



PIFS GVA/8-2023

To : Forum Island Countries (FICs)
Date : 12 June 2023
From : Mere FALEMAKA, PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva
Subject: PIF-Geneva Update 2/2023

Please find attached, for your records, an update on the activities undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum – Geneva Office (PIF-Geneva) in March-April 2023.

2. For further clarifications or follow-up on Trade Negotiations, please contact me on mere.falemaka@pifs-geneva.ch
3. For further clarifications or follow-up on Aid-for-Trade, please contact Dr Andrea Giacomelli (Mr), Trade Policy and Aid-for-Trade Adviser on andrea.giacomelli@pifs-geneva.ch
4. For further clarifications or follow-up on PTI Europe, please contact Ms Jodie Stewart, PTI Trade Commissioner to Europe on Jodie.Stewart@pacifictradeinvest.com

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1. BACKGROUND

The Pacific Islands Forum Geneva Office ([PIF Geneva](#)) comprises two sections: Trade Negotiations and Aid-for-Trade (Aft). The Trade Negotiations section provides policy and technical advice on multilateral trade issues to Forum Island Countries (FICs) which are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and coordinates their participation in multilateral negotiations. The Aft Section promotes the establishment of regional initiatives in the priority areas of the [Pacific Aft Strategy](#) and assists FICs, individually and collectively, to make better use of Aft opportunities.

Some non-trade work commenced in 2019 and is limited to support advocacy on selected regional priorities such as climate change, oceans, and COVID-19.

In addition, PIF Geneva hosts Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) Europe. PTI Europe focuses on the development and promotion of Pacific Island exports across international markets in Europe and the United Kingdom.

2. REPRESENTATION

None.

3. WTO NEGOTIATIONS

During this period, the Chairs for the Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR) and the Committee on Agriculture – Special Session (COA-SS) held formal and informal meetings to progress the discussions on these key areas of negotiations under the WTO.

On [Fisheries Subsidies](#), two cluster weeks of fish meetings were held in March (20-24) and April (25-28) focused on advancing discussions on a conceptual basis. Specifically, the March Fish Week focused on “what” or “why” the WTO should address the remaining pillar of Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF), and the April Fish Week aimed to address “how” the WTO could tackle the OCOF pillar. During the March and April Fish Weeks several Members indicated their ideas or proposals in relation to the structure of the OCOF disciplines which they deem would move the negotiations forward, such as Australia, Norway, the 6LATS (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru and Uruguay) and India. The NGR Chair (Iceland) urged these Members to table their ideas as written submissions for the consideration of the Membership. In terms of the next steps, two more Fish Weeks will be organised before the summer break, to be held in June (5-9) and July (10-14). It is envisaged that the Chair would prepare and circulate a draft text after the summer break to be the basis of textual negotiations with the aim of completing negotiations by December 2023.

On [Agriculture](#), thematic seminars were held in March focussed on food security, public stockholding (PSH) and domestic support (DS) which were followed by dedicated sessions on PSH and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) and an informal open-ended meeting. Although there was agreement among Members of the need to deliver an outcome on Agriculture negotiations at the upcoming 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), there were still wide divergences on what the outcome could entail. Nevertheless, Members generally agreed that there should be targeted efforts towards addressing the issue of [food security](#) and its close link to other negotiation issues. In terms of the regular Committee on Agriculture, the March meeting endorsed Tonga’s request for inclusion in the [List of Net Food-Importing Developing Countries \(NFIDCs\)](#). The implementation of the work relating to paragraph 8 of the [MC12 Declaration on the Emergency Response to Food Insecurity](#) continued with a workshop held on 12 April focused on production resilience followed by a meeting of the Working Group on 17 April to discuss the financing challenges faced by LDCs and NDIDC to access seeds, fertilizers, farming equipment and necessary technology. The next meeting of the Working Group is envisaged for early June.

On the [TRIPS waiver](#), the General Council (GC) meeting held in March 2023 noted that more time was needed to decide on the extension of the waiver to therapeutics and diagnostic. This issue would

therefore remain on the agenda, with substantive discussions to continue in the TRIPS Council to find a concrete way forward by the next GC meeting in May 2023.

On the [e-commerce work programme and moratorium](#), the Facilitator (Mauritius) held two dedicated sessions on 22 March and 20 April whereby Members exchanged information and perspectives on e-commerce regulatory and legal frameworks as well as the Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions. In view of the sessions and consultations held so far in 2023, the Facilitator would report back to Members in May on the possible way forward in the lead up to MC13. Noting the requests from many Members to involve and seek input from relevant international organisations, a technical workshop inviting such organisations was envisaged for early June.

