



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

2023 PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM WOMEN LEADERS MEETING

31 August – 1 September 2023

Suva, Fiji

OUTCOMES

The 2023 Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting (PIFWL) was convened on 31 August and 1 September 2023 at the PIF Secretariat in Suva, Fiji.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Cook Islands, and attended by Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

3. The Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and the University of the South Pacific (USP), attended as members of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP).

4. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC), and UN Women attended as Development Partners. The full List of Participants is at **Annex A**.

5. The Secretary General Henry Puna called the Meeting to order and invited the outgoing PIF Women Leaders Chair, Fiji, the Hon. Lynda Tabuya, to offer a few remarks and hand over the chairing responsibilities to the incoming Chair, Hon. Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown.

6. In opening the meeting, the Hon. Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown emphasised the significance of collective leadership for gender equality and the shared commitment to accountability in bringing to life the vision espoused under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (2050 Strategy).

7. Secretary General encouraged Members to draw on the many years of work and experience in addressing regional challenges and challenged participants to re-commit to prevent and end gender-based violence in our Blue Pacific. He referred to the consultation process to revitalise the *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration* (PLGED) and looked forward to its consideration by Members.

8. The Minister for Natural Resources of Niue, and Pacific Political Climate Champion on Gender and Social Inclusion, the Hon. Minister Esa Mona Sharon Ainu'u, encouraged innovation without compromising Pacific beliefs, and finding ways to work together to support those who need it. The opening remarks for all speakers are provided under **Annexes B – E**.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

9. Forum Women Leaders **adopted** the Annotated Agenda, attached at **Annex F** and **established** a Drafting Committee.

DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

10. Forum Women Leaders **welcomed** the views of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on strengthening partnership in implementing the revitalised PLGED and the 2050 Strategy.

11. CSOs presented the Key Outcomes from the Regional CSO Forum. They highlighted the need for resourcing and financing, social issues relating to labour mobility, women, peace, and security, Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), young women's participation, disability inclusion, faith, women's contribution to economic prosperity, climate change, and supporting rural and maritime women. The CSO statement is attached at **Annex G**.

12. Members **acknowledged** the fundamental role that CSOs play and **committed** to working together to resolve key issues raised and expressed in the CSO Statement.

13. Members **highlighted** the concerns on the ongoing nuclear legacy issues, which unduly stress existing health systems, impacting maternal and child health, and causing disabilities, further exacerbated by climate change.

SETTING THE SCENE: STRENGTHENING COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY, EQUITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OUR PACIFIC WAY

14. Members **welcomed** the inclusion of young people in the policy dialogue and appreciated their interventions whilst also acknowledging the efforts across the region to progress gender equality and social inclusion. In reaffirming their commitment to achieving equality and equity, Members recognised that much more needs to be done.

15. Members **supported** the need for Pacific-contextualised approaches that reflect our culture and values, further expressing that culture should not be a barrier to progressing gender equality actions.

16. The intergenerational and frank discussions **highlighted** the importance of inclusion through the engagement of men and boys to progress gender equality. Members and youth representatives recognised that evidence-based data and engagement with all our stakeholders are necessary to address ongoing challenges of gender-based violence, leadership, and defining gender equality in a Pacific context.

17. Forum Women Leaders **commended** the dialogue with the youth representatives who shared perspectives on innovative and transformative actions to progress gender equality and social inclusion and agreed to the following recommendations:

- (i) **considered** and **discussed** the three key issues emerging from the revitalisation of the PLGED consultations, which are defining gender equality in a Pacific context, gender-based violence, and leadership;
- (ii) **directed** the Secretariat to work with relevant partners to further consult with Members and relevant stakeholders on a definition of gender equality that is contextualised to and respectful of Pacific cultures; and

- (iii) **directed** the Secretariat to develop a joint CROP-UN annual work program, in collaboration with SPC and UN Women, on gender equality for better coherence and coordination.

SUPPORTING GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION MAINSTREAMING ACROSS KEY REGIONAL INITIATIVES

18. Systemic barriers continue to hamper the potential of women and girls, manifesting in many forms. The rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape, driven by challenges ranging from climate change and global economic shifts to geo-strategic interests highlights that the need for a GESI approach in policymaking is a pragmatic necessity for all Pacific people to thrive in political, economic, social, and cultural life.

19. The 2050 Strategy and key regional frameworks present opportunities to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) across all sectors so that the most vulnerable communities and marginalised groups are not left behind. There must be a concerted effort to break the silos and work collaboratively. This must include regional actions that are Pacific-grown and reflect the diverse Pacific contexts and realities.

20. Ensure GESI is embedded into the development of regional policies and initiatives and standardised across regional policy development processes and through all sectoral work. This should include strengthening opportunities for women and women machinery for simplified access to and benefit from funding and resourcing for the advancement of GESI priorities.

21. A shift to long term and sustainable financing is critical for our countries to be better prepared for the effects of climate change.

22. Gender responsive budgeting should be applied to the distribution of resources and access to funding.

23. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **acknowledged** the update on regional initiatives and the opportunities to mainstream GESI in current and emerging priorities, and within the context of the 2050 Strategy and the revitalised PLGED;
- (ii) **endorsed** that GESI is articulated and mainstreamed in the 2050 IP across all the seven thematic areas;
- (iii) **supported** the integration of GESI analysis in standardised regional policy development processes across all regional agencies, including all standing Forum Meetings, to ensure visibility of GESI benefits and actions to strengthen outcomes for the most marginalised;
- (iv) **supported** the inclusion of accountability frameworks as part of the GESI analysis across all regional agencies;
- (v) **supported** the mainstreaming of climate financing through the ministries of women; and

- (vi) **directed** the Secretariat to include GESI analysis in regional initiatives and all policy advice provided to Members, including to Pacific Islands Forum Ministerial and Leaders Meetings, articulating the GESI benefits and actions to strengthen outcomes for the most marginalised in Pacific communities and **proposed** sufficient resourcing is made available to the Secretariat to undertake the work.

