



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

European Union provides FJD 14.3 million to strengthen Pacific Trade Capacity

Suva, Fiji – The European Union (EU) and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) have today signed a new project worth EUR 5.75 million (equivalent to FJD 14.3 million) to enhance the trade capacity of Pacific countries.

The project titled “*Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT)*” (*SPIRIT*) aims at boosting and increasing intra-regional and international trade by strengthening institutional and technical capacity in the region. It will facilitate the implementation of trade agreements, in particular the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and of the Pacific’s Aid-for-Trade Strategy 2020-2025. *SPIRIT* will also contribute to the development of a statistical monitoring framework that will foster greater regional economic integration.

In her remarks, Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General, Dame Meg Taylor said that, “The implementation of *SPIRIT* will ease trade challenges faced by the Pacific ACP¹ countries and focus on creating opportunities to trade regionally and internationally. Most importantly, it will strengthen the capacities of trade departments in the region through the provision of a technical position at the sub-regional level in each of the three sub-regions in the Pacific.”

Today’s announcement outlines the significant partnership and commitment between the EU and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat in advancing the Pacific countries’ benefits from trade agreements by promoting their efficient and streamlined implementation. Three Long-Term Trade advisers will be deployed in the sub-regions of Melanesia (including Timor-Leste), Micronesia and Polynesia to assist with the development and implementation of trade and investment policies. These Trade Advisers will also deliver a range of capacity-building and training initiatives to the Pacific countries.

The Ambassador of the European Union for the Pacific, H.E Sujiro Seam said: “The European Union is not only a development partner for the Pacific, it is also the best success story of regional trade and economic integration following the Second World War. With a market of 500 million consumers, the European Union is a business partner for the Pacific. This *SPIRIT* project comes at the right time, to alleviate the catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Pacific economies, build value and growth in the region and take advantage of the business opportunities offered in the European market.”

The Pacific ACP benefitting from the initiative are Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

ENDS

¹ African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)

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Project Background

Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade Project (SPIRIT - €5.75m) is funded from the 11th EDF for the ‘Pacific Regional Integration Support’ Programme (PRISE), signed last year on 23 January 2020. SPIRIT will support the capacity for regional aid for trade implementation by strengthening the Pacific countries’ trade- and investment-related institutions and human resource; will support and strengthen the Pacific countries’ capacity to implement Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) through provision of technical assistance; will provide support to the implementation of Pacific’s Aid-for-Trade strategy 2020-2025 and will develop a trade statistical monitoring framework for the Pacific. SPIRIT will be managed and implemented by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) over the next four years.