

REGIONAL INITIATIVE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

Name of individual or group submitting initiative	Dr Esther Batiri Williams and Mr Bill Synnot
Name and position of primary contact	Dr Esther Batiri Williams, Former Deputy Vice Chancellor, The University of the South Pacific, Director, Winina Ltd, P.O. Box 1162, Suva, Fiji
Email address	ebatiriwilliams@gmail.com
Alternate email address	estherwilliams@connect.com.fj Mr Bill Synnot, Management Consultant, Bill Synnot and Associates, Level 10, , 12 Creek Street, Brisbane, QLD, 4000 bsynnot@optusnet.com.au
Phone number	Dr Esther Williams: Mobile: +6799925269 Mr Bill Synnot: Mobile: 0418196707
Fax number	NIL
Mailing address	P. O. Box 1162, Suva, Fiji

2. Name of Initiative

Oceania Charter and Oceania Community

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.

After over four decades in existence, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is now at a critical junction in its development. Although it has been operating without a fully ratified agreement (2005) by its sixteen member countries, it is one of the most successful regional organisations today and recognised by the United Nations. With the Forum leaders' newly endorsed Framework for Pacific Regionalism (2014), it is hoped that the deeper regionalism this brings will further improve the overall livelihoods and social, economic and political security of the people of Oceania. This, however, will not guarantee that PIF will continue to be relevant in the future to each individual member state and the region, and remain the driving force in regional cooperation and integration meeting the vision of "a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives". There are also continuing and growing challenges and opportunities that PIF will have to deal with. These include the major shift in the Oceania landscape with competing regional organisations, the widening and strained relationship between Fiji and PIF, strengthened regional integration, the emergence of a stronger and

freer Oceania where people assume the role of custodians of the Pacific Ocean (Hau'ofa), strengthened focus on small island states, strengthened governance, the rise and influence of China and India in the region, climate change, security, sustainable development, equitable and inclusive economic growth, disaster preparedness and regional surveillance.

The recognised need for good processes and clear political direction to achieve the vision of the Framework is fundamental to bringing about change and these must be based on a sound development and legal foundation shared by all leaders and members countries. Such a foundation does not formally exist and can be provided in a Charter setting the legal framework for cooperation and the establishment of a Oceania Community. This pathway was undertaken by Such a Charter is long overdue. This is the issue that will be addressed by this initiative.

This issue is not a new one. It has been mentioned in a number of reviews of PIFS. In 2003, the Government of Australia had suggested a Common Charter which would cover areas including political and economic integration, institutions and currency. However, this idea was lost over Australia's interest in bilateral relations and agreements not regional. Recently there have been suggestions made by the EU to establish a Pacific Community. But no one has attempted to revisit the idea of having a shared common Oceania Charter to cover the needs of the people of Oceania.

Oceania is the preferred region reference. It is a vast sea of islands and people (Hau'ofa). Before the nineteenth century there was one vast sea. Now Oceania has three divisions and is part of our "cultural consciousness" - Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. For this initiative, Oceania includes all the islands, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii.

No relevant studies or research have been carried out to support this issue. Documents, reports and information available through forums have highlighted the need for a stronger foundation to secure the future of PIF and that of the people of Oceania.

Through this initiative, the communities of Oceania are ideally placed to reconvene the debate on values important to them and "their region" as a whole.

The approach to the initiative will adopt the following principles:

- Be inclusive in all consultations;
- Be evidenced based;
- Identifying shared people's needs, local through to regional;
- Achieving democratic transparency and governance;
- Simplicity and minimisation of bureaucracy;
- Imparting skills which will enable people to identify and solve their own problems,
- Maintaining maximum flexibility;
- Nurturing a credible and ethical approach to the initiative;
- Drawing individuals and organisations of like ethos and mission to the initiative.

Objectives therefore are:

1. To design and deliver a programme of research, public consultation, debate and adoption, the desire of all Pacific Island Communities to live a fulfilling and secure sustainable future under a co-operative and collaborative, unified "Oceania Charter" and Oceania Community.
2. To empower the voice of the people in determining their diverse economic, social, cultural and spiritual needs, rationalising progressive and sustainable economic fundamentals in balance with traditional community needs and wellbeing.

3. To deliver outcomes and recommendations to governments and other authorities (PIFS) in a way they can confidentially respond to the will of the people and their acceptance of the need and content of the “Oceania Charter”.
4. To provide a roadmap for a draft Oceania Charter. This important part of the initiative will require an overview of the findings and implications on PIFS, Oceania Charter and future development.

