



PIFS GVA/32-2020

To : Forum Island Countries (FICs)  
Date : 09 July 2020  
From : Mere FALEMAKA, PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations,  
World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
Subject: PIF-Geneva Update 2/2020

Please find attached, for your records, an update on the activities undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum – Geneva Office (PIF-Geneva) in March-April 2020.

2. For further clarifications or follow-up on Trade Negotiations, please contact me on [mere.falemaka@pifs-geneva.ch](mailto:mere.falemaka@pifs-geneva.ch)
3. For further clarifications or follow-up on Aid-for-Trade, please contact Mr. Andrea Giacomelli, Trade Policy and Aid-for-Trade Adviser on [andrea.giacomelli@pifs-geneva.ch](mailto:andrea.giacomelli@pifs-geneva.ch)
4. For further clarifications or follow-up on PTI Europe, please contact Ms. Glynis Miller, PTI Coordinator and Acting PTI Trade Commissioner New Zealand on [GlynisM@forumsec.org](mailto:GlynisM@forumsec.org)

Mere FALEMAKA

**Ambassador**

**PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations,  
World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Pacific Islands Forum Geneva Office (PIF Geneva) comprises two sections: Trade Negotiations and Aid-for-Trade (Aft). The Trade Negotiations section provides policy and technical advice on multilateral trade issues to Forum Islands Countries (FICs) which are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and coordinates their participation in multilateral negotiations. The Aft Section assists FICs, individually and collectively, to make a better use of Aft opportunities provided by Geneva and Europe-based organisations.

In addition, PIF Geneva hosts the Europe desk of Pacific Trade Invest (PTI Europe). The desk focuses on the development and promotion of Pacific Island exports across international markets in Europe and the United Kingdom.

These two months was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted work as Switzerland went into lockdown from mid-March.

## **2. REPRESENTATION**

In March, Ambassador Falemaka represented the Pacific at a meeting of selected WTO Ambassadors to discuss a proposal on a Trade and Environment Sustainability initiative for MC12.

During this period, the Office intensified work to conclude an overarching Memorandum of Understanding between PIFS and the [UNCTAD](#), focussing on areas of cooperation prioritised under the [Pacific Aid-for-Trade Strategy](#).

## **3. TRADE NEGOTIATIONS**

The WTO's preparations for the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference which was scheduled for Kazakhstan in June 2020 was derailed by COVID-19. In March following the onset of the pandemic Members agreed to defer MC12 to 2021 with the exact date and venue to be decided. WTO negotiations were suspended from mid-March to mid-June and Members engaged in written procedure.

Before the lockdown, the March cluster on Fisheries Subsidies negotiations was held on 2-6 March which tried to progress negotiations on the Facilitators' texts on the proposed three disciplines on subsidies to IUU fishing (IUUF), to overfished stocks (OFS) and to overcapacity and overfishing (OCOF) and advance discussions on the cross-cutting issues including scope, transparency and special and differential treatment. At a meeting on 6 March the Chair of the Rules Negotiating Group, Ambassador Santiago Wills (Colombia) consulted Heads of Delegations on the approach to OCOF as this was the less advanced and more complex of the three disciplines. The Chair also signaled that he intended to put forward a consolidated text at some point. On 9 March the Chair's draft text on OCOF, drawn from the OCOF Facilitator's draft text, was circulated to Members to try to focus the negotiations. The Chair's text on OCOF as well as the three Facilitator's text remained on the table for Members to consider during March and April as many Members opposed negotiation in both virtual mode or written procedure on the texts as many issues were technical, complex and sensitive. However, in April, Members engaged in written format to respond to India's and the LDC Group's proposals which were tabled at the March cluster.

On Agriculture, the Chair of the negotiations, Ambassador Dip Ford (Guyana) circulated on 16 March an Options paper outlining potential MC12 outcomes in Agriculture which included elements on domestic support, market access, export competition, export restrictions, special safeguard measures, public stockholding and cotton. Members provided written responses to options paper with many members noting the need to revisit these priorities in the light of the impact of COVID-19 and the trade measures which some Members have imposed in response to the pandemic.

On Development (S&DT) issues, in April Members engaged on written submissions to respond to the revised G90 (ACP, LDC, African Group) proposal which comprised 10 Agreement-specific proposals

that are seeking flexibility to support industrialization and diversification in developing countries and LDCs.

With no negotiations going on during April, many Members started engaging in virtual mode to review their positions and have consultations bilaterally and in groups. Much of the focus turned to the trade impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising number of trade measures, in particular, trade restrictions imposed by WTO Members in response to COVID-19. Many Members called for greater transparency and urged Members imposing those measures to promptly notify the WTO Secretariat which started compiling the notifications.

