



PACIFIC PLAN FOR STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all."

Pacific Island Forum Leaders'
Vision: *Auckland Declaration, 2004*

What?

What is the Pacific Plan?

The Pacific Plan is a means to fully realize the Leaders' Vision for the whole Pacific region into the future. It will strengthen cooperation and integration between the sovereign countries of the region and identify the areas where countries will gain the most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies.

The Pacific Plan will deliver real benefits to the people of the Pacific by proposing concrete plans for the key goals of the Forum:

- Economic growth
- Sustainable development
- Good governance
- Security

The Plan will be a 'living document' to guide long-term development of the Pacific as a region and to ensure that the people of the Pacific build on our collective heritage and common purpose to lead free and worthwhile lives.

Is the Plan a legal document?

No. It will be a political undertaking by Pacific Leaders based on the needs of their people which will be implemented through national and regional institutional processes. Perhaps, later on, if Leaders decide, they can adopt protocols that are more binding.

What is different about the Pacific Plan and other regional strategies?

The Plan is a means for bringing together various regional policies and programs. It is a means to address, in a collective manner, the serious challenges that are being faced by Pacific nations so that, together, we can meet peoples' aspirations of a more prosperous Pacific. The main differences between the Pacific Plan and other regional strategies are:

- It has been mandated by Forum Leaders as a 'road map' for the region's future - distinct from other regional and global commitments

that can often be driven by interests outside the region.

- The Pacific Plan is focused on outcomes and already includes proposals for practical benefits that can be achieved or initiated over the next three years or in the medium to longer term. It also includes ideas for stimulating further debate on regionalism and what it means to Pacific people.

What will be in the Pacific Plan?

Looking at vital sector-by-sector cooperation in the key Forum sectors of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security, Pacific Plan initiatives will harmonise, where possible, policies and processes to ensure the best cooperation among countries, regional institutions, development partners and international organisations. Specific **early practical benefits** will be implemented - both for their own sake and as a means of maintaining the momentum of the Plan.

What are 'Early Practical Benefits'?

The Leaders wanted the Pacific Plan to identify sectors where the region can gain the most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies. Early practical benefits are policies and programs that can reasonably be achieved in the short term – between one and three years.

Early practical benefits will show that countries can gain more from regional cooperation and integration. Some are policies and programs that are already underway but need to be re-invigorated, and others are new.

Examples:

Sustainable economic growth and employment

How?

- Boosting *trade facilitation* through improvements in customs and quarantine services and the development of trade standards and conformance.
- Integrating trade in services, including *temporary movement of labour*, into the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and including this issue in other trade-related negotiations .
- Strengthening *vocational training* and its links to the labour market through regional interventions,

initially, through the standardisation of training and the exploration of market opportunities.

- Improving access to economic opportunities through information and communications technology and by developing and implementing a *regional Digital Strategy*.

Sustainable development for improving livelihoods

How?

- More effective resource management based on better country-specific and regional *information/statistics* bases.
- Reducing serious threats to sustainable development by immediately implementing regional policies and plans relating to *natural disasters; waste management; biodiversity and conservation; climate change and variability; water resource management; and fisheries and ocean resources*.
- A more Pacific-led harmonized approach to the health sector, particularly in implementing the *HIV/AIDS and STI Strategy* and making anti-retroviral drugs (ARDs) more accessible; and better *surveillance* and early warning of epidemics and their prevention.
- Creating a stronger development role for sports, through regional sporting networks and physical education at schools.

Good governance to better manage countries' resources

How?

- Strengthening *justice systems* at the national level.
- Assisting establishment of human rights mechanisms and regional judicial training and education; key *national integrity institutions* or initiatives, such as the Audit, the Ombudsman, Leadership Codes, anti-corruption institutions and Attorneys General; and full adherence to the Forum Eight Principles of Accountability.

Regional security to underpin development

How?

- Implementing the *Forum Secretariat's Pacific Islands Regional Security Technical Cooperation Strategy (PIRSTCS)*, particularly in support of national implementation of the *Biketawa, Nasonini and Honiara declarations* (e.g. supporting economic recovery in Solomon Islands under RAMSI, and the proposed Pacific Regional Assistance for Nauru).
- Enhancing the effectiveness of national police forces through regional training (e.g. the Pacific Regional Policing Initiative and the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre) and short-term attachments.
- Improved maritime security through a regional strategy, which will include compliance with the IMO International Shipping and Port Security (ISPS) Code.

Why?

Why write another Plan?

Pacific Leaders reinforced their intention for the Pacific Plan to be the main instrument for promoting their Pacific Vision in light of the serious challenges facing countries in the region 'so that its people can lead free and worthwhile lives.' The global environment has changed dramatically since most countries in the region gained their independence, bringing more opportunities and challenges for the region. The strong political support for the development of the Pacific Plan builds on existing consensus and partnerships between all nations and people in the region. It is now firmly recognised that some of the ways that things are currently done in the region need to be changed, including the way regional and national public institutions are governed and how resources are allocated and utilised.

How can the challenges facing Pacific countries be met?

In the context of the four priority goals of the Pacific Islands Forum, the following prioritization principles of the Pacific Plan provide the broad framework to guide the deepening and broadening of regional cooperation:

Likely Impact:

- outcomes produced in at least one of the four goals of economic growth, sustainable development, governance and security; and
- the number of countries or people benefiting.

Potential for Successful Implementation:

- level of commitment by Member states;
- level of support from partners, both internal and external;
- effectiveness of relevant institutions and policies both regionally and nationally;
- support for similar initiatives already endorsed by Leaders; and
- contribution to the strengthening or rationalizing of existing regional networks, mechanisms or agreements.

