



**PACIFIC ISLANDS
FORUM SECRETARIAT**

FAQs on the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19

2020



1. WHAT IS THE PACIFIC HUMANITARIAN PATHWAY FOR COVID-19?

- The Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C) will support the timely movement of medical supplies, technical experts and humanitarian assistance and to Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Members, as requested and in response to COVID-19.
- The PHP-C is a regional coordination mechanism overseen by Forum Foreign Ministers and supported by a regional taskforce. It is established under the *Biketawa Declaration (2000)*, which provides a regional response in times of crisis.

2. WHY IS IT NEEDED?

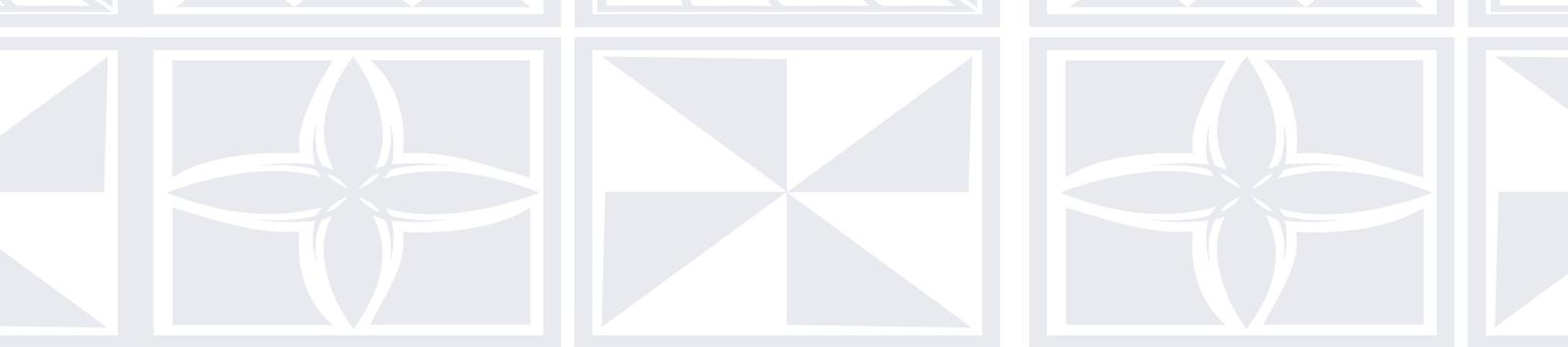
- COVID-19 is a global health emergency of unprecedented scale. It is threatening the health, wellbeing and security of Pacific peoples. Never before has a crisis impacted so directly on all eighteen Members of the Pacific Islands Forum, simultaneously.
- In response to COVID-19, Forum Members have put in place exceptional measures to control the movement of people and goods into and across countries and territories.
- In some cases, these measures are restricting the movement of medical and humanitarian supplies, equipment and personnel by WHO and other regional and international actors.
- Many Forum Island Countries have vulnerable health systems and infrastructure. The timely delivery of requested medical and humanitarian assistance is essential to protect the health and lives of Pacific peoples.

3. HOW WILL IT WORK?

- The PHP-C will respond to requests for assistance from Forum Members to enable the efficient movement of medical supplies and personnel into and across the region.
- This could include expediting customs clearance of medical supplies and facilitating clearances for chartered flights and commercial shipping. It could also include facilitating the repatriation of Forum Member citizens.
- The PHP-C will be overseen by a 'Ministerial Action Group', established under the *Biketawa Declaration*, and comprising foreign ministers from seven Forum countries: Australia, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- The PHP-C will be supported by a Regional Taskforce made up of senior officials of Forum Members, CROP agencies, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), regional law enforcement and legal agencies and the Forum Secretariat.
- Following a request for assistance, the Regional Taskforce will work with stakeholders to assess the request and identify the best approach for facilitating assistance. The Taskforce will provide regular updates to the Ministerial Action Group.
- The PHP-C will respect national responses and procedures already in place, and ensure that measures to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19 are not compromised.

4. HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM EXISTING COORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR COVID-19?

- The PHP-C ensures regional coordination on COVID-19 at the political level. Before its establishment, there was no regionally led, high-level mechanism in the Pacific for strengthened cooperation and assistance to address COVID-19.

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- The PHP-C will work with, and complement, existing health and coordination mechanisms in the region. This includes the WHO-led Pacific COVID-19 Joint Incident Management Team (JIMT) and the OHCA-led Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT). The PHP-C will also respect national responses.

5. THE PHP-C IS BEING ESTABLISHED UNDER THE BIKETAWA DECLARATION. WHAT IS THIS, AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM THE BOE DECLARATION?

- Agreed to by Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2000, the *Biketawa Declaration* has previously been enacted three times:
 - 2003 for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI);
 - 2004 for the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru (PRAN); and
 - 2009 Fiji political crisis.
- Invoking the *Biketawa Declaration* for the COVID-19 pandemic is unique in that it is the first time that all Members of the Pacific Islands Forum have been in crisis.
- The Boe Declaration on Regional Security was endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2018. It reaffirms and builds on the *Biketawa Declaration* by expanding the Forum's concept of security. This includes prioritising human security and humanitarian assistance.
- The COVID-19 pandemic fits under this expanded concept of security, given its threat to both human and economic security across the region.

6. WHAT ABOUT RESPONDING TO THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE PACIFIC REGION?

- The PHP-C is focused on responding to the immediate health and humanitarian needs of Pacific Island countries and territories for COVID-19.
- COVID-19 is also having wider social and economic impacts in the Pacific region. This includes significant job losses and reductions in government and private sector revenues due to the halt in international tourism.
- The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, together with international and regional partners, is assessing the broader economic and social impact of COVID-19 on the region, for the consideration of Forum Members.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

For further information on the PHP-C, please contact the Forum Secretariat:

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