PIF-Geneva co-ordinated the Pacific Group and the work of the TAF2 funded Consultancy team supporting the Pacific Members, to analyse the fisheries subsidies draft texts and the agriculture proposals. PIF GVA also participated in ACP Group and LDC Group meetings including on agriculture, and fisheries subsidies to ensure Pacific positions are addressed. In addition, the Office also prepared briefs for Pacific Members on the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) on Ecommerce, Services Domestic Regulation and Investment Facilitation for Development.

During this period the PIF Geneva prepared two Pacific Group statements delivered at the Fisheries Subsidies cluster in March. PIF Geneva Office also issued twelve Circulars on Fisheries, Agriculture, Ecommerce, Domestic Regulation, Trade and Environment Sustainability initiative and reports of meetings of the WTO General Council, Heads of Delegations and the ACP. The WTO-PIFS Regional Preparatory Workshop for MC12 to be held in Honiara in April 2020 was cancelled. The Geneva Office also worked closely with the [TAF2](#)-funded consultancy team from Adman Smith International, to provide analysis of negotiating issues, assist with technical reports to Pacific WTO Members, and provide technical support during the bilateral meetings on fisheries negotiations.

During this period, the new TAF2 Coordinator, Mr Kasek Galgal from Papua New Guinea, together with the new WTO Intern, Ms Raewynn Manuleleua from Samoa assisted PIF Geneva in co-ordinating TAF2 support and in preparation of meetings reports.

#### **4. AID-FOR-TRADE**

##### **4.1 Projects**

###### *3.1.1 Implemented*

The [TradeCom](#) PIFS-MSG e-commerce project commenced in March 2020 with the release of e-commerce surveys to public and private stakeholders in Fiji, FSM, Niue, and PNG. A successful country mission followed in [Fiji](#), with a view to running concurrent missions in the other countries. COVID-19 put an end to that ambition, and the other country missions got cancelled, and replaced by remote consultations and secondary research.

PIF Geneva coordinated assistance by the consultants supporting the Pacific Group through the Trade Advocacy Fund ([TAF2](#)). Under output 2 (coordination), the seventh quarterly strategy meeting was held in April, in virtual form. Under output 3 (technical advice), the usual in-person support was provided during the cluster meeting on 2–6 March, plus support for virtual meetings with Canada and the EU. Written briefings were provided on trade and environment initiatives in and around the WTO, agriculture negotiations, e-commerce, and the new Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement that will temporarily replace the usual WTO appeal process for members that opt in. Support was also provided for the drafting of an information paper on the importance of access arrangements to LDCs (outside the Pacific region).

###### *4.1.2 Completed/Secured*

PIF Geneva supported FICs to leverage USD 320,000 in Aid-for-Trade funds, notably a commitment from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ([DFAT](#)) to implement Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative approved by Forum Trade Ministers in February 2020. These will complement

assistance already secured by the German Metrology Institute ([PTB](#)) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework ([EIF](#)) to implement a comprehensive program aimed at improving quality of FICs' goods and services.

#### *4.1.3 Ongoing*

A project proposal was submitted to the [Australian Aid-for-Trade Trust Fund on e-Commerce](#) to support the development of national e-Commerce Assessments for Nauru and Cook Islands, and the development of a Regional e-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap drawing upon the national assessments undertaken so far. These activities are aligned with the Pacific e-Commerce Initiative approved by Forum Trade Officials in July 2018.

#### **4.2. Apply! Demand-driven Aid-for-Trade facilities accepting applications**

(1) [Standards Trade and Development Facility](#) (2) [Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation](#) (3) [Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility](#)

### **5. PTI EUROPE**

#### **5.1 Projects**

##### *5.1.1 Implemented*

PTI Europe activities undertaken in this period include the development of a workshop program, *How to Use Zoom: From set up to Presenting*, designed to enable FIC businesses, entities and public sector maintain or develop communication, training and collective working environments. Each workshop is comprised of 3 x 1.5-hour interactive online sessions held over a week and offered in two Pacific Time Zones. Due to high-demand demand, the workshops were extended from 2 to 5. Workshops 1 to 4 are fully subscribed as a 30 April. Participants are from: Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Nauru, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea.

The office disseminated fifteen (15) market intelligence reports as well as linkages to free trade development/marketing webinars and data source portals to 227 FIC private and public sector recipients in over 142 FIC organisations, businesses and government agencies.

##### *5.1.2 Completed/Secured*

During this period, PTI Europe clients reported AUD 123,000 in new sales directly attributable to the work of PTI Europe.

##### *5.1.3 Ongoing*

Client-specific research, product sourcing, profiling and introductions are ongoing to develop links between Pacific producers and exporters and European clients. Technical assistance and facilitation is being provided to Geneva and EU based Multilateral Organisations for project and in-country missions.