REVITALISED PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION

24. At their 51st meeting, Forum Leaders **agreed** to revitalise the PLGED which they endorsed in 2012. Based on the outcomes of consultations with all 18 member countries, a revitalised Declaration is proposed for Forum Leaders' consideration.

25. Furthermore, and based on consultations, the next revitalised PLGED focus areas will reflect a contextualised version of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), as well as an alignment with the seven thematic areas of the 2050 Strategy.

26. The PIFWLM was **recognised** as the overarching governance mechanism for the PLGED, with Terms of Reference that would be further developed in line with the Review of Regional Architecture (RRA). Lack of ownership, political will, and visibility limited the progress under the 2012 PLGED Declaration. There is a need for greater accountability from Members to progress gender equality priorities through clearer and stronger monitoring.

27. Collective responsibility is critical to ensure that our countries realise the principles of the revitalised PLGED, recognising the intersectionality of all Pacific peoples. The women and girls of the Pacific are worthy of our best efforts to ensure the future that they deserve.

28. The importance of disability inclusion is **recognised** and must be actioned through a twin-track approach, notably as a standalone focus area as well as being a cross-cutting issue within the revitalised PLGED. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, comprehensive sexual education, human trafficking, domestic violence, and data collection are also pertinent and should be reflected in the revitalised PLGED.

29. Following feedback from PIF Women Leaders, the draft revitalised PLGED will be revised before it is presented to Forum Officials Committee (FOC). It will then be shared with Directors for Women for final feedback before it is circulated out of session to PIF Women Leaders before it is presented to PIF Leaders for their endorsement in Cook Islands in November.

30. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **commended** and **acknowledged** the significant efforts of the Secretariat in consulting Members in developing the revitalised PLGED; and proposed sufficient resourcing is made available to the Secretariat to coordinate the implementation of the revitalised PLGED;
- (ii) **considered** the draft revitalised PLGED, as presented in Annex 1 and noted the conveyance process to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders for endorsement;
- (iii) **agreed** on the process to review the PIF Women Leaders Meeting (PIFWLM) Terms of Reference within the first quarter of 2024, following Leaders endorsement of the 2050 Strategy IP and the revitalised PLGED;

- (iv) **supported** the approach to the development of the Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the revitalised PLGED and directed the Secretariat to develop the Implementation and Monitoring Plan after the 2050 IP is endorsed by Leaders, and considered the proposal to include a report card with gender data indicators to monitor progress, and include Members with gender parity and youth representation on a monitoring mechanism;
- (v) **encouraged** CROP to continue their support to the revitalised PLGED and gender equality actions, and recognised the critical role of the Pacific Platform for Action and the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, and the Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting play in relation to progressing gender equality; and
- (vi) **urged** the Chair of PIFWLM to present the meeting outcomes to the PIF Leaders Meeting in Cook Islands in November.

2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

31. The 2050 Strategy guides the region's long-term coordination, cooperation and planning across seven thematic areas, considering the unique challenges and opportunities in the Pacific. The 2050 IP is being developed through four Multi-Sectoral Expert Group (MSEGs) established to develop goals, outcomes, and regional collective actions across the thematic areas.

32. It will be consulted with Members, CROP, development partners, civil society, and private sector representatives before it is presented to Leaders for their endorsement at their meeting in November.

33. There was recognition of the Review of Regional Architecture (RRA), a three-phase process intended to examine and assure the necessary governance and resourcing arrangements to deliver the 2050 Strategy. The RRA aligns closely with the development of the 2050 IP, with the outcomes of each phase informing the next. The PIFWLM Terms of Reference will follow the RRA process.

34. A GESI analysis of the draft 2050 IP is underway to ensure that GESI is mainstreamed throughout. This is critical given the important role of Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, in achieving the objectives of the 2050 IP and mainstreaming the accountability frameworks across the seven thematic areas of the 2050 Strategy.

35. In this context, it is important to note that the revitalised PLGED is reflected as a regional collection action in the 2050 IP and a key driver for mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion across the seven thematic areas.

36. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **noted** the update on the work to develop the 2050 IP and the RRA;
- (ii) **discussed** and provided feedback on the draft 2050 IP to ensure gender equality and social inclusion is embedded and mainstreamed across the thematic areas of the 2050 Strategy, inclusive of the accountability frameworks and mainstreaming gender in all thematic areas; and

- (iii) **urged** the inclusion of gender in climate change, maritime security, human trafficking and cybercrimes and women as peace builders under the pillar of peace and security of the 2050 Strategy.

POSITIONING GENDER EQUALITY FOR STRATEGIC ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

37. The inaugural PIFWLM in 2022 **supported** the development of a gender equality advocacy and messaging strategy, which would be linked to the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) International Engagement and Advocacy Strategy and its processes to ensure gender dimensions are included and reflective of the current Pacific context.

38. PIF Women Leaders **noted** the importance of maintaining a collective voice to advocate issues of common interest including the disproportionate impacts and effects of climate change and disasters on women and girls in all their diversity.

39. The development of the Gender Equality Engagement and Advocacy Strategy and its Messaging Guide has been undertaken as part of the PLGED revitalisation process to ensure it aligns with the next iteration of the Declaration, and that the messaging on common issues is grounded on national positions. Members recognised the need for the Strategy to be adaptable in order to be used at national and local level to account for the diverse context of the region.

