

**Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Joseph Cella, U.S. Representative to the PIF  
PIF Leaders Session with Forum Dialogue Partners: Kainaki II to COP 26 –Pacific Islands  
Forum High-Level Roundtable on Urgent Climate Change Action  
Suva, 11 December 2020**

Good evening, Your Excellencies. Thank you, Prime Minister Natano, Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for hosting this session. I am honored to be here on behalf of President Trump and Secretary Pompeo, who send their greetings and warm wishes.

We fought side by side during World War II to secure peace in the Indo-Pacific. In this 75th year of this blessed peace, we have been commemorating and celebrating with allies, friends, and partners. We remain vigilant together to maintain this peace, by strengthening our security and prosperity.

Full transparency must always undergird our work and engagements on these timeless truths and common principles, which infuse the founding documents of many of the countries gathered here.

Over the course of the Trump Administration, we have demonstrated our deep and longstanding commitment to the Pacific Islands through the launch of over \$300 million in new programs as part of the Pacific Pledge. This year alone we announced more than \$200 million in new funding, including \$130 million to help your countries prepare for, and respond to, the global pandemic. We are supporting the PIF Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for this global pandemic through a \$5 million contribution to facilitate transportation of personnel as well as medical and humanitarian supplies.

Under the Pacific Pledge, we also announced more than \$78 million for new programs to broaden our efforts to partner with you on your most pressing security, economic and governance challenges, including environmental resilience. The United States recognizes that addressing environmental degradation and climate change is a priority in the Pacific due to the threat posed by sea level rise and the region's vulnerability to natural disasters.

The global community faces an unprecedented challenge in combatting a changing climate. We continue to believe that the greatest way to combat any risk – whether from extreme weather events or sea level rise – is human innovation and creativity. We've seen that time and time again in the United States, such as when U.S. net greenhouse gas emissions dropped over 10 percent from 2005 to 2018, even as our economy grew over 25 percent, and we think it's the best solution for the entire world. With our partners, we'll continue to apply innovation and creativity to this problem, including here in the Pacific.

I'd like to share just a few examples of how we're partnering with you under the Pacific Pledge to enhance your resilience.

First, we continue to support disaster risk reduction programs aimed at saving lives. For example, under a \$10 million interagency resilience program, the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is increasing training opportunities for Pacific weather forecasters and emergency managers, and expanding the distribution of emergency communication devices throughout the region, so that even those living on the most remote islands will have access to this critical emergency system.

Second, the United States Agency for International Development's or USAID's Ready project has helped Pacific Island countries mobilize \$54 million to strengthen their resilience to extreme weather events and adverse environmental changes. USAID is working on additional proposals to access more than \$500 million in new finance for programs in the Pacific. Ready also supported the Pacific Community's accreditation to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Ready helped the Fiji Development Bank become the first accredited Direct National Access Entity to the GCF in the region.

Third, USAID also recently launched the Pacific American Fund, which will provide grants to local organizations to implement innovative solutions to community-identified priorities including climate resilience.

Finally, the United States is expanding its presence in the Pacific, with new Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID personnel throughout the region. This increased presence bolsters our ability to work collaboratively with governments and the private sector and strengthens our partnerships on the ground.

These are just a few examples of our demonstrated commitment to the future security, prosperity, and well-being of Pacific peoples. We look forward to continuing to build and fortify our bridges with you in the years ahead.