



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

JOINT FORUM TRADE AND ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING (JFTEMM)

“Building Pacific Economic Resilience and Competitiveness Post-COVID 19”

16 July 2021

OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

The Joint Forum Trade and Economic Ministers Meeting (JFTEMM) was convened virtually on 16 July 2021. The meeting was co-chaired by Fiji and Tuvalu respectfully, and was attended by Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu.

2. The meeting was also attended by the following Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies: the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), the Pacific Community (SPC), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and the University of South Pacific (USP). The Technical agencies and additional Observers present were the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), the Pacific islands Development Programme (PIDP), the World Bank Group, and the UN Resident Coordination Office of the Pacific, and UN ESCAP.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION UNDER THE 2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

(a) JOINT INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL ECONOMY AND E-COMMERCE

3. Ministers reflected on the emerging outcomes of the regional consultations on the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* and the emerging importance of digitalization of economies in this COVID-19 environment. Ministers also discussed the related progress of existing initiatives and strategies, including the *Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy 2020-2025*, and the *Pacific e-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap*. In light of these discussions, and while reaffirming the importance of digital transformation in the context of economic recovery, Ministers also noted the importance of having a clear strategy going forward, in terms of a *digital economy concept*. Accordingly, Ministers agreed to dialogue further to fully understand the parameters of a regional coordination mechanism for a Pacific Digital Economy Initiative. Further, Ministers also discussed the value of sequencing such an initiative with the ongoing work of the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.

4. Ministers urged that existing regional mechanisms relating to digital transformation, including the *Pacific E-commerce Strategy* (PIFS), the UNCDF *Pacific Digital Economy Program* (PDEP) and the SPC *Digital Empowerment Initiative* should be utilised and coordinated to avoid duplication of efforts.

5. Forum Trade and Economic Ministers:

- (i) **endorsed** the Concept Note for the establishment of a coordination mechanism for the Pacific Digital Economy Initiative between Trade and Economics and **agreed** that it be aligned to the ongoing development of the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*;
- (ii) **reaffirmed** the role of E-commerce and the digital economy as future drivers of growth in the Pacific region to mitigate and recover from the economic impact of COVID-19; and
- (iii) **directed** the Secretariat to develop the Terms of Reference of the regional coordination mechanism in consultation with Members, CROP Agencies, and other technical Agencies.

(b) BLUE PACIFIC ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGENDA

6. Ministers discussed the proposed concept for a *Blue Pacific Economic Strategy* as an instrument that will provide greater coherence and complementarity noting the strong linkages between economic and trade issues. Ministers noted the intent of the Strategy, that is, to serve as a medium to long-term instrument that captures short-term initiatives identified by the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Taskforce* (CERT) and the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy, and to provide a platform to initiate measures towards achieving the long-term goals of the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. Further, Ministers recognised the value of the *Blue Pacific Economic Strategy* in guiding the economic policy, advisory and advocacy work of the Secretariat, in collaboration with Members, regional agencies and stakeholders.

7. Forum Trade and Economic Ministers:

- (i) **noted** the decisions of the Forum Economic Ministers at their meeting held on 13 and 14 July 2021;
- (ii) **tasked** the Secretariat to consider resourcing and governance implications of the proposed *Blue Pacific Economic Strategy* for Member governments consideration; and
- (iii) **recognising** the importance of ensuring coherence and complementarity with current and future related initiatives, **agreed** to sequence this work with the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8. Forum Trade and Economic Ministers **considered** and **endorsed** the proposal to release meeting papers to the public.

CONCLUSION

9. The Co-Chairs acknowledged the Forum Trade and Economic Ministers, Senior Officials, the Secretary General and the Secretariat team and experts for their participation and contribution to these discussions and commended the spirit of cooperation that was evident throughout the meeting.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
16 July 2021