

Remarks by Ryan Zinke, Secretary of the Interior
30th PIF Forum Partners Dialogue
Nauru, 4 September 2018

Good morning Excellencies. I'm honored to represent the United States on behalf of President Trump, who sends his personal greetings and warm wishes, in recognition of the importance the United States places on the Pacific Islands Forum and the countries represented here.

Thank you President Waqa for your warm hospitality. Thanks also to Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

The United States is deeply committed to the security and prosperity of our friends and neighbors in the Pacific. As Secretary of the Interior, I know from personal experience the special relationship the United States has with Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. We see all of the Pacific Islands as an essential part of our free and open Indo-Pacific policy.

The United States and the Pacific Island nations are partners. Hawai'i and the U.S. territories in the Pacific have close relationships with their Polynesian and Micronesian neighbors going back centuries. U.S. diplomatic ties with the Pacific islands date back to the arrival of U.S. merchant mariners in the 1800s. Today Americans eat Pacific tuna, purchase truckloads of Fiji water, cheer Tongan and Samoan football players in the NFL—as a former player at the University of Oregon, I know from experience they're great! ExxonMobil, the single largest private sector investor in Papua New Guinea, is commercializing PNG's liquefied natural gas resources, supporting jobs and economic development for Papua New Guineans. The U.S. Tuna Treaty with 16 Pacific Island parties has provided a strong foundation for cooperation on fisheries development amongst our countries for over three decades. I'm pleased to announce that on August 28, the President sent the recent amendments to the Treaty to the U.S. Senate in the next step of the U.S. ratification process. This is the first treaty package sent by this Administration to the Senate, reflecting the importance of our relationship.

When the United States invests in the Pacific Islands, we do so as a partner committed to a shared future that advances national sovereignty, regional cooperation, and trust. This occurs when infrastructure is physically secure, socially responsible, and fiscally viable. To attract much needed private sector capital, Indo-Pacific countries must prioritize transparency, anti-corruption, and responsible financing. At the Indo-Pacific Business Forum in July, Secretary Pompeo announced a number of regional programs in support of these goals, including the Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network.

To further our commitment to the Pacific Islands, the United States intends to join the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility with an initial contribution of \$2 million to support technical assistance on infrastructure investment planning. U.S. membership will also enable us to better coordinate the over \$350 million in assistance the United States provides to the Pacific Islands annually.

For the Pacific to prosper, it is essential that the region remain secure and resilient. The United States is a committed security partner and provider with the Pacific. One should remember the dedication demonstrated in the bloody battles of World War II on the shores of Tarawa, Pelelieu, and Guadalcanal, where Pacific Islanders and Americans alike sacrificed for our collective security.

We warmly welcome the Forum's focus on enhanced regional security cooperation and safeguarding sovereignty and the international rules-based order. We will continue to support PIF members with security cooperation activities, including humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and preparedness, and maritime security and domain awareness.

To help the Pacific counter illegal fishing, we are working to sign shiprider agreements with Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands, which would bring our total number of agreements with countries in the region to 13. Next year the U.S. Coast Guard will host a regional workshop for Pacific fisheries enforcement professionals to enhance their capabilities.

We are also working together to incorporate best practices and the best science to produce results for resilience.

Today I am pleased to announce our intention to commit \$7 million in Foreign Military Financing announced at the ASEAN Regional Forum for Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Tonga, which will support training, equipment, and other security cooperation priorities identified by these countries. We will also collaborate with the Australian government on the new Pacific Security College, to provide training and professional development for Pacific Island security professionals.

Finally, I want to express our appreciation for PIF leaders' commitment to enforcing UN Security Council resolutions to keep up diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea to denuclearize completely and verifiably. We will continue to support you in this effort to advance this collective regional security priority.

The Pacific Islands have been, and always will be, an enduring foreign policy priority for the United States government, its people, and our nation. We will continue to deepen our security, economic and on a people-to-people partnership basis. Understand our policy is not to dominate but work together for mutual benefit. I thank all of you and look forward to working with you so we can have an enduring and prosperous Indo-Pacific theatre.