Celebrating 50 years of regional cooperation

The Leaders of the Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Tonga and Samoa together with Australia and New Zealand met in Wellington from 5th-7th August 1971. This was the first South Pacific Forum Meeting.

At the time, the only regional organisation established was the South Pacific Commission which was created in 1947. The leaders of the newly independent island nations understood the external influences that existed in that regional body, which included colonial powers. It was clear another forum was needed.

The Forum’s membership has increased from the original seven founding members to also include the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Leaders come together through the Pacific Islands Forum, working collectively for peace, security, social inclusion and prosperity.

The annual Forum meetings are chaired by the Head of Government of the Host Country, who remains as Forum Chair until the next meeting. The host leader of the 51st Pacific Islands Forum is Fiji Prime Minister Hon. Josaia V Bainimarama.

“...the Founding Fathers of the Forum displayed extremely far sighted vision in establishing the Forum as a strong regional political family through which the small and vulnerable Pacific Island States could together, through pooling of resources, of experience and of wisdom, help resolve crises faced by any of its members, or by the region as a whole.”

The Hon Dr Feleti Vaka’uta Sevele
Prime Minister of Tonga, 2007

The Forum Secretariat

To house the Forum Secretariat a gracious building was constructed in Suva, Fiji, opening in 1976.

“As we mark our golden anniversary... we must take the opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved together, as one collective through the Pacific Islands Forum and celebrate those achievements”

Hon. Josaia V Bainimarama, 2021
Prime Minister of Fiji

Photo at top of page: Third South Pacific Forum, Suva, 1972
Our chance to welcome and say Vinaka for your hard work!

1971 Formation of the South Pacific Forum (Original members: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga and Western Samoa)

1976 Opening of the Secretariat at Nasonini Ratu Sukuna Road, Suva

1976 Adopted the Declaration on the Law of the Sea

1980 Adoption of the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement transitioned to Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement 2001

1985 Adoption of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty) by the Forum

1992 Leaders at the 23rd South Pacific Forum held in Honiara, Solomon Islands adopt the Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation in the Pacific (Honiara Declaration)

1996 Signing of the Protocols of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty on 25 March by the Governments of United States, France and United Kingdom

2000 Leaders adopt the Biketawa Declaration

2000 Leaders adopt the new Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The annual leaders meeting is now known as the Pacific Islands Forum instead of the South Pacific Forum.

2003 Leaders endorsed the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

2004 Leaders endorsed the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru

2011 The Secretary General Tuiloma Neroni Slade is appointed as the Pacific region’s first Ocean Commissioner.

2014 Leaders appointed the first female Secretary General, Dame Meg Taylor from Papua New Guinea.

2015 Pacific advocacy central to adoption of the Paris Agreement, the treaty on climate change

2018 Leaders endorsed the Boe Declaration

2019 UN Secretary-General Antonoio Guterres visits the Forum Secretariat

2020 Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 established

Key Events 1971 - 2021