **reaffirmed** their vision for a region of peace and **welcomed** the alignment of the concept for the Ocean of Peace with the 2050 Strategy, the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the 2000 Biketawa Declaration.

41. In recognising the importance of the principles presented through the concept for the Ocean of Peace, Leaders **tasked** the Secretariat to develop the draft concept on the Ocean of Peace Declaration for consideration by Leaders at the 54th Pacific Islands Forum in Honiara, Solomon Islands in 2025.

Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI)

42. Leaders **commended** the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police for their work and **endorsed** the PPI. Leaders also **noted** the need for further national consultation on how Members engage with the PPI.

43. Leaders **further directed** the development of an implementation plan, that would take into account the outcomes of the national consultations.

44. Leaders **welcomed** Australia's support for the implementation of PPI, including the establishment of a training centre in Brisbane; Papua New Guinea's offer to host Police Officer Training for Members at the Bomana Centre of Excellence; and the expression of interest by the Republic of the Marshall Islands to host a Regional Policing Centre of Excellence, as proposed in the PPI.

FISHERIES

45. Leaders **reiterated** fisheries as a critical shared resource and a source of sustenance and livelihood for Pacific economies. Leaders **noted** the outcomes of the 2024 FFC Ministerial meeting and Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM), including the draft Tuna and Coastal Fisheries Report Cards.

46. Leaders **supported** the need for enhanced inter agency cooperation, both nationally and regionally, to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of regional fisheries initiatives and **welcomed** the new Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Strategy including work to elevate and invest in increasing social benefits.

47. Leaders **commended** the adoption of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) Climate Change Strategy (CCS) and its implementation. Leaders **further commended** the implementation to date of the Pacific Regional Framework on Scaling-Up Community-based Fisheries Management (CBFM) and **welcomed** its extension for a further five years as a fit-for-purpose tool in coastal fisheries.

48. Leaders **reaffirmed** the importance of the East New Britain Initiative (ENBi), and welcomed the progress on implementation, including the ongoing work to establish the Regional Fisheries Development Fund.

49. Leaders **welcomed** the appointment of Mr. Noan David Pakop by the Forum Fisheries Committee Ministerial meeting as the incoming FFA Director General, and warmly acknowledged the services of the outgoing Director General, Dr Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN COMMISSIONER

50. Leaders **noted** the arrangements on the transition of OPOC staff and operations to its new location in the Republic of Palau as well as the update on the OPOC annual work programme, including the priorities and strategic outcomes addressed under the OPOC annual work programme and progress of work around the institutional strengthening initiatives.

51. Leaders **encouraged** the expeditious ratification of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement noting the important decisions that are expected to be made at the First BBNJ Conference of the Parties (COP 1) and **further encouraged** Members to utilise the coordinated support available through OPOC and the Pacific BBNJ Regional Partners in line with the Leaders' decision to meet their ratification, domestication or implementation

needs.

52. In relation to the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference, Leaders **endorsed** the proposed coordinated regional approach towards preparations for UNOC3 and **tasked** the Pacific Ocean Commissioner to coordinate closely with the CROP agencies and the Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) to ensure that regional preparations are as inclusive as possible to support Members' efforts at UNOC3, and to provide regular updates through the relevant mechanisms.

53. Leaders **noted** the preparations to date for the convening of the Deep-Sea Minerals (DSM) Talanoa, and the draft DSM Concept Note and Informal Working Group TOR that have been circulated for Members' comments.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAGATOI DECLARATION

54. Leaders **noted** the Lagatoi Declaration Pacific ICT and Digital Transformation Action Plan 2024-2030 which is designed to support and enhance the 2050 Strategy's Thematic Area on Connectivity and Technology and **agreed** that the Pacific ICT Ministerial Dialogue be integrated within the Forum Secretariat architecture.

55. Leaders **directed** the Forum Secretariat to work with Pacific ICT Senior Officials Dialogue on the development of a governance framework, taking into account the current review of regional architecture, for consideration and adoption at the 54th Pacific Islands Forum in 2025.

