

**Civil Society and Non-State Actors Statement
to the 50th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting
Wednesday 14th August, 2019 Funafuti, Tuvalu**

Securing the Future Wellbeing of our Blue Pacific Household

God, give the king your justice; your righteousness to the royal son. He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. The mountains shall bring prosperity to the people. The hills bring the fruit of righteousness. He will judge the poor of the people. He will save the children of the needy, and will break the oppressor in pieces... He will have pity on the poor and needy. He will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence. Their blood will be precious in his sight. (Psalm 72: 1-4 , 12-13)

Honourable Chair, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, your Excellencies Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum member countries:

We acknowledge with gratitude the warm and open heart of the Fenua of Tuvalu that has welcomed us as sisters and brothers of the Pacific.

We join you at this table with deep humility and respect of the significance of the responsibilities you hold as elected leaders of government and the responsibility we hold as we amplify voices from our Pacific Islands communities, many of whom who are your constituents.

We gather here as people of the land and sea – on behalf of people of faith, on behalf of some of the most vulnerable communities on this planet, on behalf of your Pacific family.

Our voice includes the voice of those of us who have passed on. We remember the late Fuimaono Falefa Lima, C.E.O. of the Samoa Umbrella of Non-Governmental Organisations who was part of our original CSO Forum team.

Honourable Chair and Leaders, what we share with you today is based on the lived and recorded experiences of our people at the grassroots. It is informed by research, including our traditional knowledge, and reflects common Pacific values of spirituality, family life, traditional economy, culture, mutual care and respect, which celebrates quality of life and values human beings and creation over the production of things.

We all share in the vision of a just, inclusive and peaceful Pacific: a secure Pacific, a resilient Pacific; a Pacific that will not only survive the Climate Crisis but can still flourish.

We gather with you in recognition that Pacific Regionalism is rooted in Pacific Solidarity.

We are all part of this Blue Pacific household. There are many rooms in this household but all who wish to live in this Pacific Household must accept their responsibilities as members of the household, be it working to achieve the 1.5 degrees target; challenging the forces of economic domination; and ensuring the security and wellbeing of our ocean, land and people.

That you, as Pacific Island leaders, have supported this space for dialogue with Church and Civil Society and Non-State Actors is an affirmation that we are indeed part of the common work to secure the future of the Pacific. Thank you for affirming that we are part of the Blue Pacific Household.

We note with appreciation that since 2015, under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, our communities, youths, women, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI community, public and private sector workers, sporting organisations and CSOs and faith communities are being included as strands of the mat of an inclusive Blue Pacific that the Forum is weaving, as our own Pacific narrative of geo-politics.

In this regard, Pacific CSOs urge Leaders to ensure the voices of civil society, their communities and citizens are considered within the regional policy architecture and to ensure the existing mechanism under the FPR is provided the necessary support to carry out its role in an independent and visionary way.

REGIONAL SECURITY

Honourable Chair and Leaders, as we seek to secure our future in the Pacific, we bring to you our concerns on current and emerging peace and security issues for Pacific people and places, beginning with the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls.

Honourable Leaders:

We thank you leaders for the vision of a secure Blue Pacific and for the 2009 Forum Cairns Communique that drew attention to sexual gender -based violence as a risk to human security and its potential for destabilizing our communities and Pacific societies.

We also thank you for the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration that recasts a vision of a society where our women and girls live safely and with a strong sense of security; and the Boe Declaration on Regional Security that reminds us that the violence faced by our women and girls is compounded by the climate crisis in the Pacific and heightened during disasters.

Gender based violence is a human security issue as recognised in the BOE Declaration Framework. **However this declaration is not enough to secure the future of all our diverse groups of women, girls and children.**

Women's crisis centres report an increase in the types of domestic violence cases linked to ice and methamphetamine. These emerging intersecting forms of violence are being exacerbated by contributing factors such as the increase in the accessibility and use of illicit drugs particularly methamphetamines or "ice" as it's commonly referred to in the Pacific.

The Oceania Customs Organization reports that there is increasing border detections and widespread prevalence of street-level possession and distribution of methamphetamine, and that it presents the highest risk to the Pacific community for drug related and associated harm. The transiting of these hard drugs from countries outside of our region draws an ominous dimension into the vulnerability of our Pacific island nations whereby drugs are increasingly being sold and distributed leaving increased levels of addiction and violence in many of our island states.