40. The PLGED revitalisation process has identified the thematic focus for the revitalised PLGED and its linkage to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and other global instruments, therefore providing a good basis for advocacy, engagement, positioning and messaging more broadly.

41. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **supported** the formulation of a Gender Equality Advocacy and Engagement Strategy, its Messaging Guide and to be adaptable to account for the diverse context of the region, and ensure it reflects the agreed key priorities as outlined in the revitalised PLGED and the seven thematic areas of the 2050 Strategy; and
- (ii) **directed** the Secretariat to utilise existing mechanisms to consult on and seek endorsement of the Gender Equality Advocacy and Engagement Strategy and its Messaging Guide, including in alignment with the Forum International Engagement Strategy and its Annual Action Plan.

PROGRESSING THE OUTCOMES OF THE PACIFIC WOMEN'S TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE AND PACIFIC MINISTERS FOR WOMEN MEETING

42. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) provided an update on the implementation of the outcomes of the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women (Triennial) under the frame of the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (PPA).

43. Since the last PIFWLM, key actions have been taken towards implementing the Triennial outcomes under the frame of the PPA. These key actions, include the commencement of the Pacific Women Lead Programme (PWL) in 2022 to support the implementation of the Triennial outcomes, the establishment of a grants initiative for actions to implement one or

more of the outcomes of the 14th Triennial Conference and the 7th Ministers for Women Meeting, implementation of the Women in Leadership (WIL) programme to enhance the representation of women in leadership roles within SPC, and the design of a Gender Equality Flagship Programme.

44. The SPC, as the custodian of the Pacific Platform for Action and Women's Human Rights (PPA), worked closely with the Secretariat for the revitalisation of PLGED to ensure closer alignment between the revitalised PLGED and the PPA.

45. Preparatory work has commenced, and updates were provided by the Republic of Marshall Islands and SPC for the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 8th Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting, to be hosted by the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands from 22 – 26 July 2024.

46. Members **acknowledged** the work of SPC on progressing the outcomes of the Triennial. Samoa updated Members on their plans for hosting the 2023 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and **requested** the support of CROP agencies towards their preparations.

47. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **noted** and **confirmed** continued support for the key actions taken towards implementing the outcomes of the 14th Triennial Conference and the 7th Ministers for Women Meeting;
- (ii) **supported** efforts to finalise the Triennial Implementation Plan and Tracking Tool; and
- (iii) **noted** the dates and preparatory work for the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 8th Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting.

OTHER MATTERS

(i) COUNTRY PAPER – FIJI: PACIFIC CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) SESSION

48. Women's equality remains a priority issue across the Pacific, as demonstrated by inclusion in the Leader's list of ten Commitments in the 2050 Strategy, ongoing implementation of the revitalised PLGED and widespread ratification of CEDAW. The Pacific session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) held in Samoa in 2020, demonstrated the value of regional sessions in creating the necessary conditions for accelerated implementation and realisation of rights.

49. A CEDAW session would create similar momentum around the gender equality agenda, and to take advantage of several other conditions outlined in this paper which make such an initiative timely. This would provide an opportunity for Member States and CSOs to observe the process and enable invaluable learning. The core funding and secretariat support for holding an extraordinary session of the CEDAW Committee in the region is secured, as is support within the CEDAW Committee and its secretariat.

50. Forum Women Leaders:

- (i) **supported** Fiji's proposal to hold an extraordinary session of the CEDAW Committee in the region in Fiji in 2025, funded by SPC;
- (ii) **supported** the nomination of Pacific Islands women candidates through an agreed process to the upcoming CEDAW, CRC and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Committee elections;
- (iii) **requested** the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to approve the CEDAW Committee to convene an extraordinary session in Fiji in the first half of 2025; and
- (iv) **tasked** SPC and the Secretariat to progress these initiatives, including, if the regional CEDAW Committee proceeds, through a Steering Committee comprising Fiji, the Forum Troika, SPC, PIFS, OHCHR and relevant Suva-based UN agencies.

(ii) PALAU: TALANOA FOR WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS: SHARING JOURNEYS TO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

51. Forum Women Leaders shared experiences of their political journey highlighting the challenges and the need for support and capacity building. There is a need for inclusive spaces for women, current and newly elected politicians, to share their stories and provide support to each other.

52. Recognising the low rates of women in political office across the region and the lack of support for women to navigate their political spaces, Women Leaders called for platforms to support women parliamentarians and those who wish to enter the political space.

(iii) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

53. The Republic of Marshall Islands raised its concerns regarding the release of Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) treated water into the Pacific Ocean from 24 August 2023, in the context of women and girls as the most vulnerable group in society.

NEXT MEETING

54. Forum Women Leaders **noted** that the Secretariat will advise on the arrangements for the next PIFWLM to be held prior to the 2024 PIF Leaders Meeting.