CANDIDACY FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

56. Leaders **welcomed** and **reaffirmed** their support for the Republic of Marshall Islands' candidature for the Human Rights Council for the term 2025 – 2027.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

57. Leaders **considered** Guam and American Samoa's applications for Associate Membership in line with the 2005 Leaders Policy on Associate Membership, the reports of the Forum Teams to Guam and American Samoa, and the Outcomes of the FOC and FFMM.

58. Leaders **endorsed** the membership applications of Guam and American Samoa with the understanding that the RRA is ongoing, which may have implications on the associate membership criteria, including entitlements.

NEW CALEDONIA

59. Leaders **noted** the update on the situation in New Caledonia by the President of the Government of New Caledonia, the Honourable Louis Mapou, and **reaffirmed** their continued call for order and stability to prevail as well as their continued commitment to provide support as necessary to New Caledonia.

60. Leaders **reaffirmed** the commitment to deploy the high-level Forum Troika Plus Mission to New Caledonia in line with the request of the Government of New Caledonia and **noted** the agreement of the French State and the Government of New Caledonia on the Terms of Reference for the Forum Troika Mission. Leaders **endorsed** the Terms of Reference for the mission.

WEST PAPUA (PAPUA)

61. Leaders **recalled** their decision from 2019 and 2023 and **noted** the update from the Special Envoys.

SMALLER ISLAND STATES

62. Leaders **reiterated** their historic and long-term recognition that the smallest and most vulnerable members of the Forum family deserve special attention and pledged to strengthen collaboration, cooperation and partnerships to support Smaller Islands States, through the 2050 Strategy, and to ensure that its priorities and challenges are advocated for and addressed.

63. Leaders **resolved** to elevate the visibility of the Smaller Island States, its priorities, challenges and contributions at the national and regional level to better inform targeted regional solutions and **called** for the recognition of the Smaller Islands States grouping across the regional architecture in the Pacific, to ensure concerted efforts and steps are taken to address and respond to our vulnerabilities and challenges.

64. Leaders **strongly urged** the Pacific Regional Organisations to target assistance within their work programmes to support SIS collective and unique priorities. Leaders **further invited** development partners and international agencies to also support the SIS priorities, including in the areas of transportation, education, health, climate finance and mobility, resource management, labour mobility and capacity building.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

65. 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.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

66. Leaders **welcomed** the confirmation of dates for the 54th Pacific Islands Forum and Related Meetings in Solomon Islands on 8-12 September 2025. Leaders **further noted** the invitation by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to attend PNG's 50th Anniversary celebrations on 16 September 2025.

67. Leaders **endorsed** Palau as the host of the 55th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and Related Meetings in 2026.

68. Leaders **endorsed** Nauru as the host of the 57th Pacific Islands Forum and Related Meetings in 2028.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

Bridge to Busan

69. Leaders **supported** the ongoing efforts of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in developing an internationally legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Leaders **supported** these efforts further by ensuring that the Pacific region presents a unified and strong position and recommended endorsing the "Bridge to Busan: Declaration on Primary Plastic Polymers".

International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion

70. Leaders **welcomed** the historic participation of Members to the ICJ written proceedings with 91 written submissions from States and International Organisations (IOs) submitted, making this advisory opinion the largest case in the history of the ICJ. Forum members represented over twenty percent (1/5) of the States participating.

71. Leaders **strongly encouraged** all Forum Members to participate in the ICJ advisory proceedings in respect of climate change by confirming to the ICJ Registrar by the deadline of 2 October 2024, members' participation in the oral hearings which are scheduled to begin on 2 December 2024 at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

Unlocking the Blue Pacific Prosperity

72. Recalling **support** for the Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity (UBPP) in 2023, Leaders welcomed the AUD 15M from the Great Barrier Reef Foundation earmarked for SPREP. This is in addition to the USD 100M from Bezos Earth Fund (BEF) and USD 125M from Global Environment Facility (GEF) announced at COP28 committed to UBPP goals of 100% sustainable ocean conservation and management; healthy Pacific people supported by robust food systems and resilient ecosystems; and fit-for-purpose financing in support of 2050 Strategy implementation. Leaders **called** on partners to support UBPP alongside other Pacific-led investment initiatives.

