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FORTY-THIRD PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS

28 – 30 AUGUST 2012

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Forty-Third Pacific Islands Forum was held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 28 to 30 August 2012 and was attended by Heads of State and Governments of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu. The Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanuatu were represented by their respective Deputy Prime Ministers. The Republic of Palau was represented by its Minister of Justice. New Caledonia and French Polynesia attended the formal session as Associate Members. American Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group, Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations (UN), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the World Bank attended as Observers. The Forum Retreat was held on Tapuaetai Island in Aitutaki.

2. Leaders expressed their deep gratitude to the Prime Minister, the Government and people of Cook Islands for the excellent arrangements made in hosting the 2012 Leaders' meeting, and for the kind hospitality extended to them during their stay in Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

3. Leaders expressed their condolences to Australia and New Zealand on the recent loss of lives in Afghanistan.

PACIFIC PLAN

4. Leaders noted the Pacific Plan Annual Progress Report and its focus on the relationship between the Pacific Plan, the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and further noted a number of achievements over the course of the last twelve months, including:

(a) progress in implementing the Waiheke Declaration on Sustainable Economic Development, endorsed by Leaders at their annual meeting in Auckland in 2011, through initiatives in both productive and enabling sectors;

(b) progress in implementing the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change, including efforts towards integrating regional disaster risk management and climate change frameworks and improving access to and management of climate change finance;

(c) implementing the Pacific Oceanscape Framework and other relevant ocean agreements, which has helped support international recognition of oceans in the PALM6 Declaration and the Rio+20 Meeting; and

(d) successfully implementing the Forum Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific, including through peer reviews and public expenditure and financial assessments.

5. Leaders welcomed the Regional Legislative and Regulatory Framework for Deep Sea Minerals Exploration and Exploitation identified as a Pacific Plan priority action in 2009 and thanked the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the European Union (EU) for the assistance towards the Framework. Leaders recommended that Forum Island Countries (FICs) consider using the Framework in formulating relevant national policy noting it highlights the need for a precautionary approach and addresses economic, social and environmental aspects to ensure sustainable resource use prevails.

6. Leaders agreed that the medium-term priorities that they endorsed in 2009, including their subsequent decisions, remain relevant and should guide regional efforts until the outcomes of the review of the Pacific Plan are finalised.

7. Leaders considered the terms of reference for the Pacific Plan Review and agreed that the draft final report of the review, including a refreshed draft of the Pacific Plan, will be presented to Leaders at their meeting in 2013. Leaders agreed to the importance of the Review and that it would be led by Sir Mekere Morauta of Papua New Guinea.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FORUM COMPACT

8. Leaders considered and endorsed the *2012 Tracking the Effectiveness of Development Efforts in the Pacific Report*, and the *2012 Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Tracking Report*.

9. Leaders considered the following key messages on achieving the MDGs:

(a) there is an urgent need to accelerate progress and get behind a 'final push' to achieve the MDGs by 2015;

(b) efforts should focus on: targeting pro-poor economic growth; creating jobs and improving social safety nets; providing fee-free education to ensure universal primary education; addressing gender inequality, in particular gender-based violence; improving child and maternal health;

(c) increased investment in basic infrastructure to improve access to water and sanitation and energy; and

(d) strong political leadership is the catalyst for achieving the MDGs.

10. Leaders also considered the following key messages on improving effectiveness of development efforts in the region:

(a) recognise the enhanced leadership of FICs in development coordination, supported by the Forum Compact, including through strengthened development planning and budgets, public financial and aid management systems;

(b) acknowledge the need to improve the links between plans, budgets, and results; develop and implement aid policies; and better manage engagement with development partners, including the number of country missions;

(c) while recognising the efforts of development partners to improve development coordination, urge them to continue to focus on: improving the predictability of their aid; reducing and coordinating the number of missions; improving risk sharing through the use of country systems; and accepting the need for FICs to manage aid to suit their capacity; and

(d) develop inclusive and mutually accountable partnerships, recognising the important role of new and emerging development actors, as well as civil society and the private sector.

