

## **REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE**

Please complete each section below.

### **1. Contact Details**

Please provide the following contact details:

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### **2. Name of Initiative**

*Regional Cooperation and Enhancement in Maritime Surveillance and Enforcement to Combat Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in the Pacific.*

### **3. Background and Rationale**

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

**Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.**

The threat to Pacific Nations' marine life and to the ocean that provides it sustenance is quite clear. As stated in the Palau Declaration at the 45<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum,

*In our lifetime, a dangerous combination of human impacts has come to threaten the foundation of our Pacific livelihoods, which centers largely on the Pacific Ocean, and indeed those of the rest of the world. Overharvesting and overfishing, dangerous fishing practices and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU), damaging extractive industries, pollution, invasive species, coastal runoff, and other stressors (both local and exogenous) have weakened the resilience of many marine ecosystems and constitute a massive threat to the health and productivity of the ocean and its resources. Compounding these pressures, global carbon*

*dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions are contributing to ocean warming, increased frequency of disasters, sea level rise and acidification and potential loss of territories present the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific and one of the greatest challenges for the entire world. The implications of these challenges to the populations of the Pacific are very significant and must be addressed.*

*IUU fishing robs the Pacific of its development opportunities, reduces revenue from fisheries, undermines investment and employment opportunities and threatens the sustainability of fish stocks. A growing number of marine protected areas and conservation initiatives implemented in the region have significant opportunity costs largely borne by Forum Island countries themselves. Effectively implementing marine protected areas will provide global and regional benefits. (Palau Declaration, 45<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, 2014)*

### **The Need for a Regional Approach**

With the vast majority of Pacific Nations territories consisting of oceans, along with numerous high-seas pockets and porous Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundaries, surveillance and enforcement for PIF member states EEZs' presents numerous challenges. Many PIF States need to improve current surveillance and enforcement technology; increase the participation of regional fisheries management organizations, NGO's and partnerships with developed nations, and expand funding capacity to take advantage of the latest in surveillance and enforcement technology.

The monitoring and enforcement challenges for the Pacific will be significant, but fortunately less complex if approached from a regional perspective. Many Pacific Nations are members of some of the world's most sophisticated and advanced co-operative fisheries institutions. The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Office of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNAO) provide high quality technical advice and support, while the Harmonized Minimum Terms and Conditions of Access for Foreign Fishing Vessels (HMTCs), the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), the FFA Vessel Monitoring Scheme (VMS), the FSMA, the Niue Treaty, and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC) support collective management, enforcement and development of the region's migratory fisheries.

This initiative will seek to create partnerships between PIF countries, RFMO's, NGO's, and developed nations to identify best practices, the latest in surveillance and enforcement technology, funding sources and opportunities to tackle the issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Pacific. The fact that sub-regional cooperative efforts have proven to be successful and effective deterrents to IUU fishing lead to the conclusion that a Pacific-wide regional approach with a clearly identified body with representatives from all regions would serve, not only as a repository of information and resources, but also as a unified voice of the Pacific against illegal fishing.

#### 4. Description

*Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?*

**Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.**

Detecting IUU activity does not necessarily require vessels at sea and can be achieved through remote area surveillance options such as vessel monitoring systems, electronic monitoring systems for gear use, aircraft and satellite surveillance (including drones), and passive detection systems. A good example of this type of remote monitoring is practiced by the WCPFC and FFA Vessel Monitoring Schemes, which enable Palau to monitor the vessels inside Palau's EEZ of all large scale fishing commercial fishing vessels that are authorized to fish in the Western and Central Pacific tuna fisheries. This monitoring is available regardless of whether Palau's EEZ is open or closed to fishing, and therefore offers Palau an opportunity to monitor all registered fishing vessels as they transit through Palau's EEZ.

Palau is also in the process of creating a strategic national plan to combat IUU fishing in its waters and are partnering with many organizations to strengthen surveillance and enforcement capacity. We believe that this plan can be expanded to include support from many of the PIF states, both neighbouring and remote. Examples of successful cooperative efforts include aerial surveillance operations in the East and South Pacific and can be emulated by other PIF members. Smaller Island States (SIS) that may not be able to afford assets to combat IUU may seek to enter into cooperative agreements with other SIS to share in the cost of such assets and share them cooperatively. MOU's or other agreements may also be explored by neighbouring Pacific Nations to address the issue of IUU vessels that flee across borders to escape prosecution. An example of this type of legislation exists in Senate Bill 9-30 (Palau National Marine Sanctuary Bill) that is pending a vote in Palau's senate now. Should this bill be signed into law, it would allow IUU vessels that have fled Palau's waters and have been captured by neighbouring Marine Law Enforcement officers to be prosecuted back in Palau's courts as well as IUU vessels that have fled to Palau's waters from other nations jurisdictions.

The potential for regional cooperation in this effort to combat IUU is quite significant. Illegal fishing vessels and their crew have shown that they are not limited by the borders set by Pacific Nations. If each country or area of the Pacific operates in a vacuum, illegal fishing and the "bad actors" will continue committing maritime crimes but with a regional, cooperative effort, we can track the vessels and tackle the problem on a Pacific scale.