Correspondent Banking Relationships

73. Leaders **expressed** grave concerns about the negative socioeconomic impacts of the derisking and debanking in the region, particularly for Members who are facing the imminent risk of losing CBR and banking services.

74. Leaders **welcomed** the ongoing efforts to secure the regional CBR project that will be financed by participating FICs' International Development Association (IDA) grants and credits from the World Bank. Participating Member countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The project financing is US\$77 million, over a 6-year period.

Ease of Travel in the Region

75. Leaders **recognised** the importance of connectivity across the Pacific to build people-to-people links. Leaders welcomed efforts to improve access and mobility opportunities throughout the region for Forum Leaders and Officials.

*Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Vava'u, Tonga
29 August 2024*

REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE: PHASE 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Retain the Forum Leaders as the apex of the regional architecture, with delegated authority on sectoral matters given to endorsed sectoral Ministerial convenings under the close guidance of their respective Chairs and Governing Councils and supported by the respective Secretariats of Ministerial Meetings within the Regional System.

Recommendation 2: Retain the role of the Secretary General, as the primary conduit to and from the Pacific Islands Forum and CROP, supported by the other CROP Heads to ensure that robust policy advice is provided to the Leaders' and Leaders' decisions are implemented and effectively monitored.

Recommendation 3: The Forum Leaders Agenda be informed by global and regional developments, including the annual monitoring and reporting on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and that the arrangements of Forum Leaders meetings be managed and strengthened to ensure a member-driven process in the areas of: Communicate Drafting Protocols, Leaders Agenda Setting, Leaders Meeting Format.

Recommendation 4: Review the ongoing relevance of the Forum Associate Member and Forum Observer Categories within the Forum Architecture and its related criteria, and the application of this status across the full Forum Architecture.

Recommendation 5: Relevant civil society organisations and private sector (where relevant) be invited as Observers to relevant agenda items at the standing meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum at Ministerial and official levels and a set of principles for CSO engagement and Private Sector engagement be put in place to guide their engagement.

Recommendation 6: To support information sharing and greater complementarity between the work of sub-regional groupings and the Pacific Islands Forum, the Secretariats for each of the three sub-regional groups in the Pacific region be admitted as Observers to the standing meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum at the Officials, Ministerial and Plenary Level for Leaders.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen the integration of the Smaller Island States in the political considerations, governance processes, and the policy development dimensions of the Pacific Islands Forum and its architecture.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that the Forum Secretariat has appropriate resourcing to prioritise the coordination, reporting and communication on 2050 Strategy implementation, through an aligned PIFS Strategic Plan, organisational structure and capability framework; and that there is capacity in place across the other CROP agencies to effectively work with PIFS on the Strategy.

Coherent regional governance in support of the 2050 Strategy

Recommendation 9: Ministerial Meetings across Thematic Areas have oversight of the relevant sectoral progress towards Goals, System and People Outcomes as reflected in the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan:

- a. Provisionally endorse the regional ministerial level decision-making mechanisms in place across the 7 Thematic Areas and undertake a deeper analysis on the ongoing value and contribution of these existing ministerial meetings, including identification of gaps and/or duplications, and under Phase 3 consider options for change.
- b. New Ministerial level decision-making mechanisms (not included in the existing ministerial meetings) must be endorsed at Leader level and presented to Leaders with an appropriate business case and draft terms of reference for consideration.
- c. All sectoral ministerial meetings to include a standing agenda item on relevant 2050 priorities, regional collective actions and outcomes of Leaders meetings.