11. Leaders commended the active participation of Forum Members at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011 and acknowledged the role of the Forum Compact as a regional platform for advancing aid effectiveness principles. Leaders also acknowledged the Pacific's representation on the newly formed global governance framework for effective development cooperation and welcomed in particular Samoa as the Pacific's representation on the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Leaders were encouraged by the expressions of interest by some development partners to be included in the peer review process.

WAIHEKE DECLARATION ON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

12. Leaders recalled the Waiheke Declaration on Sustainable Economic Development adopted at their meeting in 2011. They also acknowledged progress made by Members, with the support of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and development partners, towards sustainable economic development.

13. Leaders acknowledged and supported the Forum Economic Ministers appropriate recommendation for the establishment of the Technical Working Group on the Waiheke Declaration.

14. Leaders welcomed the offer from New Zealand to host a Pacific Energy Conference in April 2013. This Conference will showcase progress in the region towards the goal of improving access to clean affordable energy and will mobilise additional support to further reduce the Pacific's dependence on fossil fuels.

THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)

15. Leaders welcomed the important outcomes of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) for the Pacific, including reaffirmation of the special case for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), an emphasis on oceans, and the decision to develop Sustainable Development Goals.

16. Leaders welcomed the decision of the Rio+20 Conference to convene the Third International Conference on SIDS in 2014. They fully endorsed the hosting of the Conference in the Pacific region and gave their full support to the Pacific Island country selected as the venue for it. Leaders gave their strong support to the full and active participation of all FICs in the 2014 Conference and its preparatory process.

17. Leaders further recognised that the effectiveness of this important Conference would require a thorough, comprehensive and well focused preparatory process and adequate financing to enable strong national and regional participation.

18. Underlining the importance of the Conference, Leaders called on development partners and the wider international community to demonstrate their support for the success of the 2014 Conference and its preparatory process.

19. Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with CROP and UN agencies, to work closely with FICs to develop a Pacific position on the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and to contribute effectively to the relevant global processes, including the 68th UN General Assembly in September 2013.

20. Leaders called on the UN system to clearly map out a merged process for the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals paths at the 67th UN General Assembly. Leaders also called for Pacific representation on the Sustainable Development Goals Working Group and the Finance Working Group proposed in the Rio+20 outcome document. Leaders acknowledged the importance of the review of the Pacific Plan in 2013 as an opportunity to encompass global developments and to better influence the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in the Plan.

REGIONAL FISHERIES

21. Leaders called for science-based management action to address overfishing, including the adoption of appropriate management measures by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Leaders called on Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFNs) fishing within the Western and Central Pacific region to:

(a) fully recognise and support the sovereign rights, national laws, and development aspirations of SIDS; and

(b) ensure that Commission measures do not result in the transfer of a disproportionate burden of conservation responsibilities on such States.

22. Leaders noted progress in renegotiating the terms of the US Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries and directed officials to continue the negotiations on remaining outstanding issues with a view to seeking agreement on an appropriate level of payment for the fisheries resources of the region commensurate with their great value. Leaders also agreed that the current distribution formula for the internal distribution of the Treaty funds among Pacific Island Parties be maintained.

23. Leaders expressed concern over ongoing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Special Management Area of the eastern high seas pocket and the exclusive economic zones of the Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Kiribati. Leaders commended the efforts undertaken thus far by both Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) members and DWFNs to adhere to the principles of ensuring the long term sustainability of the highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific ocean, and urged continuation of such efforts. In that connection, closing off the Eastern high seas pocket to any form of fishing activity by the DWFNs in the foreseeable future would be a significant step in that direction.

24. Leaders expressed concern at the damaging effect of IUU fishing, and endorsed the need to continually enhance the effectiveness of monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement capabilities in the region. Leaders also acknowledged regional achievements supported by the FFA and the SPC, and recognised the need to support progress through devoting greater attention and resources to:

(a) improving coastal fisheries management and development in support of food security and sustainable livelihoods;

(b) encouraging increased investment in Pacific fisheries and oceans in alignment with national and regional priorities; and

(c) securing region-wide market access for Pacific fisheries products through the active cooperation of relevant states

25. Leaders acknowledged the ongoing assistance provided by Australia and New Zealand to support the fisheries management work of the FFA and SPC.