There is also a growing increase in cyberviolence throughout the Pacific and current data shows that once again women and girls make up the majority of the victims to this type of violence.

This new form of violence is compounded by multiple factors and is harder to manage in times of conflict and in during climate crisis.

These new forms of security threats have reached a crisis point for women and girls and the failure to take action now will lead to grave consequences in the future as women make up approximately 50 percent of our populations.

These issues require urgent action and special commitment by our leaders.

As a way to promote regional security and gender justice for our women, girls and children, we CSOs call for Forum Leaders to appoint a Forum Eminent Persons' group to report and to monitor regional, collective actions aimed at minimizing these intersecting human security threats that are exacerbated by the climate crisis, illicit drugs, cyber violence and violence against women, girls and children. We also ask that this group report to Leaders annually on this issue.

We call that this Eminent Persons Group promote inclusivity in its arrangements and conduct, and that civil society and womens' organizations be part of this group.

We call on Forum Leaders to have a coordinated response in strengthening national policy on border and customs control and to provide dedicated expertise and resources for drug rehabilitation.

Honourable Leaders, we believe that securing the future of the Pacific, with the communities of the Pacific will ensure the future wellbeing and ecological biodiversity of our Blue Pacific.

CLIMATE CHANGE, OCEAN HEALTH AND GOVERNANCE

Honourable leaders:

As we gather here in the fenua of Tuvalu, in the midst of a Climate Crisis and Ocean health crisis, our Civil Society kainga (family) would like to make some recommendations for your consideration.

Securing our future in the Pacific requires securing the health of our shared Ocean. Reversing her current decline from the myriad of cumulative pressures she endures, and supporting initiatives that will see her productive health return, is what all of us stakeholders must strive for. To invest in the health of the Ocean is to invest in the health of our Pacific people.

The nuclear testing legacy has been an outstanding agenda and poses a threat of nuclear contamination to the health and security of the entire Blue Pacific. Promoting the status of the Pacific as a nuclear free zone, adopting modalities to foster meaningful international cooperation under the framework of the Treaty of Rarotonga and calling for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons globally would be a sign of true regionalism, supporting, in the first instance, our Micronesian families.

Therefore, we call leaders to support efforts to resolve nuclear testing legacy issues in the Pacific and to sign and ratify the 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In 2017, Forum Leaders recognised that increasing demands for fisheries resources across the region and globally would require coherent and coordinated approaches to address a range of issues. In addressing this, Leaders' in 2018 endorsed a Fisheries Ministers recommendation at the annual meeting of Regional Fisheries Ministers (RFMM) to ensure that they have effective oversight across the multidimensional issues that impact our region's fisheries. Fisheries Ministers, in their recommendation, saw the need for this multi-sectoral/dimensional approach and the involvement of CSOs in all aspects of the fisheries space.

As such, CSOs urge Leaders to establish transparent and accountable governance and management of high-level coastal fisheries species in particular beche-de-mer and support a CSO mechanism within the SPC and PIFS.

The upcoming UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) is a neutral initiative for Leaders to align with and a positive goal to aspire to that would have the support of communities.

Requesting Leaders to support a ten-year moratorium on seabed mining is asking leaders to prioritize the health of our communities and recognize values beyond economic gain.

Recommending a moratorium, in order to support the research that will be taking place as part of the Decade of Ocean Science, will allow leaders to be well-informed on how to progress with the DSM industry - if they choose to do so. This is truly utilizing a precautionary approach. As well, the resourcing for scientific research will come from a more independent source as opposed to mining companies who have vested interests in progressing their industry.

Another opportunity to be gained by supporting a Moratorium is to ensure a strong focus on supporting, involving, and empowering Pacific youth in the development agenda, especially with regards to the custodianship of natural resources.

A commitment to build the capacity within, foster greater interest in, and provide more options for careers in S.T.E.M. will align with the UN Decade of Ocean Science initiative as youth have been identified as the future leaders whom will deal with the challenges we, and those before us, have created.

Finally, a moratorium will support the reduction of rapid acceleration of climate change, protect coastal and deep-water fisheries from the negative impacts to the seabed and allow for the necessary science to be obtained.

By supporting the Ocean, we solidify the principles of traditional custodianship for nature and, in turn, for our people by enabling good health and secure and enjoyable livelihoods.