Recommendation 10: Consider and develop a process to approve any new Regional Commissioner roles, including an established set of criteria, to ensure that the role does not duplicate from existing regional mechanisms that may be in place.

Oversight of the Implementation the 2050 Strategy

Recommendation 11: The FOC Sub-Committee on the 2050 Strategy to have operational oversight of the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2050 Strategy and its Implementation Plan:

- a) Thematic Advisory Groups, chaired by the relevant CROP Agency and composed of regional implementing agencies within the specific thematic area, will be established with clear terms of reference to coordinate and collaborate with implementing agencies on the delivery of relevant goals and outcomes; to monitor progress at a thematic level towards the systems and people outcomes as identified in the 2050IP; to ensure that the Regional Collective Actions within the respective thematic areas undergo a systematic process of analysis; to develop an implementation plan, and work with the Forum Secretariat on requisite resource mobilisation; and to provide strategic advice and responses to Leaders' decision; and
- b) Have oversight of the Annual Report to Leaders on the 2050 Strategy which should include progress under each Thematic Area (both regional collective actions and existing regional initiatives) and an independent "deep dive" into 1-2 outcomes to examine progress and contribution to deepening regionalism. Every three years the report would assess progress against outcomes across the seven Thematic Areas.

Strengthened regional coordination to deliver on the 2050 Strategy

Recommendation 12: Under the guidance of the Forum Membership, update and implement the CROP Charter to reflect the governance arrangements for strengthened and coherent implementation of the 2050 Strategy, including the effective leadership and operations of the Thematic Advisory Groups and clarification of the mandates, roles and responsibilities of each CROP agency in support of the 2050 Strategy. Recommended updates include:

- a. The incorporation of agency reporting to their respective Governing Councils on the key initiatives progressed that contribute to the 2050 Strategy, including where appropriate collaboration with other CROP and/or non-CROP agencies on regional priorities; and
- b. The institutionalisation of an Annual Regional Calendar, that is informed by the work of the CROP agencies, including the Thematic Advisory Groups, and is provided for the information of Members to support strengthened planning and coordination on regional issues, and further, to ensure that the number of Regional Ministerial Meetings

held each year are well known in advance and spaced to reduce the impact, as much as possible, on smaller administrations.

Recommendation 13: Continue work to progress CROP Harmonisation, with clear accountability and reporting to CROP Heads and Members on prioritisation and timelines for implementation (potentially supported by external consultants where needed for detailed examination of options including costs and benefits).

Partnership and Engagement Mechanism

Recommendation 14: Endorse the concept of tiering the Pacific Islands Forum Dialogue Partners as reflected in the Partnership and Engagement Mechanism outlined at [Attachment 1](#) and direct the FOC to further refine the criteria and sub-criteria by December 2024 for provisional application and full implementation by the 54th Pacific Islands Forum.

Phase 3 of the Review of the Regional Architecture

Recommendation 15: Commission a third phase of the Review of the Regional Architecture to consider and provide recommendations on a rationalised Regional Architecture inclusive of CROP and Non-CROP agencies and regional convening platforms.

Attachment 1: Proposed Forum Partnership Mechanism

FORUM PARTNERSHIP MECHANISM

A. PURPOSE

This partnership mechanism sets out arrangements for the engagement of Forum Partners. It is intended to ensure that the Pacific Islands Forum engages with all its partners in the most strategic and effective manner.

B. PARTNERSHIP MECHANISM

Definitions

2. This partnership mechanism and its arrangements apply to the following:
 - a. Forum Observer Organisations
 - b. Forum Dialogue Partners
3. This mechanism and its arrangements do not apply to Associate Members and Forum Observers (countries and territories), as their engagement arrangements are treated through separate processes.

