



Attachment

### **2021 HLPF SDG Template for Themes**

***a) Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs;***

- Pacific Island Forum Leaders recognised COVID-19 as a major crisis for the *Blue Pacific* region, its peoples, countries and economies and that the effects will be felt for months and years to come.
- In our Blue Pacific region, we are faced with a three-pronged crisis – the impact of COVID-19, the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters, and the region's fragile economic health as a consequence of inherent vulnerabilities. Regional solidarity and global collective action are critical to overcoming these challenges.
- With the existing health challenges with the region's Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) crisis, the adverse health effects of COVID-19 particularly on vulnerable people with NCDs, and the significant pressures it is placing on health systems around the world. The Pacific took bold actions to restrict the spread of COVID-19 to and within our region and enforced unprecedented containment measures resulting in two-thirds of our Member States being COVID-19 free. While these measures have saved countless lives, they severely restricted our links to each other and the world.
- As a region, we quickly came together to confront the challenge of COVID-19 by invoking the Biketawa Declaration - our regional framework to collectively respond and assist one another in times of crisis. Pacific Forum Foreign Ministers met on 7 April 2020 to establish a ***Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C)***. The PHP-C has created a political space for dialogue, to ensure Member countries' request for assistance are effectively responded to.
- The PHP-C has enabled the regional distribution of COVID-19 testing supplies and PPE.
- Five common regional COVID-19 protocols are easing access to, and movement of, medical supplies and health workers through Forum Member countries. These common protocols, endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers, allow for special cooperation and support in five areas affected by current border restrictions:
  1. Deployment of technical personnel to and between Forum Members;
  2. Customs and biosecurity;
  3. Immigration;
  4. Repatriation of Forum nationals; and,
  5. Clearances for aircraft and ships transporting medical and humanitarian assistance, technical personnel, and repatriating nationals.
- Pacific Forum Members and our regional and international partners have come together to deliver a world first in a collective regional approach to the crisis. We have united against COVID-19 to ensure the protection of our peoples.

*(b) Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs and to the theme within the area under the purview of your intergovernmental body;*

The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat(PIFS) is a critical partner for regional coordination, implementation and exchange of good practices to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2015, Pacific Island Forum Leaders committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and called for the SDGs to be contextualised to Pacific realities. The 2018 Pacific Quadrennial Report and the recent 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report provides our Pacific update on SDGs by outlining high-level trends on progress to date and baseline information.

The reports noted that Pacific vulnerabilities are increasing, inequalities are deepening, and access to infrastructure and essential services remain elusive for some. The report also recognised that there are opportunities for accelerating development in the Pacific through the greater use of Pacific specific know-how; by acknowledging the regions significant biodiversity, oceanic resources and ability to work as a Blue Pacific collective; by increasing access to the use of ICT and by the greater use of renewable energy.

Key messages of the 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report.

1. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant contracting global economy, is causing unprecedented disruption in the region. While prompt action by Pacific Governments have so far curtailed the introduction and spread of the virus in the Pacific, there will still be significant economic and social disruption which is expected to be long-lasting.
2. The onset of COVID-19 and the region's continuing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters heightens the necessity for the region to implement effective policies and programmes that strengthen resilient communities. Implementation of the 17 SDGs will support this resilience and must progress across the region, fulfilling the Pacific's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda.
3. Despite the progress made to help ensure the sustainability of the fisheries sector, the improving returns and increasing community involvement in tourism and the efforts made to reduce the costs associated with the receipt of remittances, all will be heavily impacted by COVID-19. The future of tourism and level of remittances remains uncertain and the need for social protection has intensified, with the virus impacting the most vulnerable more intensely.
4. Achieving gender equality continues to be hampered by structural and underlying social, cultural and economic barriers. Despite progress made in recent years, a significant gap between men and women's economic participation remains, with women under-represented in leadership roles and formal employment across the region. Gender-based violence remains a major concern in the region.
5. More than 1 million persons with disabilities in the Pacific continue to face deep inequalities and multiple barriers. They are still over-represented among the poor, have significantly less economic opportunities than persons without disabilities and women with disabilities are still more likely to experience violence.