The Pacific Plan

Who?

Who is writing the Pacific Plan?

The Working Draft of the Pacific Plan has been developed by the Pacific Plan Task Force as a basis for broad-based consultation. The Task Force comprises senior officials from all Forum countries and members of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP). The Secretary General of the PIF, who manages the Task Force, consults a Core Group of leaders, comprising of the past, present and future Forum Chairs and a representative from the Smaller Island States.

Are Australia and New Zealand included?

Yes. They are both members of the Forum. The other members are; Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Niue, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Has the Task Force met?

The Pacific Plan Task Force met twice in Suva, Fiji in 2004 and for the third time in Noumea, New Caledonia, on 15 November, 2004 and has developed a working draft of the Pacific Plan to be used as a basis for discussions for broad-based national consultations.

Is the Pacific Plan just for Government Officials?

No. Although the *Working Draft* of the Pacific Plan will be considered by Leaders, via the Government channels, the intent is that it will be a Pacific peoples' document. The Terms of Reference for Pacific Plan Task Force calls on it to: *...consult with Leaders, governments and other non-state actors and stakeholders* in the development of the Pacific Plan. Development of the Pacific Plan is involving an extensive but necessary consultation process. The people of the Pacific must feel a strong sense of ownership of, and commitment to, the broadening and deepening of regionalism. A participatory, consultative and broad-based approach to national level consideration of regional integration is imperative in ensuring commitment to implementation of the Pacific Plan.

What are Pacific Plan national consultations?

The objectives of the country consultations are to consult with all stakeholders on the key issues arising from the development of the Pacific Plan. National consultations will take place in each Forum country. Each country's national Pacific Plan Task Force will organize the consultations with the support of the Forum Secretariat and other CROP agencies. The national consultations are taking place between January to May 2005. As all parts of society need to be fully involved in the development of the Pacific Plan for its successful implementation, Leaders have urged their Task Force members to closely consult with non-state actors. These include non government organisations, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, media, private sector associations and professional organisations.

Are non-sovereign states in the Pacific such as; New Caledonia, French Polynesia and American Samoa, included in the Pacific Plan?

Yes, the Forum Secretary General is meeting with representatives from Pacific non-sovereign states to build closer associations in terms of the Pacific Plan and discuss *expanding membership of regional agreements and associations* for broadening and deepening regional cooperation.

Are donors and other agencies involved?

Yes. Several donors and international agencies have pledged financial and technical assistance to the development and implementation of the Pacific Plan. These include Japan, the Asia Development Bank, United Nations Development Program and the World Bank. The *Post-Forum Dialogue Partners* are also involved, either directly or indirectly, and their views are sought on the development of the Pacific Plan. These include; Canada, Peoples' Republic of China, European Commission, France, Japan, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, United Kingdom and United States of America.

How?

How will the Pacific Plan be implemented?

- Success of the Plan depends on its effective implementation at a country level.
- Strengthening regional cooperation and integration through the Pacific Plan is a means to achieving national development objectives through the pooling of scarce resources.

- However, regionalism is only as strong as national commitment to, and implementation of, regional policies and programs. Therefore, national implementation of regional policies and programs and the willingness and capacities of countries to work together is of critical importance to the future of the Plan and of the region..

Will the Pacific Plan replace National Plans?

- No. The Pacific Plan is an opportunity for countries to connect their national development priorities and plans with those in the region – thus freeing up scarce national resources for those areas in which countries prefer to 'go it alone.' For the Pacific Plan to work it will also need to be implemented through National Plans and National Policies. There may also be a need for members to adopt their own Pacific (regional) policy, perhaps with a high level national coordinating mechanism to ensure effective implementation..

How will regional organisations be involved in the Pacific Plan?

Regional organisations will provide policy and technical support to help countries implement the Pacific Plan. An independent regional institutional analysis of regional institutional arrangements is being undertaken during the next few months. This work will assess whether regional institutional mechanisms are as relevant and effective as possible to support the broadening and deepening of regionalism. If necessary, the review will recommend to the Pacific Plan Task Force new or alternative institutional arrangements that best suit the region's needs and emerging priorities..

How can I be involved?

Speak or write to your member of the Taskforce (listed at the back) or to your Government (Foreign Affairs). . . Participate in discussions, especially when your Government organizes a *National Pacific Plan Consultation Workshops* or Meetings.

Once the National Consultations are done, what happens?

The Pacific Plan

The input (national reports) from the national discussions will be submitted for the consideration of the Pacific Plan Task Force and for the drafting of Plan.

When?

When will the Pacific Plan be adopted?

The final draft of the Pacific Plan will be submitted to Leaders at their annual meeting in late 2005 to be held in Papua New Guinea. The draft will include an implementation strategy for delivering immediate, medium term and longer-term benefits. These policies and programs will need to be phased in and monitored in a dynamic process to ensure that successes can be built on and failures can be identified and rectified.

What are the next steps for 2005?

- Country consultations from January to May.
- Based on country feedback from these consultations, finalisation of a draft Plan for consideration by the Core Group in June.
- A final draft of Plan to Leaders in July.
- Endorsement, hopefully, by Leaders at the next Forum in Papua New Guinea in late 2005.
- And, then, full implementation of the Pacific Plan.

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The Pacific Plan

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KEY DOCUMENTS

- **Auckland Declaration (April 2004)**
- **PIFS Sector Studies**
- **Working Draft of the Pacific Plan (December 2004)**