The expected outputs will be dynamic, credible, progressive alliances and intent; apolitical status and enduring outcomes, given personalities and politicians come and go; at a level comfortable to community acceptance, participation and empowerment,

These include:

- a report which will have a clear analysis of the need for a Charter and what it should include;
- documentation of the findings and make recommendations for inclusion in the Charter;
- assessment of the implications of the outcomes of the initiative on PIFS and its operations.

The key milestones include the:

- Programme for Public Forums and consultation;
- Fiji TV1 Programme;
- Survey questionnaire as addition happening concurrently;
- Research output on initiative;
- Individual Forum reports;
- Draft Final Report;
- Final Report.

The initiative recognises the importance of having this consultation allowing all members of the community to provide input as opposed to getting a high level team to draft a Charter immediately without the consultation process described in this initiative.

There are also similar processes, models, goals and policies that will be used to aid this initiative: ASEAN Charter and its forthcoming (December 2015) Asian Economic Community Agreement, CARICOM Agreement, European Union.

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.

Every corner of the globe is now experiencing social, environmental, political, economic, and resource depletion stresses and these are already manifested in influences coming to

bear on the Oceania region. The insecurity caused by climate change and terrorism is growing everyday affecting a peaceful and sustainable existence in the world today.

Over the past fifty years, regional organisations with specific and different visions and objectives were established to deal with these major concerns and to protect the wellbeing and happiness and needs of communities founded in traditional values and belief. These organisations have functioned well in their capacities in different environments and spaces producing outcomes that benefit the peoples of Oceania.

But recent organization reviews and continued political confrontations between leaders highlight the lack of a common determination to improve natural and social capital values which are now emerging as critical issues in the future of humanity.

The Oceania Charter consultations outcomes and impact are many. The outcomes driven from the ground-up rather than directed from the top-down. It will boost PIFS community-building processes and define more clearly the resilience of the people of Oceania and the direction PIFS is going into the future on the three pillars of economic governance, political security and socio-cultural. It will raise the profile of PIFs and strengthen its relevance to member countries. The Oceania Charter when drafted and agreed to will serve as a firm foundation in achieving the Oceania Community by providing legal status and institutional framework for PIF. It will provide new political commitment at top level as it becomes a legally binding agreement for member countries. More importantly it will bring all people of Oceania together as one big family to secure and protect its future in the oceans and a secure and sustainable environment.

The initiative will be implemented by a team of professional individuals, an Australian based South Pacific Event Management team from the private sector, and FIJI TV1 have confirmed participation. Fiji TV1's participation is important in that the consultations and forums will be aired region-wide. The University of the South Pacific is thought to be the ideal institution to partner on this initiative as they have access in the region both physically and virtually. They have been approached. The other academic institution University of Queensland is being considered. Accordingly, we draw on your thoughts re the appropriate partnering and alliance arrangements suited to this project. Accordingly, the EU and PIF need to be reviewed. Critically, the project needs to be well founded. Will identify key regional academics and experts to discuss the concept and required research to be undertaken

The initiative will be coordinated and managed by Dr Williams

The beneficiaries are wide ranging. The main beneficiaries will be at various levels: Government, PIFS, businesses, politicians, regional organisations and CROP, civil society, development partners, international organisations. The other level are the people of the Oceania region, researchers and students of universities in the region.

There are no regulatory requirements or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative.

Currently the initiative is not funded. The team is seeking funds for this initiative.

The initiative has not been carried out previously and the outcomes will be life-changing in that it will provide a more secure Oceania region in the future.

The perceived key risks identified in carrying out this project is provided in 6. Understandably, there are obstacles to be considered in the form of many vested interests

and geo-political agendas, all of which need to be put to rest. Getting regional organisations to support this may be a challenge hence the suggestions of having open forums and discussions to be hosted by the USP if they are agreeable.

PIFS is the organization that perhaps should be leading this, but this is being promoted as an academic conversation and discussion needed before any further outcome is considered, particularly political.

The other key risks include non-participation of some partners and lack of funding for the initiative. Both are mitigated by earlier planning and negotiations on participation and securing funding.

This is the only project of this nature.

The proposed start date will be as and when approved by PIFS, 4th quarter 2015.
The proposed end date will be 10 months later.

The initiative will be coordinated and monitored by Dr Esther Williams who will keep in close contact with all partners in this work.

The output of report and recommendations will be provided at the completion of this stage of the initiative.