2023 PIF WOMEN LEADERS MEETING OUTCOMES

55. Forum Women Leaders **noted** and **endorsed** the Outcomes and recommendations of the PIFWLM which will be conveyed to the Forum Leaders' Meeting by the Secretary General consistent with the *2005 PIF Establishment Agreement*, as outlined in the PIFWLM Terms of Reference.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva
1 September 2023

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Vani Tuvuki
Fiji Council of Social Services (National)

Fay Volatabu
FemLink Pacific (Regional)

Emeline Siale ILOLAHIA
PIANGO (Regional/CSO Secretariat
Support)

SUB-REGIONAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

Melanesian Sub-Region

Peninnah Woyengu
PNG

Meriam Karie
Vanuatu

Micronesian Sub-Region

Myisha Mori
FSM

Ikela Misech
Palau

Polynesian Sub-Region

Fuatino Tangitau
Tonga

Sebastian Tonga
Tonga

**Remarks by the Hon. Lynda Tabuya
Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection, Fiji
Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting 2023
Opening Intervention**

The Secretary General Henry Puna Sir,
Honourable Vainetulai Rose Toki-Brown
Distinguished Women Leaders
Ladies and Gentlemen

Bula vinaka and welcome / welcome back to Fiji.

It is a distinct privilege for me to be here today in the presence of the formidable and inspiring women leaders representing our Blue Pacific at the 2nd Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

Coming together on this occasion holds indeed great significance. Our collective leadership for gender equality and our shared commitment to accountability are vital in bringing to life the vision of an equal, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable Blue Pacific, aligned with the aspirations of the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy.

I applaud the collaborative efforts that led to the establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders meeting as an annual stand-alone event within the Pacific Islands Forum of Leaders.

Last year marked a significant milestone for Fiji as we chaired the inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting, and I want to acknowledge the dedication of my predecessor, Ms. Rosy Akbar, during that historic occasion.

I also express my gratitude to Secretary General Henry Puna and his team for their support throughout our tenure and in the continued convening of the Pacific Islands Women Leaders annual Meeting.

As we build upon the foundation set during our inaugural meeting, I eagerly anticipate joining forces with all of you to seize the opportunities presented by this gathering. I am looking forward to a conversation and discussion that embodies openness, our shared Pacific values as islanders, constructive dialogue, and a resolute commitment with a focus on accountability and tangible outcomes in order to collectively champion the rights and aspirations of Pacific women and girls in all their diversity.

Passing the leadership torch to our esteemed chair for this meeting, Honourable Vainetulai Rose Toki-Brown, I offer my heartfelt congratulations. You can count on the full support of the Fiji delegation as you navigate and guide our discussions in the next two days.

Together, let's strive for a brighter, equitable, and inclusive future for all in the Blue Pacific.

Vinaka vakalevu

**Opening remarks by
Chair of the 2023 PIF Women Leaders Meeting,
the Hon. Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown**

Moemoea kanako ite enua ote tane. Tai mata e pipiri tai mata e kakana..

Sleep well on the land...sleep with one eye close and one eye open.

This is an encouragement chant from our islands, warning us to be alert, as leaders we must be on alert at all times.

- Hon. Jerryln Uduch Sengebau Senior, Vice President of Palau and Minister for Justice.
- Hon. Mona Ainuu, Minister of Natural Resources and Pacific Political Climate Champion for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion.
- Distinguished Ministers
- Excellencies,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corp
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

Kia Orana and Bula Vinaka to you all,

I am honored to be Chairing the first face to face Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting. While it may be a difficult task keeping a room of women leaders to schedule, I will do my best over the next two days to ensure we achieve the best outcome possible for us and all women in the region.

I want to take a moment to express our gratitude to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and all the people behind the scenes of this important event. Your tireless efforts in organizing this meeting, from planning our safe arrival to putting together this ambitious program is much appreciated. We see you.

I also would like to acknowledge the presence of our youth in the room, I had the honor of meeting the impressive and brave youth delegation yesterday. When I look into the eyes of the youth, I think about when I was their age and all the changes I wanted make for my people. Then I remember here I am. Here we are as Ministers and leaders, we are here in a strong position to help make their dreams a reality. Youth, we hear you.

To all the leaders in the room, particularly our women leaders. It has been a busy year. You not only hold leadership positions in your respective countries, you also hold roles in your community, your churches, sports clubs and you also hold important roles in you families, you are daughters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, I want to acknowledge the unequal burden of care you bear.

I understand you.

To all the men present, the male gender champions for change, from the beginning we were created to stand by each other, to support each. It is through the patriarchal design that got us here today is where we must also find the solution. For us to make meaningful and sustainable change, we must always include our men and boys, your perspective and understanding is key. We stand beside you.

The Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting (PIFWLM) is an essential regional event. This meeting serves as a preparatory event for the upcoming 52nd PIFS Leaders meeting in November of this year in my homeland, the Cook Islands. The outcomes and recommendations from our discussions will ensure our voices on gender equality, equity and social inclusion are heard at the highest levels. But I think we should think beyond the leaders meeting and consider how we can have our voices heard at all levels, from our leaders to our homes. How do we make the outcomes of this meeting make sense to the everyday woman? I ask officials and drafters to think about this. If we want to make meaningful change on the ground we need to change our approach. If you want to change the story

Let's work consciously on the use of terminology and acronyms.

Let us speak a language we all can understand –

That.... is true inclusivity,

thatis true leadership,

that..... is the Pacific Way.

Before I conclude, I would like to make a special acknowledgement to the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Mr Henry Puna, whose visionary leadership has made this gathering possible. The journey that was started in Rarotonga in 2012 when you were the Chair and Prime Minister continues...I am proud to now be Chair to continue the legacy.

In closing, Proverbs 16:3 says 'Commit to the Lord whatever we do and he will establish our plans. I commit all to the Lord all our deliberations and plans into his hands and above all thank him for bring us all here today.

I do believe each person in this room is meant to be in this room for a purpose. Your presence and contributions are invaluable, and together, I am confident that we will make significant strides in empowering Pacific women and girls in our Pacific Way, to forge a brighter, more equitable future for all our people. Let us see each other, hear each other, understand each other and lean in to each other, let us make history together.