REGIONAL POLICIES ON OCEANS AND THE OCEANSCAPE INITIATIVE

26. Leaders welcomed the positive outcomes from Rio +20 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and fisheries, and agreed to use these outcomes to build global consensus on the importance of sustainable development of the Pacific Ocean for the benefit of the peoples of the Pacific. Leaders also welcomed the recent progress of the Oceanscape initiative, including the political commitments of Member states, supported by the efforts of the Secretary General of the Forum Secretariat as Ocean Commissioner and of the regional technical agencies.

27. Leaders welcomed Cook Islands' theme for the 2012 Forum of "*Large Oceans Island States – the Pacific Challenge*" aimed at striking a balance between sustaining the development of our marine resources with the interests of preservation and conservation. Leaders agreed that as '*Large Ocean Island States*' FICs have a leading role to play in management of the Pacific Ocean, building on Leaders' aspirations to maximise sustainable economic returns for Forum Members from ocean resources, including fisheries and seabed minerals, in accordance with the precautionary approach of Rio Principle 15. Leaders also commended the progress made by individual Forum Members on the creation of Marine Protected Areas, in line with global goals, in the context of broader conservation and management efforts for responsible use of ocean resources.

28. Leaders welcomed the signing of the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreements by the following countries: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Tokelau.

29. Leaders applauded increased interest in investment in Pacific fisheries and oceans, including in the context of the Global Partnership for Oceans, but reiterated the need for such investment to be designed and implemented to contribute to the achievement of national priorities and align with existing regional frameworks. Leaders endorsed the priorities identified in the Oceanscape Framework for initial funding support, including finalising national maritime boundary arrangements; developing marine spatial planning; and providing support to strengthen collaborative ocean governance.

CLIMATE CHANGE

30. Leaders acknowledged the range of efforts undertaken to support improved FICs' access to, and management of, climate change financing. Leaders also welcomed and supported Nauru in its current role as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States; Samoa as the Pacific Small Island Developing States representative on the Green Climate Fund Board; and Fiji as Pacific Small Island Developing States representative on the Adaptation Fund Board and as the incoming Alternate Council member on the Global Environmental Facility Council.

31. Leaders acknowledged the important and collaborative work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and SPC in the area of climate change. Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with other CROP agencies and development partners, to continue to assist FICs in effectively responding to climate change, including through adaptation measures, mitigation efforts, climate change financing, capacity building, and international negotiations. Leaders also noted that many challenges remain in realising benefits from the pledged 'new and additional' climate change finance of the Copenhagen Accord.

32. Leaders welcomed Australia's commitment of A$58m in new funding over four years to support FICs with improved data on weather, climate and sea levels to inform climate change adaptation planning, as well as new support for communities to build resilience to natural disasters.

33. Leaders urged development partners to fulfil their pledged finances and to work with FICs and CROP agencies to improve the accessibility of these resources, preferably through the use of national systems and modalities tailored to the special needs and unique constraints of SIDS.

BIODIVERSITY

34. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of dealing effectively with invasive species at both national and regional levels, and requested SPREP and SPC to increase their efforts in that regard, working with other actors as appropriate.

REGIONAL TRADE

35. Leaders noted the positive developments in progressing the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus negotiations and other trade agreements. Leaders directed the Forum Secretariat and other regional organisations to support FICs in making further progress in trade negotiations, and in particular to support those countries yet to fully implement the Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) to do so as soon as practicable.

36. Leaders supported increased engagement by FICs to make rapid progress on priority trade issues in PICTA, PACER Plus, and the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

37. Leaders welcomed the signing of the PICTA Trade in Services (TIS) Protocol as a significant achievement for FICs TIS in important key sectors including tourism, transport

and business services. Leaders further noted that the PICTA TIS benefits are expected to be equally beneficial for Smaller Island States.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

38. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of infrastructure to the sustainable economic development of the region and encouraged CROP agencies and development partners to work closely together to resource and address key gaps in regional infrastructure.

