

Chairs' Summary of the PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting for PALM9
20 October 2020

Overview

1. The PALM Ministerial Interim Meeting (MIM) for PALM9 was held virtually on 20 October 2020 in order to follow up on the outcomes of the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8) as well as to prepare for PALM9.
2. The Meeting was attended by representatives from Japan and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Members. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Hon. Simon Robert Kofe, Minister of Justice, Communications and Foreign Affairs of Tuvalu, current Chair of the PIF. The PIF Ministers reaffirmed their interest and offer to host the next PALM MIM in the Pacific region.
3. Recalling the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting Leaders' Declaration ("PALM8 Leaders' Declaration"), the Ministers affirmed their strong commitment to the robust partnership between Japan and the PIF Members, a partnership underpinned by historical bonds and mutual trust. The Ministers reaffirmed the significant role the PALM process has played for over two decades in enhancing the partnership and their determination to further strengthen it to better meet the evolving opportunities and challenges of the region.
4. The Ministers recognised the devastating health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of regional and multilateral collaboration to respond and recover. The PIF Ministers highlighted that national containment measures adopted by the PIF Members, and regional collaboration through the *Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19*, have been largely successful, with relatively low numbers of COVID-19 cases in the region. However, the ongoing socio-economic impacts are significant and will be felt for months and years to come. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of ensuring fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for the Pacific; increased investment in health infrastructure; and access to affordable and flexible development finance to support the Pacific region to recover from COVID-19.
5. Minister MOTEGI emphasised Japan's determination to support the Pacific Island region, in cooperation with international and regional organisations, not only through short-term assistance but also through mid-to-long term support to strengthen their health care systems amid the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the provision of 4 billion yen worth of medical equipment and 580 million yen worth of technical support and medical

supplies through UNICEF, IFRC, and UNDP, in response to the needs of Forum Island Countries (FICs). Minister MOTEGI also expressed Japan’s intention to help address economic challenges the Pacific Island region faces due to the pandemic such as through the “COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan” to rapidly funnel capitals to respond to COVID-19, as well as to achieve longer-term sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Minister MOTEGI emphasised Japan was working closely with Australia, New Zealand and other partners to support FICs as they respond to the challenges of COVID-19, including by providing support for health systems, economic recovery and infrastructure needs. The Ministers expressed their commitment to together building a stable, resilient and prosperous Pacific region in the post COVID-19 era.

6. Minister MOTEGI highlighted Japan’s renewed commitment to the Pacific Island region through “All Japan” efforts based on Japan’s vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific, including through the *Direction of Japan’s Policy toward the Pacific Island Countries*. The renewed commitment is evident, for example, from active high level exchanges between Japan and FICs as well as from the establishment of the Interagency Committee for Promoting Cooperation with Pacific Island Countries in 2019. The PIF Ministers welcomed such commitment of Japan and concrete actions to further strengthen cooperation with the PIF Members through “All Japan” efforts.
7. The PIF Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strong regional action, harnessing shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and acting as one Blue Pacific Continent, as guided by the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* and the development of a *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. They highlighted the importance of working in partnership with Japan, a long-standing Forum Dialogue Partner, as guided by the Forum’s *Blue Pacific Principles for Dialogue and Engagement*.

Follow-up of PALM8

8. Minister MOTEGI provided the update on Japan’s commitment made at PALM8 to continuing implementation of robust development assistance as before and to supporting human resource development and people-to-people exchanges for 5,000 people for three years. To date, Japan has contributed approximately 61 billion yen in development assistance and carried out human resource development and people-to-people exchanges for approximately 6,500 people, including more than 500 for ensuring free and open maritime order based on the rule of law and sustainability of ocean resources in the region.
9. The PIF Ministers expressed appreciation for the smooth and steady implementation of Japanese assistance and welcomed Japan’s long standing record of consistent

implementation of its commitments.

Maritime Order based on the Rule of Law and Sustainability of Ocean Resources

10. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of a free, open, and sustainable maritime order based on the rule of law in the Pacific that will contribute to peace, stability, resilience and prosperity of the region.

11. Minister MOTEGI explained that as part of Japan's commitment made at PALM8, Japan provided capacity building in maritime security and safety such as through the dispatch of both short-term and long-term experts, including Japan Coast Guard Mobile Cooperation Team, provision of maritime safety equipment, training to address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and workshops on maritime law enforcement at the University of the South Pacific. Japan also provided cooperation in marine resource management and environment preservation and support for addressing oil leak from sunken ships. The Ministers welcomed continued cooperation on the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Pacific, such as through mutually beneficial fishing arrangements, noting the PIF Members' commitment to implement zone based management within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in accordance with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries.

12. The PIF Ministers reiterated the PALM8 commitment to the sustainable development, management and conservation of the ocean and its resources. In this regard, they highlighted progress on regional priorities including: working collectively to ensure maritime zones are secure and cannot be challenged or reduced as a result of sea-level rise and climate change; protecting the ocean from harmful plastics and threats posed by the presence of nuclear waste, radioactive and other contaminants; ensuring the long-term sustainability and economic viability of the region's fisheries resources; and ensuring that a robust, effective, and ambitious international legally binding agreement under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) is finalised and adopted.