Meitaki ma'ata, Vinaka vaka levu, thank you

Kia Orana e Kia Manuia.

Welcome Remarks by PIF Secretary General Henry Puna

- Thank you Hon. Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown, Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum,
- All protocols observed.
- Kia Orana and ni sa bula vinaka.
- I am honoured to welcome you all to your Secretariat and to the second (2nd) Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting. As your Secretary General, I extend my warmest greetings and appreciation to each of you for your presence at this vital gathering.
- I congratulate the Hon. Minister Vainetutai Rose Toki-Brown and the Government of the Cook Islands for assuming the role of Chair of this year's PIF Women Leaders Meeting. Your Secretariat stands ready to provide support in your tenure as Chair.
- I would also like to thank the Government of Fiji for chairing the first PIF Women Leaders Meeting last year, and for guiding our *drua* on its maiden voyage towards a more equal and inclusive Pacific. A real milestone.
- Without a doubt, our region faces numerous challenges, but it is also filled with immense potential. This Meeting provides us with a unique opportunity to discuss pressing issues facing our region, chart a course for sustainable development, and foster stronger collective action.
- You may notice that many of us here today are in black. Your Secretariat supports the *Thursdays in Black* global campaign to end gender-based violence. We stand in solidarity with survivors of violence as we continue to strive for a safe and secure Blue Pacific for all.
- Gender-Based Violence affects all of us - it affects our homes and places of employment, and limits opportunities for the most vulnerable.
- However, global evidence demonstrates that gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls, is preventable within years.
- It is not impossible, and we have many years of work to draw on. Some of this work was shared at the Pacific Partnership on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Prevention Summit, in April this year.
- There is no place for violence in our region, and it is on all of us to make that a reality.
- This is my challenge to all of us, this Thursday, 31st day of August, 2023. Let September bring with it new commitment to prevent and end gender-based violence in our Pasifika.
- This year marks the second convening of the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting, now endorsed by our Leaders as an annual standing Pacific Islands Forum meeting to inform the annual Leaders convening.

- At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge with sincere gratitude, the continued support provided to your Secretariat by the people and Government of Australia to enable us to convene this important meeting and ensure the outcomes from the Meeting are actioned. Vinaka vakalevu.
- Since the inaugural meeting in June 2022 and the Leaders meeting a month later, the Secretariat has undertaken a consultation process to revitalise the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, and I am pleased to share that the revitalised Declaration will be presented for your consideration before it is taken to Leaders later this year.
- Before I continue, I would like to thank you all for your full engagement in the consultation process. These consultations have shown that while we have made some progress there is still much more to be done.
- These have highlighted emerging issues on gender equality and social inclusion, which have shaped the revitalised Declaration, particularly on its focus and proposed governance mechanism, further positioning it as the high-level and overarching gender equality framework for the region, grounded in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, our North Star*.
- In closing, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of many. Our civil society continue to hold all of us to account for the commitments made; our private sector is leading the way to ensure women are provided opportunities to contribute to growing our Blue Pacific economies, and at the same time supporting gender parity in leadership positions; academia for ensuring that we have access to and utilise homegrown knowledge to inform our way forward; and all our people who continue their daily efforts to make gender equality and social inclusion a reality for the region.
- Only when we have gender equality and inclusion can we achieve Forum Leaders' vision for the Pacific – one that is resilient and of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy, and productive lives.
- I wish you all fruitful deliberations and your Secretariat stands ready to support you. I look forward to the outcomes that will undoubtedly contribute to the well-being of all Pacific people.
- Meitaki ma'ata, Vinaka vakalevu, thank you.

**Keynote Address by
Niue Minister for Natural Resources and the Pacific Political Climate Champion on
Gender and Social Inclusion,
the Hon. Minister Esa Mona Sharon Ainu'u**

Honourable Vice President Sengebau
Chair Honourable Rose Brown
Honourable Ministers
Excellency High Commissioners and Ambassadors
Secretary General Mr Henry Puna
The Ambassadors for Women and Girls
Distinguished Delegates from Forum Member countries
Ladies and Gentlemen

Fakaalofa lahi atu ke he higoa he ha tautolu a Iki ko Jesu Keriso kua maeke ia ia ke takitaki mafola mai a tautolu oti ke he motu Fulufuluola nai ko Fisi.

Warm Pacific greetings to our Beautiful flowers and the Toa Moanas of the Blue Pacific Continent.

At the outset I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the ancestors and leaders of these lands past and present for allowing this important talanoa to take place within these compounds

1. It is my honour and privilege to deliver the keynote address at this second Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

2. Indeed, it is wonderful that the meeting is held in person as I know COVID-19 travel restrictions kept the meeting a virtual one last year. It is very inspiring to hear that agents of change from across the region are gathered in this room – those from our region's political spaces, from civil society, and the amazing young people who are representing youth from their sub-regions! It is indeed a wonderful gathering of some familiar faces and some new friendships that I know we will forge this week.

I am particularly thrilled also that the policy dialogue today includes youth delegates. I understand that this is a first for any of the Forum meetings. Involving youth voices through inclusive and meaningful dialogue and engagement in our regional policy processes can only yield positive outcomes.

3. I can only say that we are on the cusp of true and meaningful change in our beautiful Blue Pacific.

4. As the Pacific Political Climate Champion for Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI), I have the honour of representing our region and GESI issues on the world stage and especially in our own regional dialogues because as my grandmother used to say, MONA don't shine bright walking on the road when your house is messy I think it sounded better in Niuean but you know what I mean''''So as much as I wish to wear my shiny earrings and bright lipstick out on the world stage it is more meaningful and important ALSO for me to help what I can in the pacific to promote and develop our vision. As we all know we share a very unique

relationship with our cultural understanding, AND when we see it is necessary to make changes to adapt to circumstances, we will do it and this is the TIME to DO it.