39. Leaders emphasised the urgent need to implement submarine cable connectivity in the Pacific Islands region. Recalling early analytical work undertaken by SPC on submarine cable connectivity, Leaders requested that SPC and USP conduct further urgent analysis of the best options on submarine cable connectivity for Pacific Island Countries with the results to be presented to Leaders at the margins of the Special Pacific ACP Leaders Meeting to be convened in Papua New Guinea later this year.

REGIONAL EDUCATION

40. Leaders noted the efforts made by regional organisations to align their support to the Pacific Education Development Framework, and highlighted its importance in achieving improved educational outcomes across the region. Leaders recognised the USP's Institute of Education as a lead regional institution for research on education policy, and encouraged development partners and other potential funders to consider ways to better partner with USP to strengthen their research and policy capacity. Leaders noted the continued contribution of the Australia-Pacific Technical College to regional Technical and Vocational Education and Training development.

41. Leaders thanked Australia for its commitment of A$85 million in new funding over four years to strengthen tertiary education across the region, including through IT and infrastructure upgrading of regional tertiary institutions, two thousand new places in tertiary bridging programmes and two thousand and three hundred new places with a priority on engineering, construction, maritime transport, education and health.

REGIONAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

42. Leaders recognised the increasing and collective efforts to tackle the challenge of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) across the Pacific region. Leaders called on the region to intensify efforts and for development partners and all stakeholders to upscale efforts and direct resources to national and regional efforts to combat the NCDs pandemic.

43. Leaders acknowledged the urgent need for strategic investment in health system strengthening and in cross-sectoral, whole-of-country initiatives to achieve better health outcomes at the national level, supported by appropriate regional initiatives. Leaders called for an immediate analysis on what is needed to be undertaken at the national and regional levels to ensure a comprehensive health sector response.

44. Leaders acknowledged the investment made by the Australian Government in the sport for development programs for the Pacific region and in particular the Pacific Sports Partnership that aims to reduce NCDs, promote gender equality and provide opportunity for people with disabilities. Leaders were pleased to note the ongoing work of the

Australian Government to develop the next stage of the Partnership to improve lives and build healthier communities through sports.

REGIONAL GENDER INITIATIVE

45. Leaders endorsed the *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration* which is attached as **Annex 1**. Leaders committed to supporting women's political representation, including by: strengthening consultative mechanisms with civil society groups on key budget and policy issues; advocating for increased representation of women in the private sector and local level governance boards and committees; and considering specific legislative changes to allow temporary special measures such as reserved seats. Leaders committed to ensure that gender analysis is factored into sustainable development discussions, country programming, and policy decisions.

46. Leaders commended Australia on its Pacific Gender Equality Initiative and thanked Australia for its commitment of A$320m in new funding over ten years, with the objective of increasing the proportion of women in leadership and political roles, improved economic opportunities for women through better access to finance and markets; and improved safety for women through prevention of violence and access to justice.

47. Leaders agreed to adopt measures that eliminate all barriers preventing women from participating fully in the economic sphere, consistent with the decisions made by Forum Economic Ministers in July 2012. Leaders pledged to act to end violence against women by progressively implementing a set of essential services to women and girls who are survivors of violence, and enacting and implementing domestic violence legislation to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.

REGIONAL SOCIAL POLICY

48. Leaders welcomed efforts by CROP agencies, UN agencies, and other partners to develop a Framework for Youth Development in the Pacific. Leaders also noted progress made on the implementation of their decisions regarding the PIFS-UNDP Youth Initiative.