B.1. TIER STRUCTURE

4. Partners will be allocated in to one of the following two tiers:

| Tier 1 – Strategic Partners | Tier 2 – Sector Development Partners |
|--|---|
| Tier 1 partners will have development cooperation and investments in the region that cut across the 7 thematic areas under the 2050 Strategy. Partners who are eligible for this tier will likely demonstrate a clear political, strategic, or economic relationship with the Pacific. | Tier 2 will include partners whose support and commitment to the Pacific is specific to a sector or a programme area under the 2050 Strategy, or who engage with a smaller number of members. |

5. The tier structure will retain flexibility, whereby Members may agree to allocate partners from one tier to another based on their levels of engagement and responsiveness to Forum Leaders priorities. Furthermore, Tier 2 partners may also participate in Forum Leaders meetings at members' request.

6. Within this context, it will remain the prerogative of the Forum Chair to issue, in close consultation with the Forum Secretariat, one-off invitations to Special Guests who they may feel are able to contribute to the agenda and priorities of the Forum Leaders. Those invited as Special Guests will not be afforded partner status automatically and will be required to apply for Dialogue Partner or Observer status according to the process set out below.

Allocation to Tiers

7. The allocation of partners into Tiers 1 or 2 will be based on their ability to meet a set of criteria as agreed to by the Pacific Islands Forum. Furthermore, the process to allocate partners into tiers is as follows:

Existing Partners:

- Existing Forum Observer Organisations and Forum Dialogue Partners to be invited to provide a written and detailed response to criteria.

- The Secretariat to determine each partners' status based on a review and assessment of the responses and information received from each partner.
- A recommendation will be conveyed to Leaders by the Secretariat as to the tiering allocation for partners for their endorsement. Once endorsed, this determination will be conveyed to each relevant partner.

New Applicants:

- New applicants will be required to provide a written application to the Forum Secretariat to the stakeholder group they seek admission to. As part of their applications, applicants will be required to provide a written and detailed response to the criteria to determine which tier they are to be allocated to.
- The Secretariat will determine each partners' eligibility to stakeholder status and tier based on the review and assessment of the responses and information received.
- A recommendation will be conveyed to Leaders by the Forum Secretariat as to the tiering allocation for partners for their endorsement.

B.2. ACCESS AND PRIVILEGES

8. A key expectation for Members is that the Leaders' dialogue with partners be rationalised to an engagement with the most strategically important partners on the most critical issues, including resourcing and partners' alignment to Forum priorities. This expectation drives the setting of access and privileges to partners in this mechanism.

9. Accordingly, the tier structure determines the level of access and types of privileges that partners are given within the Pacific Islands Forum architecture.

10. Access and privileges given to partners in Tiers 1 and 2 respectively are set out below:

Access and Privileges - Tier 1 Partners

- **Leaders Meetings:** Tier 1 partners will be given ongoing access to the annual Leaders' dialogue with Partners, where they will engage on political and strategic issues of concern to the Blue Pacific and be in position to contribute resourcing and support towards Pacific priorities.
 - Tier 1 partners will be expected to participate in Leader's level dialogues at a senior level (Ministerial level for Forum Dialogue Partners, and Head of Agency level for other partners).
- **Ministerial Meetings:** Tier 1 partners will have automatic access to the relevant segments of Forum Ministerial meetings, given their capacity to engage across a range of sectors, and at different levels, including sectoral and technical.
- **Official/Technical Meetings:** Tier 1 partners will be given access to all relevant segments of the range of Officials/Technical level meetings within the Forum architecture. This applies only to those meetings that have a partnership dialogue arrangement.

Access and Privileges - Tier 2 Partners

- **Access to Ministerial Meetings:** Tier 2 partners will be given access to the relevant segments of the range of Forum Ministerial meetings, where there will be an expectation that they engage and contribute to thematic, sectoral and technical discussions.
- **Access to Officials/Technical Meetings:** Tier 2 partners will be given access to all relevant segments of the range of Officials/Technical level meetings within the Forum architecture. This applies only to those meetings that have a partnership dialogue arrangement.