5. We all know we need to highlight the topic of inclusivity, to empower women and girls and enable our marginalized people through meaningful participation, in all aspects of life, including engagement in climate change action, decision making and leadership.

6. I am fully invested in this role. For me, it is an important opportunity to recognise our women and children and those who are often overlooked, persons with disabilities and older persons, and how climate change affects them. I whole heartedly embrace and applaud decisions that derives from OUR peoples experiences. Yesterday I was so fortunate to meet a ALL WOMEN FISHING CREW, I AM sure it's a first in the region, maybe in the world, and I know Director General Dr Manu Tupou Roosen will tell that story in her presentation. What a absolute inspiring story of the Pacific Women and Girls, taking on roles mainly dominated by our men. These are stories we need to tell, because we should make decisions from experiences and lessons learned, because that is how our ancestors have done it for so many years. We learned from our ancestors who made decisions from experiences and we teach our young the same values and understandings.

7. We should APPLAUD those who are pillars of households and communities. Our Women, those who carry life, those who nurture life, those who are there before, during and after life impacting events. Those who are much more impacted because of their mobility or those who experience the difficulties and challenges without complains because they are trying to live.

9. Excellencies, as the threat of climate change envelops us, I cannot stress enough the significance of integrating climate change into the various sectors to allow all Pacific people, not just women and girls, to strengthen whole-of community resilience. I have been to 7 high level Ministerial meetings with different agendas in the last couple of weeks this is the eighth but one topic that continues to emphasize those discussions involve climate change, at parliament, at fisheries at meteorology, at community lead events, and today at the women leaders forum, and I am so glad to see so many women and most will know, been the only woman in many of the Ministerial meetings in areas dominated by men, is okay, but we need to allow our women to be at the table. We have only 40 women Parliamentarians in the Pacific and we need you to be the 40 or more sitting at some of the critical discussions.

At this juncture I would like for us to acknowledge our support for women leaders who are leading roles that have been predominantly held by men. There are too many to acknowledge individually but I applaud each and everyone of you.

Climate change, gender inequality and social exclusion are interwoven challenges. The Blue Pacific Continent and the world will not meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal, or any other goal, without the full contribution of women and girls, persons with disabilities, young people and our older citizens.

- Pacific island countries have committed to a gender-responsive and socially inclusive approach to the climate crisis. One that recognises women's and marginalized groups' agency, knowledge and leadership.
- It is important to ensure and facilitate their active, meaningful participation in all stages of climate change and disaster actions. This is so any funding, actions and support is

to reach and meet the needs of the most marginalized and the grass roots community. In turn making greater impacts for our people.

10. This includes Education: an important aspect of knowledge, learning and awareness for young Pacific children and youth especially in relation to the climate change crisis.

11. Health: having appropriate, accessible, quality and affordable healthcare as we face the effects of climate change and other shocks; and Finance: for planning and appropriate resource allocation that supports our people and their needs including simplified access to climate finance.

2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

13. This is a watershed moment for us in the Pacific. In recognising the challenges and the potential of the region, Forum Leaders have led the way for us to determine the need to chart our own course, on our own terms. Their endorsement of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as the blueprint to advance Pacific regionalism for the next three decades – articulates the region’s long-term vision, values, and thematic priorities.

14. I know the work underway to develop the implementation plan and monitoring framework for the Strategy has been an inclusive, consultative, and robust process, firmly centred on the needs and aspirations of our Pacific people. In doing so, it is important to recognise our women and children in all that we do.

15. Accelerating gender equality and social inclusion is critical to the realisation of our 2050 vision and ensures all Pacific peoples are empowered to fully participate and benefit from development outcomes.

Leadership

16. Thinking back on my own story, becoming a political leader in my country, Niue, and taking on the mantle of Pacific Political Climate Champion on Gender and Social Inclusion, I strongly believe that women and girls, in all their diversity, are capable of any leadership and decision-making roles of their own choosing including political leadership and need to be provided with the enabling environment to attain leadership positions.

17. As policymakers and legislators in our own countries, we must be the change we wish to see in our region whether it is through identifying measures to increase women’s participation at all levels of leadership and decision-making including political representation. senior positions in the public and private sectors and within local and communal governance systems – right across the leadership spectrum.

Engaging young Pacific people

18. Excellencies, I am a strong advocate for empowering Pacific youth. Half of the Pacific population is under 25. There are many young people who are not waiting for tomorrow – they are leading the way today! In the fight against climate change, in the plans for Disaster Risk Reduction, and in the ongoing push for gender equality and social inclusion - they are the passionate advocates who will steer this Vaka for us as we make our way to 2050.

19. I gladly recall that Forum Leaders recognise the need to create space for young people to meaningfully participate and contribute to decisions that will affect their future. I am so pleased that we have youth representing our sub-regions. I wish you abundance of positive strength to carry the flags of each country in your sub-region through your aspirations of leadership and agents of change. Women and girls, in all their diversity, are already leaders in their communities and can be powerful agents of change. Efforts must be made to ensure that they are meaningfully represented in decision-making spaces and that their contributions are considered. In saying this, I fully recognise the importance of engaging men and boys to progress gender equality and social inclusion.

21. As women, and importantly as leaders, we have so much to give. Unfortunately, for many of our women across the region, they have very limited opportunities or spaces to share what they think. We need to make sure that they have access to those opportunities and spaces; and if they're not there, well, it's time that we create them for ourselves.

