

THE FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM





This Framework for Pacific Regionalism was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in July 2014. It replaces the *Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration*.

The Framework is intended to support “focussed political conversations and settlements that address key strategic issues, including shared sovereignty, pooling resources and delegating decision-making” (Forum Leaders’ Special Retreat on the Pacific Plan Review, Cook Islands, May 2014). Rather than providing a list of regional priorities, it sets out a robust process through which regional priorities will be identified and implemented.

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Forum Leaders' Statement (2014)

Pacific peoples are the custodians of the world's largest, most peaceful and abundant ocean, its many islands and its rich diversity of cultures.

We celebrate and draw strength from the culture and traditions, language, social values, and religious freedoms and beliefs that bind citizens and communities together, providing sustenance, social stability, and resilience.

We acknowledge our shared responsibility for our significant terrestrial and oceanic resources, which provide livelihoods and opportunities for sustainable development.

We also face significant challenges, including complex vulnerabilities, dependencies, and uncertainties that arise for countries and communities as our region changes with modernity, the processes of globalisation, and the damaging effects of climate change.

We stand together as a Pacific region because there are significant benefits to sharing and combining our resources to leverage our voice, influence and competitiveness, and to overcome geographical and demographic disadvantages.

From its foundation, the Pacific Islands Forum has recognised the advantages of shared purpose and of close cooperation and coordination. Our nations commit to working together to address our common challenges, harness shared strengths, and ensure that our individual and collective advancement brings practical benefits to all Pacific people. Deeper regionalism will help increase market opportunities, improve service delivery, and ensure good governance for Pacific people.

Forum Leaders embrace Pacific regionalism as:

The expression of a common sense of identity and purpose, leading progressively to the sharing of institutions, resources, and markets, with the purpose of complementing national efforts, overcoming common constraints, and enhancing sustainable and inclusive development within Pacific countries and territories and for the Pacific region as a whole.

For successful implementation of this Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which replaces the Pacific Plan, we seek the support, commitment, and ownership of all Pacific people, including governments and administrations, civil society organisations, private sector representatives, regional organisations, development partners, media, and other key stakeholders.



Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Vision

Our Pacific Vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives.

Values

We value and depend upon the integrity of our vast ocean and our island resources.

We treasure the diversity and heritage of the Pacific and seek an inclusive future in which cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed.

We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies.

We seek peaceful, safe, and stable communities and countries, ensuring full security and wellbeing for the peoples of the Pacific.

We support full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific.

We strive for effective, open and honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships—based on mutual accountability and respect—with each other, within our sub-regions, within our region, and beyond.

These Pacific regional values will guide all our policy-making and implementation.

Objectives

Our principal objectives are:

- Sustainable development that combines economic social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably;
- Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable;
- Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and
- Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.

Forms of Regionalism

For each of the principal objectives, Pacific countries will adopt forms of regionalism, drawing from the collective actions below, that work in support of deeper regionalism.

