



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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FORUM ECONOMIC OFFICIALS MEETING

4 – 5 August 2020

FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING

11 – 12 August 2020
Virtual

AGENDA ITEM 3: 2020 BIENNIAL PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Purpose

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This paper presents the “2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report” for FEMM endorsement.

Summary

The “2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report” provides an update on the status of the nine action areas highlighted in 2018 Quadrennial Report. The nine action priorities should help accelerate our progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As such, the report should be published with the implementation of its recommendations monitored and reported on as part of the second Quadrennial Report in 2022. The report describes Pacific Sustainable Development with the following key messages:

- i. COVID-19 is an unprecedented globally disruptive pandemic and economic crisis. The report provides a snapshot of a potential catastrophic scenario, catalyzed by climate change impacts where the region will have to rely on existing regional and national institutions, partnerships, mechanisms and resources.
- ii. With the advent of COVID 19, economic progress, through export activity, tourism and overseas employment and remittances remain problematic; increasing the pressure for increased social protection for the most vulnerable in the population.
- iii. A significant gap between men and women’s economic participation remains, with women under-represented in formal employment across the region.
- iv. More than 1 million persons with disabilities in the Pacific still face deep inequalities and multiple barriers.
- v. There is a need for accelerated nationally driven action to reform economic and labour policies that target key growth sectors.
- vi. Substantial effort is required to strengthen leadership, governance and financing to accelerate national action to halt/reverse the Non-communicable disease crisis.

- vii. Some Pacific Island countries need to elevate waste management in their development agenda, by increasing the resources required to address waste management issues.
- viii. There is a need for additional resources for national/regional statistical stakeholders to ensure production of quality data to guide and monitor economic/social development.
- ix. Voluntary National Review processes are an opportunity to build capacity, enhance national planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and reporting systems and processes.

A. Overview/Summary

The 2020 Biennial Sustainable Development Report builds on the findings of the 2018 First Quadrennial Report. It has been produced by the Secretariat under the guidance of a Pacific Steering Committee and with the support of technical advisers from CROP agencies, the UN, private sector and civil society.

2. The Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) *“tasked the Pacific Steering Committee for Sustainable Development, in collaboration with officials, to consider and prioritize actions for Economic Ministers emerging from the recommendation in the first quadrennial report, and report back to the FEMM in 2020”*

3. The theme of the *“2020 Biennial Sustainable Development Report”* is *“Ensuring Pacific People’s well-being through the Blue Pacific identity, the proposed 2050 Strategy and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*. It recognizes the centrality of the Leader’s vision of *“a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free healthy and productive lives”* as supported through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the Kainaki II Declaration on Climate Change.

B. Discussion

4. The Biennial report includes discussion of a number of issues that may contribute to the foundations of a Pacific 2050 Strategy under a Blue Pacific identity. A Blue Pacific that has at its core the protection and sustainability of people's wellbeing.

5. Wellbeing lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs which emphasises improving outcomes for all people. The theme of wellbeing also emerges throughout the *2020 Biennial Sustainable Development report* which focuses on four main areas:

- a) Impact of COVID19
- b) Addressing sustainable development progress since 2018
- c) Reflecting on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Process and Advocacy and Engagement for the SDGs in the Pacific
- d) Reviewing Progress under the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED).

6. The report has been prepared as the region and the global community faces a public health crisis and economic upheaval resulting from COVID 19. As a result, any progress made in 2018 and 2019 in meeting the SDGs, must be tempered by the knowledge that the region, like the rest of the world, faces major challenges as a direct consequence of the pandemic. The report provides COVID-19 information while recognising that the situation across the region changes every day.

7. The 2030 Agenda provides a global roadmap to mitigate the impact of such shocks on overall sustainability and calls for a greater investment to strengthen the resilience of national and regional platforms to fight climate change, natural disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19. It is clear that there is a need for significant investments in areas such as health, water, sanitation, combined with measures to reduce poverty, food insecurities and inequality.

8. The report examines the nine member countries¹ voluntary national review (VNR) processes and lessons learned between 2016 and 2019. The report notes that while country systems, institutional arrangements, policies and processes were largely in place there remain a number of issues that are common to almost all. For the island country members many of the challenges include:

- i. Human and institutional capacity constraints;
- ii. Lack of ownership and political will to effectively respond to the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable development;
- iii. Lack of awareness and engagement of stakeholders both within government agencies, civil society and the private sector;
- iv. Lack of alignment at national level with global and regional commitments, including the importance of localising global goals, targets and indicators;
- v. Insufficient financial resources and capacity for resource mobilisation;
- vi. Paucity of data and limited capacity to collect and analyse data.

¹ Samoa (2017), Kiribati and Australia (2018), Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga, Vanuatu (2019)

Progressing Gender Equality

9. This report also includes a review of progress under the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) that draws on an analysis of country progress reports for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25-year review submitted in 2019. In addition, 2020 marks a decade to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 8 years since Pacific Forum Leaders committed to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) in 2012, invigorating collective efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower Pacific women and girls to actively participate in economic, political and social life.

C. Next Steps

10. The “2020 Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report” provides an update on the status of the nine action areas highlighted in 2018 as priorities for accelerating progress in the region on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As such, it should be published with the implementation of its recommendations monitored and reported on as part of the second Quadrennial Report in 2022.

1. Address vulnerability and increasing inequality in the region.
2. Tackle gender employment gaps and high youth unemployment.
3. Build resilience and strengthen efforts to tackle the dual threats of climate change and natural disasters in the region.
4. Maintain multisector efforts for addressing the impacts of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD).
5. Address the consequences of poor waste management.
6. Continue efforts to promote sustainable tourism and fisheries.
7. Take steps to address de-risking issues and the high cost of sending remittances and enhance the impact of labour mobility on human development.
8. Strengthen coordination and collaboration to achieve sustainable development.
9. Strengthen commitment to the collection and analysis of timely, accurate and disaggregated data for evidence-based policy, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and accountability.
10. Mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) and eight years since Leaders committed to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) by continuing to work as a collective and accelerate action to address the root causes that further perpetuate gender inequality.