6. There is a need for accelerated national action to reform economic and labour policies that target key growth sectors, with specific attention required to address gender inequality in employment and the limited job opportunities for the region's youth population.
7. Despite progress being made under the Pacific NCD Roadmap, substantial efforts are still required to strengthen leadership, governance and financing to accelerate national action to halt or reverse the crisis and 'leave no one behind'.
8. The *Cleaner Pacific 2025* integrates strategic actions to address municipal solid waste, asbestos, electrical and electronic waste, healthcare waste, chemicals, used oil and lubricants, marine litter, ship-sourced pollution, disaster waste and sewage and trade waste. However, there remains a need for some Pacific island countries to elevate waste management in their development agenda, including increasing the resources required to address waste management issues.
9. Some SDG data gaps have been addressed since 2018, enhancing the region's capacity to measure, monitor and report progress in critical areas of poverty, gender equality, and disability. However, national statistical systems are still heavily dependent on external technical and financial support. There is a need for additional resources for national and regional statistical stakeholders to ensure that high-quality data is produced.
10. The nine Pacific VNRs completed since 2016 confirm that while country systems, policies, and processes are largely in place, there is a need for greater effort to build institutional and personnel capacity to enhance national planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and reporting systems processes.

*(c) An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of "ensuring that no one is left behind" at the global, regional and national levels against of background of the COVID-19 pandemic in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, within the respective area addressed by your intergovernmental bodies;*

1. Pacific Leaders have emphasised the collective priorities of the region, reaffirming our Blue Pacific approach with the following principles:
  - a) One Blue Pacific – recognising and engaging with the full Pacific Forum Membership;
  - b) Regional priorities – embedding and progressing the Forum's regional priorities;
  - c) Partnership approach – joint planning, programming and delivery by both the Pacific Islands Forum and Forum Dialogue Partner(s); and strengthening partnerships within the Pacific and beyond as stipulated in the *Framework of Pacific Regionalism*;
  - d) Utilise existing mechanisms – aligning with and seeking to build on existing regional and international mechanisms, processes and meetings; and
  - e) Collective outcomes and impact – developing joint outcomes statements and outlining a transparent process for follow-up and implementation.

#### Socio-economic impact of COVID-19

- Regional and global response measures to COVID-19 have had devastating socio-

economic impacts on Pacific economies, affecting key drivers of growth including the private sector, trade, tourism, remittances and fishing license fees. The Pacific region is now forecast to contract by an unprecedented 6.1% in 2020.

- Tourism has essentially come to a complete standstill. Many Forum Island Countries are highly dependent on tourism flows for employment, incomes and public and private sector revenues. Countries with high dependency on tourism have lost between 30% – 40% of national incomes.
- Remittance inflows to the region have declined by around 5% in 2020 and export revenues from key sectors, including fisheries, minerals, logging and agricultural primary commodities, have dropped significantly.
- Air services have collapsed, affecting connectivity and the financial viability of our airlines. COVID-19 border closures have also exacerbated ongoing challenges in aviation and shipping.
- Employment levels have declined substantially in directly and indirectly affected sectors. Household incomes have also plummeted, and informal sector activity has increased as unemployed families seek other sources of income and livelihood. Women's economic security has been diminished and needs specific attention.
- We recognise that social challenges are expected to escalate vulnerabilities as the economic effects take their toll at household and individual levels. Loss of employment and shrinking remittance flows are resulting in hardship and suffering for families and communities across the region. Poverty, hunger, malnutrition and social inequality will increase.
- Gender based violence, which is already a major social and economic challenge in the region is again on the rise and needs urgent attention as families struggle to survive in this new context.
- While most Forum Island Countries' education authorities have initiated extended breaks and put in place alternative learning modes, maintaining the quality and sustainability of education systems is critical to safeguard the future of our youth and skilled workforce.