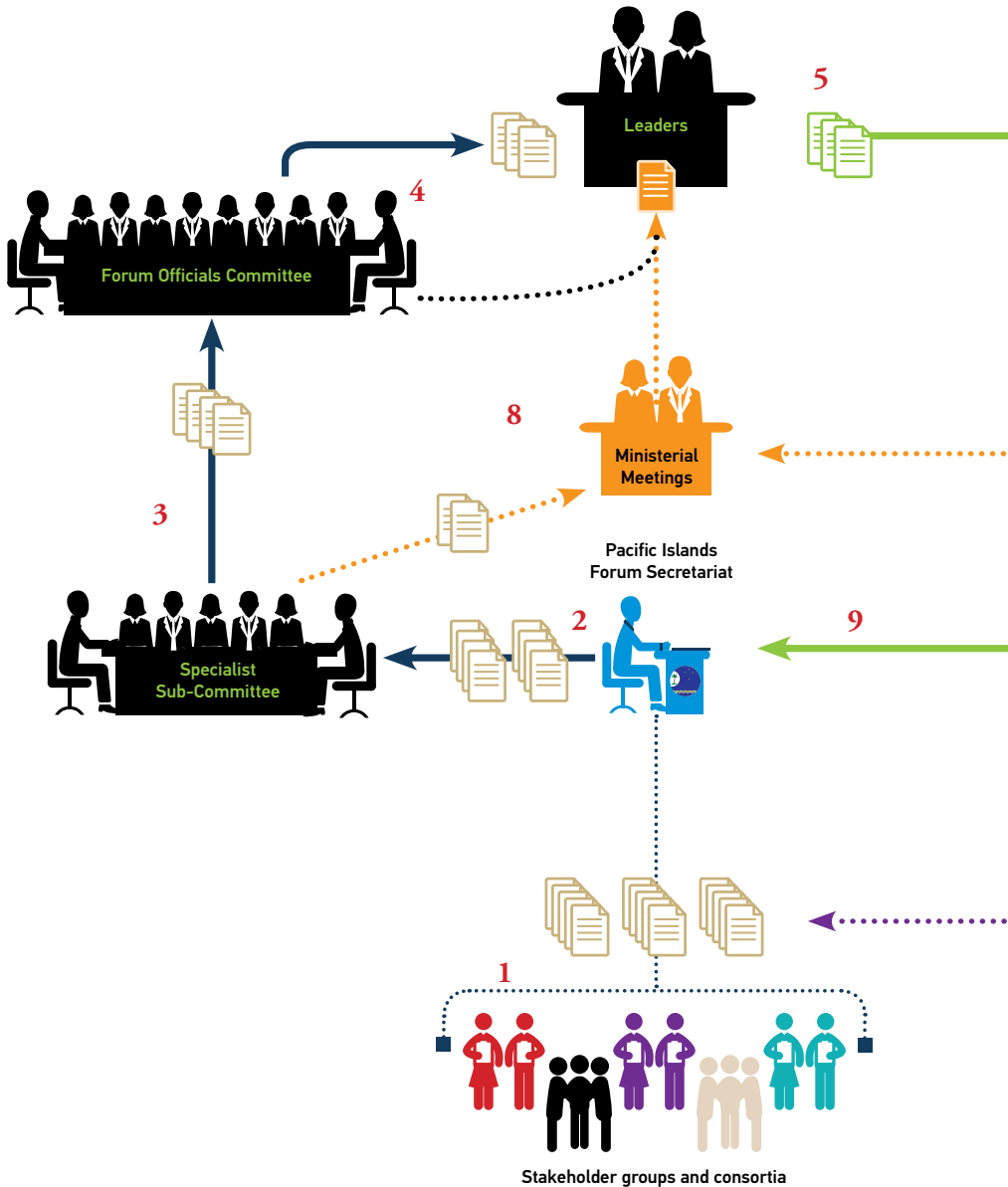
| Regional collective action | To achieve: | By: | Requiring: |
|--|--|--|---|
| Coordination | Open consultation and access to information; and coordinated application of shared, best-practice norms and standards. | Establishing and managing agreed processes that facilitate regional dialogue and access to (and use of) information. | Voluntary consultations and agreements; possible resource sharing. |
| Cooperation | An effective and strengthened voice in protecting and sustainably harnessing the region's physical, social and cultural assets for the benefit of all. | Developing and committing to coordinated regional or sub-regional policies and strategies. | Voluntary agreement to modes of regional cooperation; services are mainly funded and delivered nationally. |
| Collaboration | Achievement of economies of scale and equitable benefits that cannot be achieved nationally. | Delivering regional public goods and pooled services. | Voluntary agreement to modes of regional collaboration; national governments are freed from daily management of these priorities. |
| Harmonisation | Achievement of shared institutional and/or legal objectives. | Entering into specific regional or sub-regional commitments to common policies, regulations, standards and/or processes. | Legally binding arrangements, including commitment to national resource allocation; each country free to amend their internal laws / requirements to meet the shared regional objectives. |
| Economic integration | Greater economic prosperity founded on regional economic integration and sustainability and the equitable distribution of benefits and costs. | Lowering physical and technical market barriers to enable freer movement of people and goods within and among countries. | Legally binding arrangements, including commitment to national resource allocation; each country commits to amending their internal laws / requirements to meet the shared regional objectives. |
| Administrative / legal / institutional integration | A secure and well governed Pacific region pledged to upholding regional values. | Agreeing to common rules, standards and institutions to foster and sustain integration. | Legally binding arrangements, including commitment to national resource allocation and to operating within regionally mandated requirements. |

