

6th September, Apia, Samoa

Partnerships for a Blue Pacific – an exploration of the role and contribution of Civil Society

Civil Society Organisations' Statement to Forum Leaders

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) welcome the opportunity for an open and constructive dialogue around policy and programming for the sustainable development of our Pacific region. The role of CSOs as an equal partner in the development of policy is important to ensure that appropriate environmental and social factors are at the forefront of strategy formulation and that necessary safeguards are in place resulting in more targeted, equitable and relevant approaches to the sustainable development of our region.¹ We call for a strengthened and institutionalized partnership with CSOs which will realise the Leaders' vision for a Blue Pacific Region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives.² The Honourable Prime Minister of Samoa and Chair of this Forum stated; *“With the current global uncertainty associated with shifts in geopolitics and globalization, it seems pertinent to re-assess our region’s collective engagement with the world and with each other – and to reassert our collective Pacific Regionalism as “The Blue Pacific”.*³

To this end we acknowledge and welcome the space provided to CSOs to dialogue with Leaders directly and we invite Leaders to consider this dialogue a standing agenda item at every Forum Leaders meeting.

We call on Leaders to ensure inclusive and sustainable approaches to the development of our Pacific region:

On a Blue Pacific Economy, recognizing and affirming Leaders' vision in placing Oceans at the core of the 2030 Agenda; recognising and affirming the SAMOA Pathway; and recognising the need for protection of new and infant industries, improved working conditions and adequate living wages for working class people **CSOs call on Leaders to:**

1. Properly regulate the commercial use of our Oceans including taking a firm stand against seabed mining as it poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of our oceans. The history of extractive industries in our islands region is not a happy one. We must divert resources to economic activities that will build a more inclusive and sustainable future for our island communities;
2. Defer the ratification of PACER Plus until independent impact assessments, in consultation with CSOs, are conducted, including adequate food safety and security conditions, and issues identified are addressed with appropriate amendments to the text of PACER PLUS;

On a Sustainable and Resilient Blue Pacific, recognising Leaders' vision in prioritising the need for a resilient people of the Pacific; recognising a better and inclusive Pacific that *‘leaves no one behind’*; recognising that the youth population in the region doubles annually and that the youth

¹ Vision, 1st PIFS-CSO Engagement Strategy, November 2016.

² The Framework for Pacific Regionalism

³ Statement by Hon. Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sialele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa at the High-Level Pacific Regional Side Event by PIFS on ‘Our values and identity as stewards of the world’s largest oceanic continent, The Blue Pacific’. UN Headquarters, New York, 5 June 2017.

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unemployment rate is 23%; and, recognising the Pacific Tsunami of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) where up to 75% of our Pacific peoples are dying prematurely of NCDs and 8 out of the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of diabetes are from our region, **CSOs call on Leaders to:**

3. Commit to align national health budgets to the Non – Communicable Disease profile and the epidemiological burden that Pacific Island countries face, focusing efforts on the prevention of NCDs at a primary and secondary level.
4. Cultivate a resilient youth population, through budget support of its National Youth Councils to lead the innovative use of ICT solutions for the promotion of sports and physical activities as a contribution to reducing premature mortality from NCDs; and through the establishment of a youth economic empowerment fund to encourage entrepreneurship, including the provision of training initiatives that support the start-up and maintenance of entrepreneurial activities as a contribution to economic development including social and political stability.
5. Practice inclusivity by mainstreaming sexual orientation and gender identity, expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) language across all government programmes, sector policies and legislations.

On a Secure and Peaceful Blue Pacific, CSOs reiterate that security in the region is inherently tied to governance that ensures equitable, sustainable and people-centred development. We must seek a balance between short-term financial stability and longer-term equitable growth if they are to build sustainable peace in the region and security for the future. In this light, recognizing regional security efforts such as the Biketawa Declaration (2000), the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015), the Human Security Framework for the Pacific (2012-2015) and the Pacific Forum Principles on Security Sector Governance (2012); recognizing the heightened security threats to our region; recognizing that in 2018 there will be referenda in Bougainville and New Caledonia; and recalling that Leaders have in previous Communiqués⁴ expressed deep concern over ongoing violence and loss of life in West Papua; and acknowledging Leaders' recognition of the political sensitivities of the issue of West Papua, the importance of an open and constructive dialogue with Indonesia on the issue, and the need for West Papua to remain on Leaders' agenda, **CSOs call on Leaders to:**

6. Develop systematic programs of democratic transition support for Bougainville, New Caledonia and West Papua, in areas such as training, scholarships, development funding and political education.
7. Create multi-stakeholder forums, that include investment in young people as the next generation leadership, on Pacific peace, security and development that allows for an exploration of structural conditions of conflict and armed violence and its impact on development, and invite multi stakeholder recommendations and shared action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding for the long-term stability of the region;

⁴ Forum Communiqué 2000 and 2016