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

This initiative clearly supports the vision, values and objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. The Charter focus on providing a sound foundation to allow PIFS and Forum leaders to meet the vision set in 2014 and to ensure a peaceful Pacific in the future.

It draws heavily on all the values listed in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism which will provide the basis for the Oceania Charter. The Charter will ensure all such values and objectives not only guide policy making and implementation for governments, institutions, and organisations, but forms the guideline to life of all Oceania peoples.

6. **Additional Information**

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

Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.

Additional information in support of this initiative is provided as Attachment 1.

Attachment 1

6. Additional Information

Initiative: Oceania Charter and Oceania Community

Plan for initiative

Esther Batiri Williams

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has been in existence for 44 years. Established in 1971, it is regarded as the Pacific region's "premier political and economic policy organisation" .¹ It has grown and expanded into a regional grouping of sixteen Pacific Island nations comprising Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, twelve associate members and seventeen dialogue partners.

This grouping is diverse in peoples, cultures, religion and political history. Despite their different backgrounds and history, Forum members have set aside their differences to work together to promote regional co-operation, regional and political integration, peace, security and economic and social development.

In 2000 an *Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum* was endorsed by the leaders. This was revised in 2005 to replace the 2000 agreement. But up to the time of the review in 2013, not all countries had ratified the agreement.

Pacific leaders lack the firm political will to process and implement those agreements, and because of the diversity in legal development among members, implementation of agreements has been difficult to effect to date. Most Pacific declarations and agreements have merely declared intentions and objectives to implement closer regional cooperation.

Despite the lack of any formal rules governing its operations or the conduct of its affairs and meetings, leaders have worked together making decisions by consensus from which policies are developed and work programmes prepared. Over the years focus of the Forum has been largely on regional trade and economic issues.

Today, PIF is not only a regional force to be reckoned with but is also deepening its integration efforts on all fronts and especially internationally.

¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, website May 2006. Mr Peter Hooton, Transcript of Evidence, 8 <ay 2006, p.8

The challenges facing PIFS have been highlighted in review reports of the organisation over the years with the most recent in 2013. Climate change, sustainable development, good governance, economic growth, integrity, socio-cultural development, migration, inequitable economic development, etc. are impacting the countries in many ways. In particular, with the rapidly changing Pacific landscape where China and India are having significant influence, greater regional interdependence and the need deeper cooperation is required and necessary. PIFS and Forum leaders will have to adjust its act and address the many issues for security and peace in the region.

An Oceania Charter will enable PIFS to better position itself to overcome these challenges. It presents an opportunity for PIFS to take stock of its achievements and shortcomings, reaffirm its relevance, and forge a new path for pacific regionalism and integration. Besides conferring a legal status on PIFS, the Charter seeks to encourage, PIFS it is hoped, with a renewed sense of purpose, to reaffirm and codify key objectives and key principles, to strengthen its institutions and organisational structure, and to strive to narrow the development gap between member countries, so it can be a truly driving force in regional dialogue, consultation and cooperation.

This concept was conceived formally a few years ago responding to the deteriorating security in the Oceania region and the growing influence of major economic and political giants, China and India. Few meetings on the concept was held in late 2014 and developed further in February 2015. Professor Epeli Hau'ofa's paper on Oceania formed the basis of discussion. Interested participants were approached in February 2015.

The group putting this forward includes academics, researchers, business people from the private sector, media people, and staff of a regional organisation.

The group feels that it is timely that an Oceania Charter is in place soon.

This is an important initiative and one calling for the involvement of the Pacific communities in what this Charter should include and what it should do. So instead of putting in place an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on the Oceania Charter comprising senior officials of the region, to come up with recommendations for an Ocean Charter that is forward-looking and progressive as they did in ASEAN, this initiative put forward is seeking to establish a Consultative Forum to debate and discuss this issue.

It is planned that this initiative will run for ten months with planned national and regional Forums held in different countries and in sub-regions if necessary. It will include business people, government officials, academic, civil society and students. The initiative will draw on the experiences of the European Union and ASEAN. It is important that the people of the region understand what it wants and how this will be designed and implemented. They must take ownership of the Oceania Charter.

Conducting successful forums is crucial to this initiative and should be supported. This process and step is in the right direction. It is not duplicating past reviews or the work involved in previous agreements. What it does is establish a sound legal framework which will be the basis of operations of the PIFS and its leaders.

Over the ten months, input to the Forums will be recorded and reports prepared. The outcomes of these consultations will form the basis of a report as to what to be included in the Oceania Charter. Researchers in particular will be asked to make their input and also recommendations on a Oceania Charter for the Pacific.