49. Leaders noted work being done on youth employment and its importance to preventing social discord.

50. Leaders commended the excellent work achieved under the Pacific Regional Disability Strategy, while recognising that a long-term approach is required to support the rights of people with disability in the Pacific. Leaders encouraged Ministers responsible for disability, who will be meeting in Papua New Guinea in October 2012, to continue efforts to find concrete and practical ways to support disability inclusive development and to report to Leaders the outcomes of their meeting.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI)

51. Leaders noted the joint achievements made by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI, and commended progress made in 2011 in implementing the Partnership Framework as well as the ongoing commitment of both the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI to the Partnership Framework. Leaders acknowledged the solidarity and cooperation of the Forum under RAMSI, which contributed to the achievements of

RAMSI, including the planned withdrawal of the military component of RAMSI in the second half of 2013.

52. Leaders noted that the RAMSI Participating Police Force will need to continue supporting the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. Leaders also noted the transition of assistance under RAMSI's three development pillars to bilateral and other donors by 1 July 2013, and acknowledged the leading role by the Solomon Islands Government in consultation and coordination through existing mechanisms, in mapping out development transition priorities and responsibilities. Leaders accepted the call by the Solomon Islands Government that the transition of RAMSI must be task-bound, not time bound, and that the pace of transition across the various sectors of government must be done in close consultation with the Government.

53. Leaders noted the 10th anniversary of RAMSI in 2013 and expressed the wish for participation at Leaders' level to commemorate this very significant event.

54. Leaders endorsed the recommendation of the Forum Regional Security Committee for the Forum to continue to have oversight of RAMSI in the next phase of its activities and transition.

FIJI

55. Leaders noted the Forum's ongoing work to encourage and support Fiji's return to parliamentary democracy in accordance with the Biketawa Declaration and reiterated the Forum's intention to remain engaged with Fiji. Leaders welcomed the successful visit of the Forum Ministerial Contact Group (MCG) to Fiji on 1 May 2012 and noted the Group's report to Forum Leaders with its assessment of the situation in Fiji.

56. Leaders noted progress made in 2012 towards elections in September 2014, including the registration of voters and the establishment of the Constitutional Commission, and the assurances given to the MCG that there would be freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom for the media. Leaders reaffirmed their long standing offer to support Fiji's early return to parliamentary democracy, including through the provision of appropriate assistance, consistent with the Forum's underlying principles and values of respect for democracy, good governance and the rule of law.

57. Leaders also noted the deliberations of PACP Leaders with respect to the involvement of Fiji in purely PACP related activities and the intention of PACP Leaders to consider the matter further at a special meeting of PACP Leaders to be hosted by Papua New Guinea in the near future.

REVIEW OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

58. Leaders considered the Review Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and agreed that in light of the imminent review of the Pacific Plan in 2013, that the recommendations of the Review Report, in particular the restatement of the core business of the Secretariat and its senior management structure be considered as part of the review of the Pacific Plan. Leaders also urged the Secretariat to take into account the Review Report in its ongoing corporate and budget reform efforts.

REVIEW OF THE CROP CHARTER

59. Leaders endorsed the revised CROP Charter 2012 which reaffirmed, *inter alia*, the continued validity of the existing CROP membership criteria with the addition of retirement clauses; the retirement of agencies which no longer meet the membership criteria (i.e. South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, South Pacific Board for Education Assessment, and Fiji School of Medicine); and periodic reviews of the Charter which should be linked with the review of the Pacific Plan.

TRANSNATIONAL AND BROADER SECURITY ISSUES

60. Leaders noted the activities and endorsed the objectives of the Working Group for Strengthening Information Management. Leaders encouraged those Members that have not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to consider doing so. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Forum Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Reference Group and its work in addressing SGBV in the region.

61. Leaders welcomed the development of the Human Security Framework for the Pacific developed as a strategic guide for FICs, the Forum Secretariat and other stakeholders to improve understanding, planning and implementation of human security approaches in stand-alone and broader peace, security and development initiatives in the Pacific. Leaders also noted the development of the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security developed by the Pacific Regional Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

62. Leaders recognised the special circumstances pertaining to the continued presence of radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility by the United States of America towards the people of the Marshall Islands, who have been and continue to be, adversely affected as a direct result of nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States during its administration of the Marshall Islands under the United Nations Trusteeship.