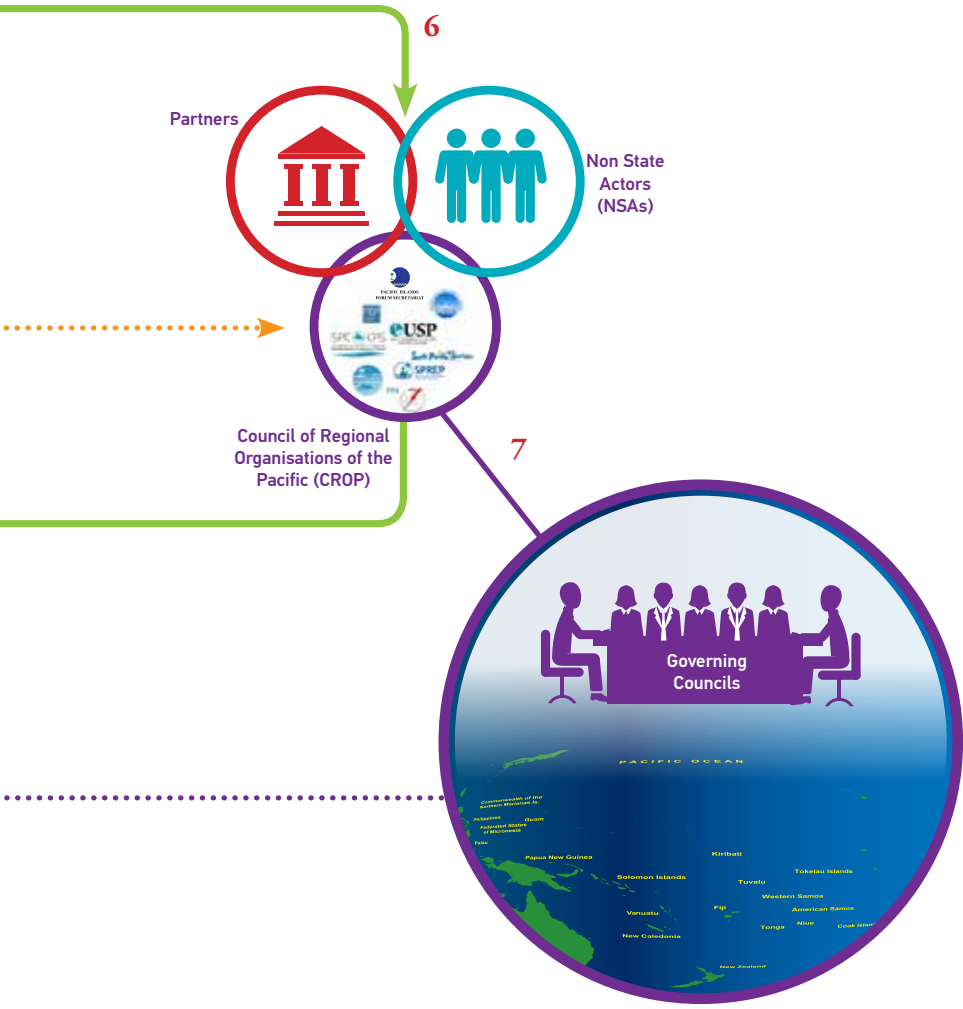
Process for priority setting

To further regionalism in line with the vision, values, objectives, and forms of regionalism set out above, Pacific countries will prioritise major regional initiatives for Leaders' oversight through the following process:

1. All interested stakeholders will be eligible to submit proposals for new regional initiatives to be overseen and driven by Forum Leaders. Proposals will be submitted to the Forum Secretariat, using a standard template that demonstrates how the proposed initiative is in line with the values and objectives established in this Framework, and how it meets the approved tests for regional action (see Annex 1). The Forum Secretariat will assist stakeholders requiring assistance with this process.
2. The Forum Secretariat will check proposals for completeness, and will compile all eligible and viable proposals for further consideration by a specialist sub-committee of the Forum Officials Committee (FOC). The list of proposals will be made publically available.
3. The FOC specialist sub-committee will review new proposals alongside progress reports for any existing initiatives. It will evaluate whether any existing priorities should be halted due to lack of progress or unfavourable re-evaluation against the tests; and whether any new proposals should be put forward for the consideration of Leaders. The specialist sub-committee's decisions will be made public and will follow clear and transparent principles aligned with the values and objectives set out in this Framework.
4. The FOC will receive the specialist sub-committee's report to Leaders, and have an opportunity to provide comments or further advice to Leaders. The FOC will compose a proposed agenda for Leaders, including consideration of the recommendations of the specialist sub-committee, consideration of pressing issues forwarded to Leaders from Ministerial meetings, and political issues identified by FOC as requiring Leaders' guidance. The FOC will have responsibility for ensuring that politically sensitive and major regional issues and initiatives are the focus of Leaders' meeting agendas.

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5. At their annual Forum, Leaders:
 - Will be invited to consider the specialist sub-committee's recommendations, identify a small number of regional initiatives for the region to focus on (with no more than five, ongoing or new, to be selected at any one time), and provide directions on further policy development, implementation, and reporting;
 - Will have opportunity to discuss other highest-priority concerns raised by Ministers and the FOC for Leaders' guidance; and
 - May propose new ideas for regional initiatives, which would be subjected to the evaluation and priority-setting process set out in the previous steps.
6. If an initiative is selected by Leaders for their oversight, the relevant agencies, organisations, and partners involved in proposing the initiative would work together on its implementation.
7. Work on regional initiatives selected by Leaders through this Framework should be consistent with the work plans already agreed on by the governing bodies of the relevant agencies, organisations, and partners. In addition to their broader programme of ongoing work in the region, these agencies may develop future proposals for new regional initiatives, which would be subjected to the evaluation and priority-setting process set out above.
8. Regional initiatives that are not recommended by the specialist sub-committee for Leaders-level oversight may be overseen by Ministers—who retain decision-making responsibilities in their areas of sectoral expertise—by officials or by the Governing Council of the relevant CROP agency.
9. The Forum Secretariat will compile progress reports for existing priority areas, at least annually. Progress reports will detail actions taken and costs incurred, and provide an updated evaluation against the tests for regional action. These progress reports will be shared with the original proponents and implementers for comment before being forwarded (along with stakeholders' comments) to the specialist sub-committee, FOC and Leaders and be made publically accessible.

Measuring progress

Progress will be monitored by:

- Relevant implementing agencies identifying measurable indicators of outcomes and impacts for each initiative, linked to the Framework's principal objectives;
- Relevant implementing agencies ensuring every initiative has a detailed implementation and monitoring plan;
- The Forum Secretariat analysing and reporting on areas of major progress in initiatives on an annual basis, with reference to the measurable indicators;
- The Forum Secretariat regularly sending high-level delegations to visit Member countries and to hold open dialogues with key stakeholders across the Pacific on progress towards regionalism, including the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Framework and its supporting processes, and the contribution of regionalism towards national plans and objectives;
- The Forum Secretariat working together with CROP agencies to develop a high-level regional monitoring framework, linking regional work across key areas to the pursuit of higher-order objectives for regionalism and the fulfilment of SDGs / post-2015 development goals;
- The specialist- sub-committee reviewing progress reports from the Forum Secretariat, and preparing a brief report to Leaders highlighting important issues for consideration, including points of notable progress or concern;
- Ministers reviewing progress and making decisions in their areas of mandate, related to the pursuit of regional cooperation and integration; and
- Leaders reviewing progress and determining the continuing value of major initiatives in advancing the regionalism agenda.