On [WTO Reform](#), the new GC Chair (Botswana) launched consultations in April with Delegations and Group Coordinators to gauge their respective views on how the MC13 could build on and deliver some elements of the reform mandate in the MC12 outcomes document. Many Members have reiterated that Dispute Settlement Reform remains a high priority area. Several Members also stressed the need for the ongoing dispute settlement informal process to be formalised well in advance of MC13.

Technical Support. During this period, PIF Geneva Office prepared six briefing notes for the Pacific Group in preparation for key meetings - annual Pacific dialogue with the European Commission in Brussels; the March and April fisheries subsidies discussions; consultation with WTO DG on Pacific priorities for MC13; as well as email briefs on various issues and ACP positions. The Office also coordinated two informal briefings with Pacific Missions to discuss and finalise the guiding points for April Fish Week. In addition, eight Pacific Group statements and talking points for key meetings held during this period including were prepared: General Council meeting on 6-7 March; Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development on 20 March; Committee on Agriculture on 27-28 March; meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee and Heads of Delegation on 19 April; and fisheries subsidies plenary and bilateral meetings held in March and April. The Office held an informal meeting with Pacific Delegates in the margins of the 46th Session of the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore held from 27 February to 3 March 2023 to introduce the consolidated matrix of Pacific comments to inform negotiations on the draft legal texts on traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. The Office also provided technical support to the Pacific Ambassadorial Group in Brussels during the annual Pacific-EU dialogue held in March with follow-up meetings held in April including one focussed on Trade issues. By request of Pacific Missions, the Office collaborated with the Cook Islands Mission to coordinate informal meetings in March and April to explore the possibility of engaging the Pacific to collectively request for the inscription of Kava on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO.

4. AID-FOR-TRADE

4.1 Projects

4.1.1 Implemented

Under the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#), a contract was awarded to further develop the Pacific regional e-commerce [database](#), and work commenced. Moreover, Terms of Reference for the establishment of two regional e-commerce sub-committees were prepared and submitted to members. Following PIF's accession to the [e-trade for all](#) partnership, the PIF-e-commerce program was [published](#) in the partnership's website.

Under the [Pacific trade Facilitation Initiative](#), a revised version of the draft regional strategy was presented to implementing partners, whose comments were subsequently received and incorporated in a final version.

4.1.2 Completed/Secured

The PIF and Australia [signed](#) an [AUD 103,000](#) grant agreement to support the Pacific Group with [WIPO](#) negotiations for the forthcoming [international legal instrument](#) on protection of traditional knowledge (TK), traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) and genetic resources (GRs).

4.1.3 Ongoing

Numerous project proposals were submitted during this period, including (1) two proposals to support members benefitting from the PIFS [E-commerce Toolkits](#) Plus program – including a proposal submitted to the EU SPIRIT project and one submitted to the PPIU; (2) one concept note to enhance the PIFS [E-commerce rules](#) program; (3) one proposal to the Standards and Trade Development Facility ([STDF](#)) to fund a project preparation grant ([PPG](#)) on the development of a regional apiculture project.

4.2. Apply! Demand-driven Aid-for-Trade facilities accepting applications

(1) [Standards Trade and Development Facility](#) (2) [Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation](#) (3) [Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility](#)

5. PTI EUROPE

In March, PTI Europe attended the [Professional Beauty Show](#) in London. ITC organized for a large presence at the Professional Beauty Show in London to include seven businesses, and PTI Europe successfully pitched to have five Pacific businesses be the beneficiaries of this. Before and during the event, PTI Europe co-ordinated and supported Pacific Islands businesses attending for a smooth visit to London as well as assisted them to maximise commercial and learning outcomes whilst there. Pacific businesses all sold out of their skincare products as well as met with B2B opportunities. This successful activity further cemented our professional relationship with ITC paving way for the possibility of future collaboration for similar activities for Pacific businesses.

In April the Europe Trade Commissioner attended a PTI Independent Advisory Board (IAB) meeting in Suva at Pacific Islands Forum. The PTI IAB is made up of four individuals who have industry knowledge and experience in Pacific corporate and private sector development. Their key roles are to provide governance and strategic direction to the PTI network. Following that, Trade Commissioner Europe conducted meetings Fiji jointly with an ITC representative, introducing her to businesses that have product fit and supply capacity to service UK and Europe. The purpose of the meetings in Fiji was to identify those businesses that can be further assisted to export to Europe and additionally identify key institutional and private sector stakeholders suitable for the second phase of UK [Trade Partnership Programme](#) in the Pacific. Investment Fiji provided excellent assistance on the ground in the lead up to and during the mission. Non private sector meetings included Pacific Community (SPC), Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, and Hon. Manoa S.N, Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs and Communications in Fiji. In total, 26 meetings were conducted with businesses in Fiji.