63. Leaders reiterated their call on the United States of America to live up to its full obligations on the provision of adequate compensation and commitment to its responsibility for the safe resettlement of displaced populations, including full restoration to economic productivity and human enjoyment of all affected areas. Leaders noted that the U.S. Government has taken a position that all avenues to respond to the Changed Circumstances Petition under the original Compact as well as the amended Compact have been exhausted, and 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 Testing Programme. Leaders encouraged Forum Members to lend their support to the Marshall Islands on these issues at the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Security Council, and other international fora, notably in September of this year when the Special Rapporteur presents his findings to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

PARTNERSHIP MECHANISMS INCLUDING THE POST-FORUM DIALOGUE (PFD)

64. Leaders thanked all PFD Partners who provided PFD membership reassessment reports for Leaders' consideration. Leaders reaffirmed all existing PFD Partners remain strategic allies for the Forum through the PFD mechanism, and encouraged all PFD Partners to participate in this regular reporting process on a 3-yearly basis which will be aimed primarily at maintaining up to date and improved information on PFD Partners available through the PIFS website.

65. Leaders agreed that bilateral summitry between PFD Partners and the region should provide for sufficient time for Leaders' consultation with the respective Partners, and that negotiation of the relevant outcomes documents are undertaken through a process that allows for full and effective participation of all member countries.

SIXTH PACIFIC LEADERS MEETING (PALM6)

66. Leaders expressed gratitude to Japan for hosting the Sixth Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM6) from 25 - 26 May 2012 in Okinawa, Japan. They expressed deep appreciation for Japan's commitment at PALM6 to making maximum efforts to provide the assistance of up to US$500m over the next three years when Japan itself is faced with enormous challenges of reconstruction from the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami.

67. Leaders reaffirmed the "Kizuna" (strong bond of friendship) with Japan in the aftermath of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami, and welcomed Japan's initiative to launch the "Kizuna Project", which would invite over 300 young people from FICs to Japan.

2005 AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

68. Leaders encouraged remaining Members to ratify the 2005 *Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum* as soon as practicable.

CANDIDACIES

69. Leaders noted the success of regional cooperation and solidarity in highlighting Pacific issues within United Nations fora. Leaders recognised the importance of Pacific representation on the UN Security Council (UNSC) in ensuring that the UNSC remained informed of international issues of concern to the region. In that regard, Leaders reaffirmed their strong and unanimous support for Australia's candidature for the UNSC for the term 2013-2014 and New Zealand's candidature for the term 2015-2016.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

70. Leaders reiterated their support for the principle of French Polynesia's right to self-determination. Leaders noted the election of a new French government that opened fresh opportunities for a positive dialogue between French Polynesia and France on how best to realise French Polynesia's right to self-determination. Leaders encouraged French Polynesia and France to intensify their dialogue in the coming months and agreed to consider developments at their 2013 meeting.

OUTCOMES OF THE SIS LEADERS MEETING

71. Leaders noted the outcomes of the SIS Leaders Meeting held in Rarotonga on 27 August 2012.

OUTCOMES OF THE PACIFIC ACP LEADERS MEETING

72. Leaders noted the outcomes of the Pacific ACP Leaders Meeting held in Rarotonga on 28 August 2012.

OTHER MATTERS

73. Leaders encouraged Forum Members to consider the International Disaster Response Law Guidelines developed by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and to take appropriate measures to strengthen their national policy, and institutional and legal frameworks in collaboration with their National Red Cross Societies, IFRC, the United Nations and other relevant partners.

APPRECIATION

74. Leaders commended the outgoing Chair, The Right Hon John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and his Government for their leadership of the Forum over the past year.

75. The Government of the Cook Islands expressed its appreciation to the Governments of Australia, the People's Republic of China and New Zealand for their assistance in hosting the Forum.

VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

76. Leaders welcomed the offer of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to host the 2013 Forum. The date for the Forum will be finalised by the Republic of the Marshall Islands in consultation with the Secretariat. Leaders also welcomed the offers from Papua New Guinea to host the 2015 Forum, Tuvalu in 2016, and Nauru in 2018. They also noted Solomon Islands interest to consider hosting the 2014 Forum.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Aitutaki, Cook Islands

30 August 2012

Annex 1

PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION

30 August 2012, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

The Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum met from 27 to 30 August 2012 in Rarotonga and brought new determination and invigorated commitment to efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower them to be active participants in economic, political and social life.

Leaders expressed their deep concern that despite gains in girls' education and some positive initiatives to address violence against women, overall progress in the region towards gender equality is slow. In particular Leaders are concerned that women's representation in Pacific legislature remains the lowest in the world; violence against women is unacceptably high; and that women's economic opportunities remain limited.

Leaders understand that gender inequality is imposing a high personal, social and economic cost on Pacific people and nations, and that improved gender equality will make a significant contribution to creating a prosperous, stable and secure Pacific for all current and future generations.

To realize this goal, Leaders commit with renewed energy to implement the gender equality actions of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2005 to 2015); the Pacific Plan; the 42nd Pacific Island Forum commitment to increase the representation of women in legislatures and decision making; and the 40th Pacific Island Forum commitment to eradicate sexual and gender based violence.

To progress these commitments, Leaders commit to implement specific national policy actions to progress gender equality in the areas of gender responsive government programs and policies, decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and health and education:

Gender Responsive Government Programs and Policies

- **Incorporate** articles from the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into legislative and statutory reforms and policy initiatives across government;
- **Support** the production and use of sex disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government policies and programs;
- **Strengthen** consultative mechanisms with civil society groups, including women's advocacy groups, on key budget and policy issues of national and sub-national governments.

Decision Making

- **Adopt** measures, including temporary special measures (such as legislation to establish reserved seats for women and political party reforms), to accelerate women's full and equal participation in governance reform at all levels and women's leadership in all decision making.
- **Advocate** for increased representation of women in private sector and local level governance boards and committees (e.g. school boards and produce market committees).

Economic empowerment

- **Remove** barriers to women's employment and participation in the formal and informal sectors, including in relation to legislation that directly or indirectly limits women's access to employment opportunities or contributes to discriminatory pay and conditions for women.
- **Implement** equal employment opportunity and gender equality measures in public sector employment, including State Owned Enterprises and statutory boards, to increase the proportion of women employed, including in senior positions, and **advocate** for a similar approach in private sector agencies;
- **Improve** the facilities and governance of local produce markets, including fair and transparent local regulation and taxation policies, so that market operations increase profitability and efficiency and encourage women's safe, fair and equal participation in local economies.
- **Target** support to women entrepreneurs in the formal and informal sectors, for example financial services, information and training, and review legislation that limits women's access to finance, assets, land and productive resources.

Ending violence against women

- **Implement** progressively a package of essential services (protection, health, counselling, legal) for women and girls who are survivors of violence.
- **Enact** and implement legislation regarding sexual and gender based violence to protect women from violence and impose appropriate penalties for perpetrators of violence.

Health and Education

- **Ensure** reproductive health (including family planning) education, awareness and service programs receive adequate funding support;
- **Encourage** gender parity in informal, primary, secondary and tertiary education and training opportunities.

Leaders called on Development Partners to work in a coordinated, consultative and harmonised way to support national led efforts to address gender inequality across the region in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific. Leaders also requested Development Partners to increase financial and technical support to gender equality and women's empowerment programs, and to adopt strategies within their programs to provide

employment and consultation opportunities for women in the planning and delivery of development assistance to the region.

Leaders agreed that progress on the economic, political and social positions of women should be reported on at each Forum Leaders meeting. They directed the Forum Secretariat, with the support of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Development Partners, to develop, as part of the Pacific Plan performance monitoring framework and annual report to Leaders on country progress in implementing the above commitments and moving towards achieving greater gender equality.