

REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION FORUM

Pacific Civil Society Organisations Statement to Troika Leaders

Papua New Guinea, 8th September 2015

We wish to acknowledge His Excellency Mr Christopher J Loeak, His Excellency Mr Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr, the Honourable Peter O'Neill and His Excellency Mr Peter M. Christian as members of the Pacific Islands Forum Troika. Your attendance this morning demonstrates a genuineness to engage with Civil Society under the new Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- 1. Provide guidance and feedback to Forum Leaders on engagement with civil society and working in partnership across sectors in a transparent and inclusive dialogue.*
- 2. Provide requested feedback on 5 regional issues identified under the new Pacific Regionalism Framework.*
- 3. In addition highlight the critical importance of the West Papua situation for Forum Leaders action.*

We thank the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat for facilitating the opportunities to engage the Troika leaders this week and we ask that this paper be circulated to all Forum Delegations as part of the formal Forum process. Following the Forum, we seek to know how our input has influenced your deliberations this week.

Pacific Islands Forum and Civil Society

Civil society appeals to Leaders to garner political support for this agenda. As a sector civil society seeks your political leadership to direct regional institutions like PIFS and members of the CROP family to actively facilitate institutional arrangements that reflect a revitalized citizen engagement strategy. Such political leadership would demonstrate the genuine commitment to work with civil society and ensure appropriate representation through the regional architecture.

Highlights of five policy issues contained within the Special Sub Committee on Regionalism and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders agenda:

1. “Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management”

We call for Pacific Island Leaders to maintain a strong and united voice to Paris COP 21 and beyond, reflecting the scale of the climate emergency and need to manage and reduce the risk of climate related disasters facing Pacific Island People. We explicitly call on Australia and New Zealand to join a united voice from the Pacific seeking urgent, just and ambitious climate action.

2. “Increased economic returns from fisheries activity and maritime surveillance”.

We recognise both the importance of increasing economic returns from fisheries and critically the vital importance of these fisheries to local food security and livelihoods. Further we encourage Forum Leaders to take an integrated approach across the whole-domain of your Pacific Island jurisdictions. Only in such a holistic whole-domain approach can Pacific Island peoples realise their stewardship role of the ocean and truly benefit from the ecosystem services of fish, minerals, genetic resources, tourism, transport and carbon sequestration and thereby invest appropriately in monitoring, control and surveillance and deal effectively with impacts of climate change. In effectively managing your domain we urge to unite on high seas management issues for without effective action for areas beyond national jurisdiction everything you do within your sovereign jurisdiction is under threat.

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3. “Regional ICT Advisory Committee”

Civil society recognise that information technology is a game changer for the Pacific. We call leaders to look beyond an advisory committee to a visionary strategy which incorporates a coordinated master-planning approach to establish interconnected regional ICT infrastructure and the strategic development of a regional ICT industry in the Pacific. Our communities cannot afford to be merely consumers of other nation’s digital products and services. We must grow our own skills base and our own software and technology innovation industries in order to position our region for digital age economic and social sustainability.

4. “Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention”

We call on Leaders to expand the focus of the cervical cancer priority to include a broader focus on promoting and saving women’s lives by ending preventable deaths from maternal mortality and NCDs. Cost-effective solutions already exist and we recommend that Leaders mobilise resources behind these practical solutions as outlined in the PIF CSO Forum Position Paper.

5. “West Papua”

West Papua is a very real human tragedy that has been unfolding in the Pacific for the last 54 years. Since Indonesia’s forced occupation of the western half of New Guinea, West Papua has suffered brutal oppression and extreme injustice. Current estimates indicate more than 500,000 West Papuan have died under colonial rule. Despite assurances of an improving human rights situation by the Indonesian government, current affairs indicate otherwise. Mass arrests and fatal shootings, for instance, have continued. The West Papuan struggle is typically viewed through 2 lens: a) Human Rights; and b) Political. Responses have therefore been designed to address the gross violation of human rights as well as the restoration of self-determination. So far, efforts on both fronts have been hampered by diplomatic and/or economic pressures and a lack of political solidarity.

West Papua is unquestionably a part of the Pacific region – a member of our Pacific family. Recognizing this close affinity implicates Pacific regionalism in this story. Finding just resolution thus sits squarely on our shoulders – it is our moral obligation as a Pacific family. And, there is a strong resurgence of hope that change is possible. Popular support has surged around the region for West Papuan pro-liberation aspirations in the last 2-3 years. On occasion, Pacific leaders have, both individually and collectively, advocated emphatically in support of self-determination aspirations in the region. As such, Pacific Civil Society calls on Forum Leaders to reaffirm their shared ownership of this moral responsibility.

Pacific Civil Society also believes that finding just resolution must necessarily be pursued through both the human rights and decolonisation avenues and utilizing all appropriate mechanisms and initiatives at the national and international levels. Only then can meaningful resolution be realized. In this, Pacific Civil Society commits to support Forum Leaders should they decide to stand in solidarity with the West Papuan people and find just resolution.