## 5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.

**Please limit your response to no more than 500 words**

### **Regional Vision:**

Because the health of the ocean is essential for all PIF countries, and is directly threatened by Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing, a regional approach is necessary to combat this issue. Leaders and communities have developed and are implementing many significant local, national, sub-regional, regional and international initiatives across all aspects of sustainable Ocean management. This cooperative approach to addressing the health of the ocean is in line with the comprehensive regional umbrella framework, the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP) adopted by leaders in 2004 as well as the Pacific Oceanscape framework in 2010.

### **Values:**

This initiative would strengthen our commitment to conserving and protecting our most valued resource, our Ocean. As stated in The Palau Declaration from the 45<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum:

*IUU fishing robs the Pacific of its development opportunities, reduces revenue from fisheries, undermines investment and employment opportunities and threatens the sustainability of fish stocks. A growing number of marine protected areas and conservation initiatives implemented in the region have significant opportunity costs largely borne by Forum Island countries themselves. Effectively implementing marine protected areas will provide global and regional benefits. (Palau Declaration, 45<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, 2014)*

The core values of Pacific Island Nations lie in our culture. Each nation has a unique culture and unique needs. Recognizing this, we are aware that the strategy to combat IUU as well as the contribution to regional ocean conservation will be different for each Nation. There are, however, opportunities for cooperation in this endeavour and this initiative will seek to identify and maximise those opportunities.

### **Objectives:**

As stated in the “Values” portion of this section, the overall objective for this initiative will be to identify and maximise opportunities and areas of cooperation between all stakeholders. As stated in the Pacific Ocean Alliance Charter (a mechanism envisaged under Our Sea of Islands, Our Livelihoods, Our Oceania, the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO)...

Lastly, the objective of this initiative is directly in line with the roll of the Pacific Ocean Alliance.

The Roll of the Pacific Ocean Alliance

- A. Supporting improved cooperation and collaboration between ocean stakeholders. This includes cooperation between stakeholders in the Pacific Region and inter-regional cooperation.

- B. Supporting networks of leaders drawn from local communities, districts and provinces through to national and regional special issues advocates, ocean champions and ambassadors to bring the ocean and related issues to the center stage.
- C. Supporting opportunities to pool and share the expertise of its members for the benefit of its members, Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) and the region as a whole.
- D. Providing a central platform for engagement on ocean-related issues.

## 6. Additional Information

*Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.*

***Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.***

In April of 2015, Palau partnered with the Scripps Oceanographic Institution and Pew Charitable Trusts to host a marine domain awareness (MDA) workshop. The workshop brought together experts from government and non-government agencies as well as regional bodies such as the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). The final product from this three day working session will be a comprehensive MDA strategy and implementation plan for Palau. The Plan, which is anticipated to be completed in July 2015, will:

- Review current surveillance and enforcement capacity in Palau;
- Outline immediate monitoring and enforcement needs and steps;
- Identify where Palau would like to be in five years when the sanctuary is fully in effect;
- Provide implementation benchmarks, training and staffing requirements, equipment necessities, cost estimates; and
- Identify potential future government and NGO partners.

During the Workshop, participants developed a Surveillance Vision and Mission State as follows:

### MISSION STATEMENT

Beginning in January 2019, Palau Marine Law Enforcement in collaboration with local, state, national, partner nation and non-governmental organizations, will conduct continuous monitoring and control operations to deter, detect, investigate and/or interdict maritime violations of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary in order to protect the Palauan natural resources from illegal fishing, criminal acts or other activities which are detrimental to the natural environment of Palau and its international waters.

### OBJECTIVES

The participants also established a set of primary objectives, which included:

- The establishment of internal programmatic (Policy and Procedures) improvements to increase EXISTING surveillance and response capability in the near term;
- The development and implementation of a fully operationally capable, continuous MCS system... by

2019;

- The implementation of a comprehensive Public Relations/Outreach in order to maximize deterrence through aggressive exposure;
- The institution of Regular Plan and MCS System Evaluations in order to ensure plan is meeting the changing environment of emerging threats as well as advances in technology; and
- The implementation of Financial Programmatic to ensure that MCS initiatives have sufficient and dependable budget(s).

In line with these objectives, the Workshop resulted in a set of proposed activities and related costs. Some of these activities require immediate (Preliminary Activities) attention, such as training of staff and the pilot development of an aviation capacity. Other Activities (Phase I Activities) need to be undertaken prior to the passage of the Marine Sanctuary Law to allow for effective implementation when the law is passed. Finally, Phase II activities are targeted to be undertaken after the Legislation is passed.

This plan, when finalised, will fit in with regional efforts to combat IUU. The purpose of this endeavour was not to “re-invent the wheel” but to see how Palau could leverage our strengths to tackle the problem of IUU in our waters by enhancing current regional initiatives, partnerships and grassroots support. The plan is taking shape and looks to be the beginnings of a successful campaign against IUU but we are now at the stage where we need to call on the regional efforts of the Forum to take this initiative to the next level.