#### COVID-19 recovery efforts

- COVID-19 has significantly disrupted economies and societies right across the world. We must rethink, plan and collaborate; working together to 'build back better' countries and economies that (i) leave no one behind; (ii) protect the health and wellbeing of all; (iii) preserve our natural and marine environment; (iv) are low emission and climate smart; and (v) build our resilience to future crises. We must come out of this pandemic more unified, safe and resilient, as one Blue Pacific and one Blue Planet.
- We call for coordinated and sustained regional response and recovery efforts to COVID-19 – working through national and regional systems – to protect the most vulnerable, support economic livelihoods and 'build back better' in support of a socially inclusive and economically resilient Blue Pacific.
- We call for cooperative multilateral approaches to the equitable access to safe, effective, trusted and certified COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines and ensuring their accountable and transparent procurement and distribution.
- We unanimously and unequivocally acknowledge that the burden of COVID-19 responses and recovery ultimately fall on the governments of the region, but this burden can only be met with support and assistance from the region's development partners and donors.

- We make a strong, concerted plea for development partner support for the recovery efforts of all Forum Island Countries (FICs), including those that have graduated to higher income classification, including by:
  - providing debt relief, in line with the April 2020 G20 decision;
  - enhancing flexibility in development financing modalities and priority areas of focus, including frontloading existing donor programmes and project pipelines;
  - increasing the use of general budget support (concessional loans and grants) to supplement operating balances, including exploring innovative development financing mechanisms;
  - continuing and increasing support to strengthen FICs' social protection systems, including addressing gender-based violence;
  - mobilise funding support for equitable access to COVID-19 testing cartridges and vaccines for FICs;
  - International Financial Institutions reassessing grant and loan eligibility and utilising all available instruments, so that FICs can fully benefit from their support;
  - IMF promptly considering a general allocation of Members' Special Drawing Rights, and enhancing support for Members having difficulties in meeting essential external commitments; and,
  - capitalisation of the Pacific Resilience Facility, when conditions allow, as a funding source that will be regionally available to FICs for building economic resilience and strengthening disaster preparedness.

*(d) Cooperation, measures and commitments at all levels in promoting sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;*

The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat explores multi-stakeholder networking that provides regional SDG collaboration, capacity strengthening and resilient recovery from the COVID19 pandemic. The following are current workstreams attributed to the pandemic.

Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19

- Pacific Forum Foreign Ministers met on 7 April to establish a ***Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C)***. The PHP-C has created a political space for dialogue to ensure Member countries' request for assistance is effectively responded too.
- The PHP-C has enabled the regional distribution of COVID-19 testing supplies and PPE.
- Five standard regional COVID-19 protocols are easing access to and movement of medical supplies and health workers through Forum Member countries. These standard protocols, endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers, allow for special cooperation and support in five areas affected by current border restrictions:
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  4. Repatriation of Forum nationals; and,
  5. Clearances for aircraft and ships transporting medical and humanitarian assistance, technical personnel, and repatriating nationals.
- Forum Members and our regional and international partners have come together to deliver a world-first in a collective regional approach to the crisis. We have united against COVID-19 to ensure the protection of our peoples.

*(e) Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development;*

- Design and implement national policies that are evidence-based and aimed at transforming those social and cultural norms that condone violence against women and girls, and work to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion.
- Governments adopt, review, and implement legislative measures to address all forms of sexual and gender based violence in all areas of life.
- Collect, collate, analyse and disseminate reliable, comparable and anonymised data and statistics on a regular basis, disaggregated by sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation (where sexuality is decriminalised in the region), age, ethnicity and disability, among other variables, at the national and local levels. Use this data to inform and effect policy changes.
- Ensure equitable and universal access to available, accessible, acceptable, affordable good quality and gender responsive health services and preventative health information including SRHR for all women and girls throughout the life cycle.
- Support and strengthen existing regional and national coordination mechanisms to address gender-based violence to avoid duplication and accelerate coordinated actions across all sectors.

*(f) Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2021 HLPF.*

In 2015, Pacific Island Forum Leaders committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and called for the SDGs to be contextualised to Pacific realities. The 2018 Pacific Quadrennial Report and the recent 2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report provides our Pacific update on SDGs by outlining high-level trends on progress to date and baseline information.