22. In true Pacific fashion, there is time for talanoa and there is time for action. Let us dare to be innovative without compromising what we believe in. Let us find ways to work together to support those who need it. I wish you every success as you deliberate and discuss these two days. May the outcomes of this important convening continue to drive the work that is underway for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity.

Fakaaue Lahi Kia fakamonuina mai he Atua.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM WOMEN LEADERS MEETING

31 August –1 September 2023

**“OUR PACIFIC WAY: STRENGTHENED COMMITMENT TO GENDER
EQUALITY, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION.”**

PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

Day 1: 31 August 2023

1. **Opening** (9:00am - 10.00 am)
The Chair will call the meeting to order, and opening formalities will be observed.
2. **Photograph & Morning Tea Break** (10.00am - 10.30am)
3. **Adoption of Agenda and Meeting Timetable** (10.30am - 10.40am)
4. **Dialogue with Civil Society** (11.00am – 12:30pm)

Lunch break (12.30pm – 1:30pm)

5. **Setting the Scene: Strengthening commitment to gender equality, equity and social inclusion our Pacific Way.** (1.30pm – 5.00pm)

An intergenerational discussion on three key policy issues identified through the PLGED consultations and to inform policy actions. The three areas are:

i. **Defining gender equality in a Pacific context**
To consider and discuss a common understanding of gender in the Pacific context.

ii. **Gender-Based Violence**
To consider and discuss what can be done differently to address Gender Based Violence in the region given the high rates of violence. What has worked and what has not? What do we need to do differently?

iii. **Leadership**
To consider women’s leadership, ensuring that the concept of leadership is not limited to political leadership but considers leadership at all levels and sectors.

Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(23)PIFWLM.5

Drafting Committee meeting

Day 2: 1 September 2023

A. Regional/ Strategic Policy Setting

- 6. Key regional initiatives (9.00am – 10.00am)**
Update and invite PIF Women Leaders to consider opportunities for mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion across key regional initiatives.
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23) PIFWLM.6
- 7. Revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (10.00am – 11.00am)**
To consider the draft revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, as mandated by the 51st Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, for further discussion through the Forum Processes prior to Forum Leaders consideration.
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23)PIFWLM.7
- 8. 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (11.00am – 11.30am)**
To consider and discuss an update of the Implementation Plan for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23)PIFWLM.8

Morning Tea Break (11.30am – 11.45am)

B. Regional Advocacy on Gender Equality and Equity

- 9. Positioning Gender Equality for strategic advocacy and awareness (11.45am-12:00pm)**
To consider the role of cohesive and collaborative advocacy and engagement to strengthen gender equality actions.
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23) PIFWLM.9
- 10. Progressing the Outcomes of the Pacific Women’s Triennial Conference and Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting (12.00pm – 1.00pm)**
Presents the update of actions to address the Outcomes of the 14th Pacific Women’s Triennial Conference and 7th Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting and the recommended actions for Leaders’ attention.
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23)PIFWLM.10

Lunch Break (1.00pm – 1.30pm)

11. Any Other Matters

- i. Country Paper – Fiji: Pacific CEDAW Session (1.30pm – 2.00pm)**
Please refer to the meeting paper PIFS(23)PIFWLM.11(i)
 - ii. Palau: Talanoa for Women Parliamentarians: Sharing Journeys to Political Leadership (2.00pm – 2.45pm)**
- 12. Next meeting and Adjournment of Meeting (2.45pm – 3.00pm)**

Afternoon Tea Break (3.00pm -3.30pm)

- 13. Consideration and endorsement of the 2023 PIFWLM Outcomes** (3:30pm – 4.30pm)
Women Leaders to consider and endorse the 2023 PIFWLM Outcomes document prepared by the Drafting Committee.

- 13. Closing of 2023 PIFWLM** (4.30pm -5.00pm)

Press Conference post-closing

*Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
31 August 2023*

STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The Pacific is at the frontlines of the climate and ecological crisis, sitting at the nexus of worsening disasters, accelerating biodiversity loss, and threats to our ecosystems and the entire living Planet, all compounded by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and in some places, the long-term impacts of coloniality and conflict.

“We want to live peacefully and be safe. Safe from the adverse impacts of climate change because we are experiencing a climate change crisis that have tremendous impact on our land, our resources, our health, our livelihoods, our way of life, and our culture. We want to live sustainably and for our environment to be clean and the resources of our land and ocean to be used in a sustainable way so that future generations can use those resources to sustain themselves.”

We also want to be safe from all forms of violence within our homes, in our schools, in our workplaces, and in the public space. We need to take measures to address cyberbullying in particular towards women and girls who are the main targets.

Any work on gender justice, women’s human rights and gender equality must operate across humanitarian, disaster, development, and peace contexts. Our lived experiences, countries and peoples must not be siloed into “projects, "issues" or "parts of a programme cycle.” This work is now beyond urgent.

We draw attention to the global backlash against human rights and gender equality and this needs strong regional and national commitments and solidarity from Pacific Leaders, CROP and UN Agencies to address any backlash against gender equality and women’s rights including by progressing ratification and implementation of CEDAW, ICPD and CRPD.

Climate injustice poses the greatest immediate, urgent, existential threat to all communities in the Pacific and globally. This exacerbates existing socio-economic disparities and inequalities, including between urban, rural and maritime areas, and undermines long-term resilience and economic justice. The science is clear that use of fossil fuels is responsible for the climate emergency.

