

30th Leaders Session with Forum Dialogue Partners, 4 September 2018

"Building a Strong Pacific – Strengthening regional security to ensure safety and wellbeing for all"

Statement by the European Union delegation

The EU acknowledges that the Blue Pacific is about Pacific people across all the Pacific islands, recognising their needs and potential and their plans for their future. This will be at the core of the EU's partnership with the Pacific and therefore part of the renewed Agreement between the EU and the countries of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific group of states, the negotiations of which will be launched in the next weeks. The EU is confident that this new partnership will be inclusive and anchored in the collective strength of the Pacific region.

The security of the Pacific people and their environment is crucial for sustainable growth and development. There cannot be sustainable and inclusive development without peace and security.

Pacific regional leadership on **security** is articulated in the "Biketawa Plus" security declaration which is being tabled at this year's Forum Meeting. The EU welcomes that the region aims at sustainable solutions which require multi-stakeholder approaches, interventions at different levels centred on a long-term vision.

Pacific Island countries and territories contribute the least to **climate change**, but suffer the most from its effects. In addition to climate change, related environmental pressures and degradation have direct and indirect implications for international security and stability, primarily affecting communities in the most fragile and vulnerable situations. These factors contribute to the loss of livelihoods, increase disaster risk, force the displacement of people and exacerbate the threat of social and political unrest, as well as security tensions. This requires special attention and sustained international engagement in order to achieve sustainable development.

For the EU it is therefore a key priority to support Pacific partner countries and territories and regional organisations to help prevent and adapt to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. The EU does this through bilateral and regional programmes with the Pacific. More than 60 % of the total amount of broadly EUR 800 million for the period 2014-2020 is, directly or indirectly, linked to climate change related actions. The aim is to help people and communities to better adapt to climate impacts, be better prepared and reduce their exposure and vulnerability, and strengthen their resilience and capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and disasters.

While funding is important, EU-Pacific relations are based on ownership, as well as engagement through policy and political dialogue, which cover all issues of joint interest. Resilient societies require accountable, democratic, effective, transparent institutions, where human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected. Effective policy making should rely on the active participation of youth and women and involve local communities and civil society organisations. Often, women and girls are key agents of development and change.

The EU encourages the sustainability dimension and inclusive approach built in the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific. In this context, concrete first steps to address climate change effects and resilience in a comprehensive and coherent manner have been made with the establishment of a highly inclusive Pacific Resilience Partnership Task Force. A Pacific Resilience Facility, is now being developed by PIFS. All EU programmes address resilience issues and the EU stands ready to be part of the discussions and provide inputs to the design process of this future regional instrument.

Maritime security cooperation is a long-term process and involves many and diverse partners at all levels. While the EU's direct security presence in the Pacific is limited, our on-going cooperation, developed in particular in the context of the Pacific-EU Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme, focuses on supporting sustainable use of fishery resources, the fight against IUU fishing, marine protected areas and biodiversity conservation, research and innovation, and promoting a shared, transparent and rule-based ocean governance, enshrining the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and human rights.

Looking forward, and as part of the forthcoming negotiations on the new post-Cotonou Agreement, concrete areas of EU-Pacific cooperation on security might include:

- support conflict prevention initiatives for all forms of conflict and violence;
- foster cooperation and initiatives on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, understanding and systematically integrating environmental, climate and disaster risk assessments on peace and security efforts including conflict prevention;
- address illicit traffic in small arms, light weapons, and drugs;
- develop cooperation on and protection of maritime and airspace surveillance and identify needs and means to counter cybercrime;
- strengthen governance systems to stem irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking in human beings and related criminal networks, with a specific focus on victim protection and development of prevention strategies for persons at risk;
- cooperate in preventing the use of financial systems, institutions, and designated non-financial businesses and professions for the laundering of proceeds from criminal activities (including illicit trafficking and corruption) and for preventing the financing of terrorism in line with international standards;
- continuing dialogue on the legal obligation of the Parties to readmit their nationals irregularly present on the territory of another Party at the latter's request and without conditionality.

To conclude, the EU intends to increase its efforts to build resilience, security and adaptive capacity to climate change, consistent with the multilateral system, seeking to improve coherence between the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development.