**1. Climate change and resilience**

*Forum Island nations are facing a climate change crisis; we need urgent global action to keep us on the 1.5°C pathway*

While COVID-19 is our immediate crisis, climate change presents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and wellbeing of the Pacific and its peoples, as declared by Forum Leaders in the *Kainaki II Declaration*<sup>1</sup> and *Boe Declaration*.<sup>2</sup>

Forum Leaders calls for urgent, transformational global climate change action

- We call on the international community to meet or exceed their obligations and timelines set out under the Paris Agreement and deliver more ambitious climate action, including by communicating or updating ambitious National Determined Contributions in accordance with the five-year cycle. COVID-19 response and recovery measures

<sup>1</sup> The *Kainaki II Declaration* is available here as an annex to the 50<sup>th</sup> PIF Communique: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/50th-Pacific-Islands-Forum-Communique.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The *Boe Declaration on Regional Security* is available here: <https://www.forumsec.org/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>

should advance the goals of the Paris Agreement and stimulate low-emissions technologies and climate resilient development.

- In 2019, Forum Leaders issued the *Kainaki II Declaration* – the strongest climate change declaration issued by all eighteen Forum Members.
- We re-emphasise Forum Leaders' commitment to urgent, transformational global climate change action, noting with concern that:
  - global greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, reaching record levels, and with no signs of peaking any time soon;<sup>3</sup> and,
  - current policies and actions put us on a trend to exceed 1.5°C by as early as 2030 and reach 3°C or more by the end of this century, drawing attention to the need for Parties to meet or exceed their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- The *Kainaki II Declaration* calls on all countries and non-state actors to join with the *Blue Pacific* in taking bold, decisive and transformative action to address the ever-present challenges of climate change, through taking ten actions:
  1. All Parties to the Paris Agreement to meet or exceed their Nationally Determined Contributions in order to pursue global efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Those not a Party to the Paris Agreement should do likewise.
  2. All Parties to the Paris Agreement to formulate and communicate mid-century, long-term low emissions development strategies by 2020. This may include commitments and strategies to achieve net zero carbon by 2050.
  3. All countries to recall the UN Secretary General's remarks regarding carbon pricing, fossil fuel subsidies, and just transition from fossil fuels, and all Parties to the Paris Agreement to reflect on these views when updating their Nationally Determined Contributions and formulating Low Emission Development Strategies.
  4. Members of G7 and G20 to rapidly implement their commitment to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.
  5. The international community to continue efforts towards meeting their global climate finance commitment of USD 100 billion per year by 2020 from a variety of sources, through bilateral, regional or global mechanisms, including the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund and completing the work required to enable the Adaption Fund to serve the Paris Agreement.
  6. The international community to immediately increase support and assistance for Pacific-led science-based initiatives to improve our understanding of risk and vulnerability.
  7. The international community to welcome the work of the IPCC and consider in relevant decision-making the findings of the *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, and the *Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*.
  8. All Parties to consider developing a work programme on oceans within the UNFCCC and to convene a workshop on the climate-ocean nexus in 2020.<sup>4</sup>
  9. All countries to accelerate support for the work of the *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts* and ensure efforts to avert, minimise and address loss and damage are key elements of the financial support to meet climate change and development challenges in the Pacific region.

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<sup>3</sup> UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2019

<sup>4</sup> Subsequently and consistent with the COP25 decision on oceans, support the importance of the ocean in the context of climate change, and participation in a dialogue on the ocean and climate change to consider how to strengthen mitigation and adaptation action in this context.

10. The UNSG to urgently appoint a Special Adviser on climate change and security, and the UNSC to appoint a special rapporteur to produce a regular review of global, regional and national security threats caused by climate change.