Accessible and appropriate technology is also an inclusive accelerator of change for women in the existing initiatives amplifying their voice and outreach, as well as enabling diverse women’s leadership in community-led responses to climate change including young women. Young women have an important role to play in ensuring targeted and appropriate humanitarian responses.

“Ahead of the twin cyclones TC Judy and Kevin, Flora Vano, the Country Manager of ActionAid Vanuatu activated the Woman Wetem Weta system in Port Vila for her network of women leaders across Vanuatu demonstrating how unlike when TC Pam hit Vanuatu in 2015, women leaders in local communities are now equipped with their information and communication system to lead community preparedness and response. Woman Wetem Weta and has been adapted through cross-coalition learning from the through the Shifting the Power Coalition. It is part of the government-led national disaster management’s communications cluster to ensure early warning and preparedness messages reach communities with information from Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department

and is a national women-led mechanism of the preparedness and protection work of the Women I Tok Tok Tugeta (WITTT) forum”

Pacific feminists including Indigenous women human rights defenders are at the helm of self-determination movements, such as in West Papua, Kanaky New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea & Bougainville, First Nations people of Australia and others.

Peacebuilding and demilitarization movements call for accountability from nuclear testing and waste disposal; deep-sea and land-based mining, and call for decoloniality, indigenization and reclamation of culture, language, values and ways of life, among others.

The Pacific's struggle for decolonization and independence encompasses various aspects, including reclaiming land and resources, asserting the right to exist, striving for political freedom, decolonizing culture and institutions, advocating for reparations, promoting collective healing, opposing extractive industries and trade, and resisting violent militarization and securitization.

This includes ensuring there are dedicated demilitarized and peacebuilding financial resources for women's civil society leadership to lead implementation of peace and security commitments at national, regional and global level.

“The establishment of the Pacific Women Mediators Network draws on experience and learning from the development but lack of resourcing in the implementation of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2012 – 2015). We will draw on our collective experience and expertise to build capacity and sustain channels of engagement, so that national action, including those responding to climate and humanitarian crises, are informed by and includes national and local women leaders who are resourced to lead civil society action. We feel this is both important in the development of the Pacific Forum Leaders Blue Pacific Strategy; the integration of the Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Rights , in the revitalisation of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration ; and the localisation of the Boe Declaration Action Plan, all of which contribute to building just, transformative and sustainable peace.”

We reaffirm the need for ongoing and dedicated investment in dialogue with faith-based and religious groups throughout the Pacific to build collective understanding and application of gender equality and women's rights.

“The Pacific Church leaders meeting held in December 2022, reaffirmed their commitment to the protection and flourishing of all our vulnerable communities in the Pasifika Household and see church as engaging partners on eliminating violence against women and children and all vulnerable members of our community. Pacific Church leaders also reaffirmed their support to create more intergenerational spaces and opportunities for young people to develop and strengthen their leadership capabilities”

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are human rights. They are essential for sustainable development because of their links to gender equality and women's wellbeing, impact on bodily autonomy and integrity, sexual decision making, maternal, newborn, child, and women's health throughout the life cycle, and their roles in shaping future socio-economic and ecological sustainability, development and climate justice.

Yet, progress towards fulfilling SRHR for all has been stymied because of weak political commitment, inadequate resources, persistent discrimination against women and girls in all

their diversity, and an unwillingness to address issues related to sexuality openly and comprehensively. There are many groups of women and gender diverse people who experience exacerbated and intersectional discrimination.

Women and girls with disabilities continue to be left behind when accessing health services, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as sexual and reproductive health services and information. This leads to discrimination exacerbated through attitudinal barriers and the lack of awareness of service providers. Women with disabilities experience discrimination and lack of access to appropriate medical care throughout pregnancy, during and post birth due to stigma and lack of understanding of their specific needs.

The Way Forward

Collaboration with the diversity of Pacific Island Civil Society, including feminist-led coalitions and networks who bring together the diversities of women is an opportunity.

to accelerate progress to achieve gender equality in the region including by supporting the production and dissemination of relevant gender statistics and gender data analysis, and research on priority gender equality and intergenerational issues.

“We want to work and earn incomes. We want to have the means to sustain our families and communities through decent jobs and the development of economic opportunities that lift and empower our communities and respond to our needs.”

An effective and well-funded multistakeholder approach that prioritizes intergenerational and intersectional leadership in both national and regional political arenas can be instrumental in ensuring the inclusion and active engagement of Pacific Women's Organizations (PWO) and Disabled People's Organizations (DPO), PIDSOGIESC communities.

By involving these organizations in co-creation processes (in planning/design and implementation and monitoring/evaluation), shaping policy and funding directions for the Blue Pacific Strategy, we leverage their unique position to connect with the millions of women living across the region. This approach builds further on the richness of their work and further supports them to contribute meaningfully to fostering secure and sustainable lives for themselves and their children.

“Since 2015, four out of 12 Pacific Sendai Framework Monitor (SFM) reports have addressed disability data. However, most simply confirm no data is available. Nauru reported the livelihoods of 15 persons with disabilities had been disrupted or destroyed by disasters. Double disaggregation is not possible in the SFM. For example, from those 15 persons with disabilities impacted we cannot say how many were women. The DesInventar Sendai database includes options for reporting against disability, including deaths, missing, and injured persons with disabilities. Currently, only Samoa has included data for persons with disabilities. This is for three persons with disabilities whose livelihoods were impacted by disaster (...) There is also a need for sustained flexible feminist funding models to ensure the autonomy of diverse feminist-led efforts in their community, country and region to ‘shift the dial’ towards greater equity for women and girls in all their diversity.” – Pacific Disability Forum