In proposing the key components of an Ocean Charter the following are just some issues that can be addressed:

- What are the continuing and new challenges confronting Oceania over the next fifteen to twenty years?
- How should PIFS respond to these challenges?
- What shape should new PIFS take?
- What more can be done to strengthen deeper cooperation?
- What changes are necessary for institutions and processes to support the realisation of the Oceania Community?
- And how soon can this reasonably be - 2020, 2030 or beyond?

The Oceania Charter will seek to reposition PIFS to respond to these challenges and represent the peoples and Oceania more confidently as the premier regional and international political institution.

The proposed start date will be as and when approved by PIFS, 4th quarter 2015.

The proposed end date will be 10 months later.

The extent and depth of this initiative and the planned activities and milestones proposed will ensure the best outcomes and deliver on the required outputs to assist and guide PIFS. The focus will not only be limited to political and economic but also consider social, cultural, human resources and spiritual benefits in member countries, and the multiplier effects.

A four stage action plan to fulfil the objectives of the initiative and provide the outputs required is recommended. In Stage 1 the plan is to establish a governance management framework for the initiative, do desk study and research, review of reports and data collection. Information and data collection is essential to the initiative. Findings will be evidenced based. An online questionnaire and survey will be designed and disseminated as widely as possible to key stakeholders. Stage 2 will involve consultations and forums with all member governments, relevant agencies and people. The aim is to be comprehensive and inclusive in these consultations. Country visits and close engagement and *talanoa* sessions with key different stakeholders in country will be undertaken where relevant. If necessary, after discussions with PIFS supplementary consultations with phone and video conferences can be organised.

All intellectual property arising from this review including the Final Report will remain with PIFS and as such any use of the materials will be with their agreement. However, there may also be intellectual property that belongs to the team, for example the approach and

methodology. Agreements about these issues will need to be negotiated with PIFS before contracts are signed.

Key risks in implementing this initiative

A risk register listing what are considered to be key risks, why they are considered a risk, what level they are or how likely they will occur, and if they do what impact they will have. Ways to mitigate the risk are provided.

The risk register is a live document and will be continually updated.

The key risks for the initiative are set out below.

Risk	Why	Level/likely impact	Mitigation
Academic institutions unable to participate as key partner	Too busy with other commitments	High	To consider other partners in this initiative and approach early and on standby
Many vested interests and geo-political agendas	May provide a block which may constrain the initiative		Planning stage with PIFS should be inclusive
Lack of funding to manage and sustain initiative	Requested budget not available for financial reasons	High	Approach business partners and other development partners and aid agencies to assist.
Low attendance at some Forum organised	Late arrangements or people to attend consultations as too busy; poor publicity and communication	High	Ensure programme is compiled as early as possible and advertised on the radio, TV and web
Support of regional organisations in the Pacific	Getting a number of organisations to support this maybe a challenge	High	Organise forums in academic institution such as USP.
Travel to main PIF member countries may be a challenge	Unreliable schedule making the visit ; no budget	High	Tentative travel arrangements to be made as early as possible with PIF and backup videoconference
Acceptance of initiative	Unclear of the initiative	Medium	Prepare submission well and as required. Keep in contact with PIFS
PIFS not keeping to commencing date	Due to time and commencement date; unclear progress plan and unclear decision on budget line for initiative	Medium	Will keep in close contact with the PIFS on this matter
Unavailability of key people to attend consultations and meeting	Due to late cancellation or unavailability of person/group	Medium	Meeting appointments made to be confirmed early. Meeting to be with key persons and not only one person
Limited cooperation from USP, FijiTV1 and other partners on limited use of network for e-survey and Alumni network	Due to misunderstanding and workload, assistance may not be forthcoming	Low	Rectify with early meeting and awareness with USP, Fiji TV and other partners

Late production of report and recommendations	Due to heavy commitments and wealth of information	Low	Consultants will have its time plan for this and all other milestones. It will keep strictly to timelines.
Inability of Team members to complete the initiative	Due to competing demands on partners	Low	The Team is committed to this review and will put in place action plan to draw on to ensure the initiative is delivered on time

We believe we are aware of the main risks associated with this initiative and have adequate plans and personal resources in place to mitigate or minimise them. However, this register is a live document and would be updated to include any previously unidentified risks and plans to mitigate/minimise them should they occur.

Dr Esther Batiri Williams
18 June 2015