#### Our commitment to bold regional climate change action

- To secure the future of our *Blue Pacific*, Forum Leaders are pursuing innovative solutions to combat climate change and build resilience.
- Through the ***Boe Declaration on Regional Security*** we are increasing our ability to respond and manage threats to our security, including our single greatest threat of climate change.
- We have established the ***Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)*** and its inclusive ***Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP)***, as an integrated approach to address climate change adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk management. The FRDP and PRP emphasise a principle-based approach to resilience building to address the root cause of societal and environmental vulnerability, supporting actors at the regional, national, sub-national and community levels. The FRDP and PRP encourage innovation, change and genuine and active partnerships, placing climate change and disaster risk at the centre of development. The FRDP and PRP strive to ensure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of resilience interventions.
- We are developing the ***Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF)*** – the first Pacific designed, led and owned initiative to provide communities with access to finance to ensure that existing and/or new community-level projects consider and prepare for the increasing risks of climate-induced and other natural hazard risk disasters.
- We have established the ***Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC)*** – a centre of excellence for climate change action in the region with a focus on bringing together partnerships to realise Pacific Countries' and Territories' priority climate change responses and to build capacity within the Blue Pacific region.
- We are committed to a collective effort, including to develop international law, with the aim of ensuring that once a Forum Member's maritime zones are delineated, in accordance with the ***1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea***, the Member's maritime zones cannot be challenged or reduced as a result of sea level rise and climate change.

## 2. Sustainable ocean management, use and conservation

### *As guardians of the largest portion of the Pacific Ocean, our leadership matters*

- Forum Leaders are committed stewards of the *Blue Pacific* continent, working to strengthen the management, use and conservation of the Pacific Ocean.
- The ocean is inseparable from Pacific peoples, cultures, economies and societies. Indeed 96% of our region is ocean, and together Pacific island countries are stewards of over 40 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. We are the **largest oceanic continent** on the Blue Planet.
- We have a longstanding commitment to sustainable ocean management, use and conservation including through the *2002 Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy*; the *2010 Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape*; the *Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries*, and the *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region*.



- We have demonstrated strong, global leadership in calling for urgent action on oceans, which led to the adoption of SDG14 and its targets.
- We are concerned that the health and sustainability of our ocean is now – more than ever – under threat. This includes the threats of climate change to our ocean systems and species; marine pollution; and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Such threats not only undermine our sustainable development, which relies on marine ecosystem services, but in the case of climate change, pose a threat to our very viability as large ocean island states.

#### Pacific Forum Leaders' ocean priorities

- To ensure our national and regional efforts to sustainably manage our ocean are not in vain, we need urgent action to prevent the irreversible impacts of climate change on our oceanic continent. This should include considering developing a work programme on oceans with the UNFCCC and convening a workshop on the climate-ocean nexus in 2020.
- Forum Leaders are committed to **securing the region's maritime boundaries**, particularly in the context of sea level rise and noting that 13 out of the 48 shared boundaries in the Pacific are yet to be legally delineated.
- We are committed to a collective effort, including to develop international law, with the aim of ensuring that once a Forum Member's maritime zones are delineated in accordance with the *1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea*, that the Member's maritime zones could not be challenged or reduced as a result of sea-level rise and climate change.
- We are working to **protect our ocean from harmful plastics through our *Pacific Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2018 – 2025*** and call on Pacific Rim countries to join and commit to action on addressing marine pollution and debris.
- We continue to advocate for the reduction and elimination of any threat posed to our people and ecosystems by the presence of **nuclear waste, radioactive and other contaminants**, shipwrecks, and World War II relics.
- Our Leaders have agreed to continue support to assist the Republic of the Marshall Islands in its efforts to engage the United States Government to achieve a full, fair and just resolution to address the ongoing impacts of the United States' Nuclear Testing Programme.
- Forum Leaders have also endorsed the commissioning of an appropriate body to undertake a scientific assessment of nuclear contamination in the Pacific, including in the nuclear test site at Runit in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.
- Forum Members are focused on **ensuring a robust and effective Implementing Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) is achieved**. A new instrument must rise-up to the huge challenges and threats facing marine biodiversity. Our negotiating priorities include ensuring the new instrument:
  - establishes a robust and ambitious framework to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of our oceans;
  - creates a clear legal regime for accessing marine genetic resources and promoting the equitable sharing of benefits;
  - contains robust and action-oriented capacity building and technology transfer provisions;

- incorporates the traditional knowledge accumulated through centuries by indigenous peoples and local communities; and,
- leaves no one behind, including consideration of Small Island Developing States to support their role, rights and duties as stewards of the ocean.

End.