Annex 1: Tests for Regional Action

More specific and detailed criteria and evaluation guidelines, including a relative weighting for each test, will be developed and made public and will be used consistently by the Forum Secretariat and the specialist sub-committee in assessing regional initiatives.

| Test | Criteria for regional implementation |
|------------------------------|---|
| Market test | The initiative should not involve a service that markets can provide well. |
| Sovereignty test | The initiative should maintain the degree of effective sovereignty held by national governments (countries, not regional bodies, should decide priorities). |
| Regionalism test | <p>The initiative should meet one of the following criteria at a sub-regional or regional level, in support of national priorities and objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. establish a shared norm or standard ii. establish a common position on an issue iii. deliver a public or quasi-public good which is regional (or sub-regional) in its scope iv. realise economies of scale v. overcome national capacity constraints vi. complement national governments where they lack capacity to provide national public goods like security or the rule of law vii. facilitate economic or political integration <p>Where benefits accrue sub-regionally, the contribution to broader regionalism should be clear.</p> |
| Benefit test | <p>The initiative should bring substantial net benefits, as demonstrated by a cost-benefit analysis. The distribution of benefits across countries and across stakeholders within the region should also be considered—particularly with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The relative costs and benefits for smaller island states (an “SIS test”). · How inclusive the proposal is of all stakeholders who might benefit from regionalism. |
| Political oversight test | The initiative should require the Leaders’ attention and input (as opposed to being within the mandate of Ministers or other governing bodies). |
| Risk and sustainability test | The initiative should demonstrate a robust risk and sustainability evaluation, be based on a sound implementation plan, be supported by some identified funding, and demonstrate available capacity and experience for successful implementation. |
| Duplication test | The initiative should not be currently under progress by another organisation or process, and there should be no duplication of effort. |

Background

The Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration



The Pacific Plan was adopted by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2005 as the region's strategy for strengthening cooperation and integration between Pacific countries. Its aim was to support Pacific countries in working closely together on areas requiring collective action in order to do more than they could separately, to manage shared resources, and to achieve the shared

goal of a “a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives” (as set out on the Forum Leaders’ Vision, 2004).

When Leaders first endorsed the Pacific Plan in 2005, they decided that it should be a living document – one that would be updated and reviewed regularly. Initially, four “pillars” for the Pacific Plan’s strategic objectives were identified: economic growth, sustainable development, governance, and security. In 2009, the focus of the sustainable development pillar was expanded to recognise and include two emerging issues: responding to climate change, and improving livelihoods and well-being.

The Pacific Plan Review

In 2012, at their annual Pacific Islands Forum in Cook Islands, Pacific Leaders called for a comprehensive review of the Pacific Plan. They recognised that over the years since the Plan was adopted the region had evolved considerably, and a change in the approach to regionalism was needed to respond to these contextual shifts.

Leaders selected an eminent person from the region to lead the Review: the Rt. Hon. Sir Mekere Morauta, a former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Together, Sir Mekere and his Review team of consultants and Pacific officials conducted consultations in all Forum member and associate member countries. They met with



Sir Mekere Morauta, KCMG

over 700 people from governments, civil society, the private sector, development partners, universities, and regional agencies across the Pacific. They also called for written submissions online, receiving over 70.



Sir Mekere presented the key Review findings to Leaders at the 2013 Forum in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands. The final Review report was then delivered at the end of October 2013, and released to the public in December 2013 after being discussed at the Forum Officials Committee meeting.

In presenting to Leaders, Sir Mekere called for a thorough overhaul of the Plan, stating “we see a region that is at a crossroads and one that needs regionalism more than ever before” and concluding that the future of the Pacific Plan should be as “a framework for advancing the political principle of regionalism through a robust, inclusive processes of political dialogue, the expression of political values about

regionalism and sovereignty, and the decisive implementation of key, game-changing, drivers of regional integration.”

His final report provided details of the changes that the Review team concluded were necessary for supporting deeper regionalism and better regional-level outcomes.

Forum Leaders’ Decisions to recast the Pacific Plan as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

On May 5th 2014, a Special Forum Leaders’ Retreat on the Pacific Plan Review was held in the Cook Islands. At their retreat, Leaders endorsed the re-casting of the Plan as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

Following directions from the Special Leaders’ Retreat, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat undertook consultations around the region to prepare a draft of the Framework for Leaders’ consideration at the 45th Pacific Islands Forum in Palau. The Framework was formally endorsed in the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué, and Leaders encouraged its early implementation. Leaders recognised the significant benefits that deeper regionalism could bring—while also recognising the need for regional processes to complement national efforts.



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