11. At Leaders' request, tier 2 partners may attend the annual Leaders-level dialogue if their support is relevant to Leaders' priorities and discussions in any given year.

Summits

12. Partners will continue to be strongly encouraged to align to the Blue Pacific Principles for engagement in the convening of political level summits.

B.3. REPORTING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Reporting

13. To ensure transparency, mutual accountability, and consistency partners will report annually on the commitments and pledges that they make. Partners in both tiers will be required to report in this regard. A key guiding principle for reporting is that it aligns to reporting and monitoring for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, to ensure that partnership commitment, support and reporting continues to align to a common reference point.

14. To ensure this, it is important that dialogue agendas and priorities are aligned to the 2050 Strategy. Based on this, the Forum Secretariat will set out an annual reporting process, with clear timeframes, milestones, reporting templates and other requirements.

Accountability

15. An Accountability Framework will be established that sets out the respective political, strategic and legal instruments that establishes the parameters, terms and conditions of each partners' relationship with the Forum - bringing an elevated level of formality, consistency and mutual accountability to the various partnerships.

16. The specific instruments that partners are required to sign will be determined by the tier structure. Accordingly:

17. Tier 1 partners will have in place with the Pacific Islands Forum:

- An overarching **Strategic Partnership Agreement** that that sets out the broad strategic parameters and areas of political and development cooperation, aligned to the Leaders priorities as set out in the 2050 Strategy;
- One or more **Programming or Project Agreements** that elaborate specific technical areas of programming support and related reporting and accountability requirements.

18. Tier 2 partners will have in place with the Pacific Islands Forum:

- One or more **Programming or Project Agreements** that elaborate specific technical areas of programming support and related reporting and accountability requirements.

B.4. REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

19. A regular review of all partners will be undertaken on a quadrennial basis. The regular review process will also take into account new partners who seek to apply for partnership status with the Pacific Islands Forum.

FRAMING PHASE 3 OF THE REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Phase 3 will be structured around the following core elements/objectives:

1. Implementation of the 15 recommendations from Phase 2;
2. A comprehensive analysis of the existing institutional structures, arrangements and governance mechanisms that are part of the regional architecture and which operate alongside the CROP;
3. Strengthened understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the wide range of external partners active in the region and the development of effective engagement mechanisms to ensure that their support to the region is aligned to the Vision and Values as laid out in the 2050 Strategy; and
4. Undertake an in-depth consideration of the key political issues that shape and impact the regional architecture, above and beyond what has been undertaken so far in the review, with the intention to meet the objective of a fully effective fit-for-purpose regional architecture to meet the demands of the 2050 Strategy implementation. These issues include: Political Leadership and Unity; Forum Membership and Criteria; Strengthened Regionalism; and the Rationalisation of the regional architecture to foster increased effectiveness and efficiency.
 - i. **Political Leadership and Unity:** How can Leaders ensure that there is collective political leadership that is aligned to international law and unity to overcome shared challenges and disputes, as well as to maintain collective momentum on the 2050 Strategy? Are there key issues that divide the Forum Membership that need to be addressed?
 - ii. **Forum Membership and Criteria:** Is the current Forum membership appropriate to effectively lead the delivery of the 2050 Strategy? What is the ongoing relevance of the Forum Criteria for the Forum Associate Membership and Observer categories?
 - iii. **Strengthened Regionalism:** What can be done to promote and achieve regional integration in key sectors, given that the concept and practice of regionalism has remained mostly at the level of cooperation and coordination between Forum members around specific issues or in a limited number of sectors? What can be done to balance national sovereignty issues against the potential economic benefits of regional integration?
 - iv. **Rationalising the regional architecture to foster increased effectiveness and efficiency:** Is there scope to rationalise CROP agencies and/or review CROP agency membership? Is there scope to more formally recognise regional

institutions, networks and associations that fall outside the CROP network, as well as partners and other stakeholders who effectively (and could) support the implementation of the 2050 Strategy?