Strengthening the Basis for Resilient and Sustainable Development

13. The Ministers reconfirmed their shared view that efforts to achieve resilient and sustainable development will require addressing climate change with a sense of urgency, recognising the existential threat that climate change poses to the future of the Pacific region, especially for island countries. In this regard, the Ministers reaffirmed the PALM 8 commitment to implement the Paris Agreement, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic

should not delay global momentum and ambition. Rather, COVID-19 recovery efforts should advance the goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and stimulate low-emissions, climate resilient development.

14. Given the need acknowledged in the PALM8 Leaders' Declaration to mobilise financial support, Japan announced an additional contribution of up to 1.5 billion USD to the Green Climate Fund in 2019, amounting to a maximum of 3.0 billion USD contribution in total. The Ministers welcomed the establishment of the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) in Samoa in 2019 and the start of human resource development in the field of climate change at the PCCC in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and New Zealand. The Ministers also welcomed progress made on the Hybrid Island Programme to promote the stable use of renewable energies through appropriately mixing the power generated through diesel power plants and renewable energies.
15. The PIF Ministers reaffirmed regional efforts to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction considerations into resilient development. Through the *Kainaki II Declaration on Urgent Climate Change Action Now* and the *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, the PIF Members have increased the focus on responding to climate change as the region's single greatest security threat. The PIF Members continue to implement the *Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP)* and its inclusive *Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP)*. As endorsed by the PIF Leaders, the PIF Members are finalising a *Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF)* – the first Pacific designed, led and owned initiative to provide communities with access to finance to ensure that existing and new community-level projects consider and prepare for the increasing risks of climate-induced and other disasters.
16. Given the importance of developing resilient quality infrastructure in an open, transparent, non-exclusive, sustainable manner, in accordance with international standards as affirmed in the PALM8 Leaders' Declaration, Minister MOTEGI explained that Japan has provided both hard and soft infrastructure development assistance throughout the Pacific Island region, including the renovation of the Palau International Airport, the Papua New Guinea Nadzab Airport, the Solomon Honiara Airport and support for development of roads in Papua New Guinea and ICT networks in Tuvalu, among others.
17. Reaffirming the Leaders' shared view that efforts to achieve resilient and sustainable development will require enhanced cooperation in the fields of health as well as trade and

investment, among others, Minister MOTEGI highlighted Japan's cooperation since PALM8. Japan's support in health includes the provision of a medical ship and equipment, dispatch of emergency disaster relief/infectious diseases teams and technical cooperation on both non-communicable and communicable diseases. In promoting trade, investment, and tourism, in addition to bilateral cooperation with FICs, Japan dispatched economic missions to multiple FICs and hosted a trade and investment symposium and business seminars in close cooperation with the Pacific Island Centre, leading to the start export of Pacific products to Japan, including chocolate from Vanuatu and dried bonito flakes from the Federated States of Micronesia.

Connecting Pacific Citizens

18. The Ministers reaffirmed the critical importance of strong personal bonds through active people-to-people exchanges, in particular among the youth. In this respect, the Ministers welcomed steady implementation of JENESYS programs, the Children Exchange Program with Micronesian Islands, the Sakura Science Plan, Pacific LEADs, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), JICA training programs, and Sports exchanges taking opportunities of the Rugby World Cup 2019 through host town exchange, among others, resulting in hundreds of people-to-people exchanges.

Cooperation in the International Fora

19. The Ministers expressed shared appreciation for continued cooperation between Japan and the PIF Members on initiatives and efforts in international fora as well as multilateral institutions.
20. The Ministers stressed the importance of taking advantage of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations to deliver on Leaders' commitment in the PALM8 Leaders' Declaration on an early reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC), reaffirming the need to further enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness and representativeness of the UNSC to better reflect the realities of the international community in the twenty first century. In this regard, Minister MOTEGI expressed his deep appreciation for the PIF Ministers' continued support for Japan's bid for permanent membership of the Council.
21. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to seeking further cooperation to address transnational security challenges, including transnational organised crime, cyber security, illicit trade in conventional weapons, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and counter-proliferation, terrorism and violent extremism. The Ministers expressed their intention to pursue the possibility of greater defence and security exchanges and cooperation.

22. The Ministers stressed the importance of efforts to achieve North Korea's complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in accordance with UNSC resolutions as expressed in the PALM8 Leaders' Declaration, and called on North Korea to take concrete actions toward that goal. They expressed their support for the resumption of talks, including between the United States and North Korea. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to fully implementing and enforcing the UNSC resolutions, including addressing North Korea's sanctions evading tactics such as "ship-to-ship transfers". The Ministers emphasised the continued importance of addressing humanitarian concerns, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Towards PALM9

23. The Ministers discussed other potential ways and areas to further deepen cooperation between Japan and the PIF Members, including how specifically Japan and FICs continue to collaborate to overcome various challenges posed by COVID-19, with a view to adding further depth to this important and enduring partnership. The PIF Ministers highlighted the importance of working in close partnership to ensure PALM 9 strengthens collective efforts in responding to regional and global development challenges including COVID-19 response and recovery; climate change and resilience; sustainable ocean management, use and conservation; and sustainable economic development. The Ministers jointly discussed their visions and priorities for PALM 9, thereby laying the groundwork for PALM9.

24. Minister MOTEGI announced that the next PALM (PALM9) will be held in Shima, Mie in 2021. The PIF Ministers welcomed Japan's hosting of PALM9. The Ministers shared their determination to continue close consultation in preparation for a successful PALM9.