Pacific CSOs encourage Forum Leaders to endorse a ten-year moratorium on Seabed mining within the United Nations Decade of Oceans Science for Sustainable Development (2021 – 2030), to allow for the generation of scientific data and information to better inform the governance and conservation of our Ocean.

This week, we are meeting in a country at the frontlines of climate change, the effects of which threaten the wellbeing of our Pacific. We DO need to Save Tuvalu to Save the World.

The global community must recognize that people have been, and are being, displaced by climate change and their rights need protection. Countries who are major polluters and are historically responsible for the acceleration of climate change have an obligation under international law to protect those on the frontlines of climate change.

For that reason, *we urge leaders to call the UNGA to adopt a resolution requesting the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory Opinion on the obligations of States under international law to protect the rights of present and future generations against the adverse effects of climate change.*

Loss of territory due to climate change should not compromise our maritime boundaries, and Climate Migration should not affect the sovereignty of large ocean states in the Blue Pacific. Countries that are displaced due to climate change, and keep their citizenship, should still be able to manage their ocean territories, for climate justice and for those who will come after us.

Climate change intrinsically impacts on human rights by creating the eventuality of forced migration, displacement and relocation which impacts negatively on physical and mental human health.

CSOs request that schemes by PIF countries which address forced climate displacement and relocation, including internal and external migration, treat families with dignity and be inclusive of people with disabilities.

Larger, developed countries may be responsible for the accelerated rates of climate change impacts affecting our islands but we, the people of the Pacific, are responsible for the manner in which we continue to engage – let us uphold our cultural values of truly nurturing our lands, seas and each other.

WEST PAPUA

Honourable Leaders:

We join together as Civil Society Organisations to express our concern about the escalating human rights violations and abuses in West Papua. Since the 49th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Communique included West Papua as a 'regional priority' for 'collective actions' towards 'a Strong Pacific' in September 2018, the situation in West Papua has continued to deteriorate.

In February 2019, the World Council of Churches took the largest-ever delegation visit to West Papua and raised serious concerns over the continued systematic marginalisation of the West Papuan people. The World Council of Churches visited West Papua and learnt of the displacement of a growing number of people from remote communities, in response to the perceived threats from Indonesian authorities in the region.

On February 21, 2019, the largest group of independent experts within the UN human rights system issued an unprecedented statement condemning a 'culture of impunity' around human rights abuses in West Papua. The statement calls for 'those who have committed human rights violations against the indigenous population of Papua' to be 'held to account'.

We also draw Leaders attention to the recent release in March 2019 of the U.S. State Department annual 'country reports' on local human rights in Indonesia. The report detailed arrests of self-determination advocates, targeting of local NGOs operating in West Papua and intimidation of the press. The report also notes the severe and widespread violations of the cultural, social and economic rights of Indigenous West Papuans.

Together, the World Council of Churches visit and the US State Department report show evidence of the serious human rights abuses that are taking place in West Papua.

Indonesia has agreed in principle to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit West Papua. We remind Forum Leaders that Indonesia is a party to all major International human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Honourable Chair and leaders, none of us can speak of an inclusive and peaceful Pacific and remain silent on the serious human rights issues for West Papuans. We call on Pacific Leaders to observe the importance of human rights in all parts of our region.

1) We urge that Forum Leaders call on Indonesia to immediately allow access of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN special mandate holders to West Papua.

2) We ask that Forum Leaders request that Indonesia immediately restore the access of independent journalists to the region, so that the international community can better assess the ongoing human rights situation in West Papua.

3) We ask that Forum Leaders immediately support a UN Resolution to list West Papua on the UN Decolonisation List.

Honourable Leaders of the Pacific:

There are many stories in the Bible of when the King has hated the words of the prophet. We acknowledge that there may be things in our presentation that you may not agree with or find too strong or perhaps not strong enough. In this 21st century, the Church shares the prophetic task with Civil Society and News Media and we will encourage the truth to be spoken in love.

We are grateful to this esteemed forum for receiving our message from the community and we look forward to your responses and the opportunity to talanoa together today.

We also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary General and the PIFS Non-State Actor programme and facilitation team for their support.

May God's blessings be with you and our Pacific Household. May God's wisdom, strength and protection be upon you as you seek to serve and lead our Blue Pacific.

Fa'afetai lase. Vinaka vakalevu.