



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR FORUM DIALOGUE PARTNERS

1. ABOUT

- 1.1 Without restricting the discretion of Forum Leaders, these guidelines set out the background and purpose, roles and responsibilities, and processes and procedures for Forum Dialogue Partners (FDPs) of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), in the interests of effective, transparent and accountable partnerships in support of Forum Leaders' vision for the Blue Pacific region.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Forum Leaders' vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy, and productive lives. In pursuing this vision, the Forum engages with stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels.
- 2.2 The Forum Dialogue Partner mechanism (formally known as the Post Forum Dialogue mechanism) was established by Forum Leaders in 1989. to invite selected countries outside of the Pacific Islands region with significant cooperation and engagement and political or economic interests, to participate in a dialogue with Forum Leaders.
- 2.3 The annual Forum Dialogue Partners session with Forum Leaders is supplemented by regular strategic engagement between Forum members and Dialogue Partners to progress regional priorities.
- 2.4 In 2019, Forum Leaders adopted the *Blue Pacific Principles for Dialogue and Engagement* apply to all dialogues and engagements between Forum Members and Forum Dialogue Partners. They are:
- *One Blue Pacific* – recognising and engaging with the full Forum membership;
 - *Regional priorities* – embedding and progressing the Forum's regional priorities;
 - *Partnership approach* – joint planning, programming and delivery by the Forum and Dialogue Partner;
 - *Utilising existing mechanisms* – aligning with, and seeking to build off, existing regional and international mechanisms, processes, and meetings; and,
 - *Collective outcomes and impact* – developing joint outcomes statements and outlining a clear process for follow-up and implementation.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of the Forum Dialogue Partner mechanism is to facilitate dialogue and engagement with countries outside of the Blue Pacific region which have significant cooperation, engagement, and interests with the region, in order to build understanding, support and action on the Forum Leaders' vision and regional priorities.
- 3.2 Through admission, Forum Dialogue Partners are invited to: the annual PIF Leaders meeting week and to a specific plenary session with Forum Leaders; an annual Regional Development

Partners Roundtable with Forum Economic Ministers; other PIF meetings and events; and briefed, consulted and regularly updated on the work of the Forum by the Forum Secretariat.

4. CRITERIA

- 4.1 The criteria for Forum Dialogue Partners, which must all be met by countries at the time of admission and then continuously adhered to, are:
- a) Demonstratable commitment to advancing the vision and priorities of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum.
 - b) Long-established historical connections to the Pacific region which could include strategic, security, economic, social, and cultural links.
 - c) Long-term forward commitment to the Pacific region as demonstrated through foreign policy commitments, engagement strategies, diplomatic missions and engagement with regional organisations, and transparency in declaring economic, political, and strategic interests in engaging in the region.
 - d) Dedicated support for the sustainable and resilient development of the Pacific region including development assistance, trade and investment promotion, knowledge transfer and technical cooperation, people to people exchange, and south-south cooperation.
 - e) Shared interests and common positions on international issues and a commitment to using global networks and membership of international organisations to support Forum priorities.
 - f) Commitment to engaging with the Forum in accordance with the *Blue Pacific Principles for Dialogue and Engagement*.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Forum Dialogue Partners

- 5.1 The roles and responsibilities specific to Forum Dialogue Partners are to:
- Respect and act in accordance with the vision and purpose of the Forum and the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, with respect for Pacific cultures and indigenous knowledge.
 - Maintaining adherence to the criteria for Forum Dialogue Partner membership at the same or expanded levels of commitment.
 - Attendance at the Forum Leaders annual plenary session with Forum Dialogue Partners including at Ministerial level at least once every three years, with speaking preference reserved for Forum Dialogue Partners represented at Ministerial level.
 - In advance of the annual plenary session with Forum Leaders, provision of a written submission setting out support and engagement on Forum priorities during the year and plans for the upcoming year.
 - Attendance at the annual Regional Development Partners Roundtable with Forum Economic Ministers.

- Commitment to full engagement in the Triennial Reassessment process, facilitated by the Forum Secretariat.
- Engaging widely and meaningfully with Forum Members, Associate Members, Council of Regional Organisation of the Pacific (CROP) agencies and other regional institutions in support of regional priorities. This includes proactive engagement with Forum Members in multilateral fora and settings.
- Regular engagement and follow-up on Forum initiatives including attendance at regular and ad-hoc Forum meetings and events.
- Funding attendance at Forum meetings and activities.

Pacific Islands Forum

5.2 The roles and responsibilities specific to the Forum, through its Secretariat, are to:

- Provide Forum Dialogue Partners with advance notice of meetings and events requiring their attendance, to facilitate effective engagement.
- Ensure Forum Dialogue Partners are regularly briefed on Forum priorities and initiatives including after standing Forum meetings.
- Assess new applications for Forum Dialogue Partner membership.
- Induct new Forum Dialogue Partners including a high-level meeting with the Secretary General.
- Facilitate the Triennial Reassessment including the provision of collective and individual feedback to Forum Dialogue Partners.

6. ADMISSION

- 6.1 At the initiation of these *Guidelines*, existing Forum Dialogue Partners shall retain their Forum Dialogue Partner status.
- 6.2 Countries may either apply to be Forum Dialogue Partners or be invited by Forum Leaders, should they meet the criteria.
- 6.3 Recommendations may be made by the Forum Officials Committee and Forum Foreign Ministers to Forum Leaders regarding the issuing of invitations to prospective Forum Dialogue Partners. Upon the agreement of Forum Leaders, an invitation shall be issued in writing by the Secretary General to the prospective Dialogue Partner.
- 6.4 Forum Leaders may also invite countries to join the annual PIF Leaders Meeting or other events as a ‘Special Guest’. This may include while a country’s application for Forum Dialogue Partner membership is under consideration.

Application process

- 6.5 Countries interested in applying to be a Forum Dialogue Partner should write a letter to the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum expressing their interest and including a detailed submission (3 - 4 pages) addressing, in turn, each of the six criteria for Forum Dialogue Partners (outlined in section 4 above).
- 6.6 Upon immediate receipt of an application, the Forum Secretariat will share the application with all Forum Members and CROP agencies for information. The Forum Secretariat will then

undertake an assessment of the application, in consultation with the applicant, Forum Members and CROP organisations, to verify and supplement information contained in the application.

- 6.7 The application and assessment will then be shared with Forum Members for consideration at the next meeting of the pre-Forum Forum Officials Committee (FOC). If endorsed by the FOC, the applicant and assessment will be presented to the next Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting (FFMM). If endorsed by the FFMM, the application will be presented to the next meeting of Forum Leaders for consideration.
- 6.8 If the application is endorsed by FOC and FFMM, the applicant will be invited to attend the annual Pacific Islands Forum and to observe the session of Forum Leaders and Forum Dialogue Partners, as a Special Guest.
- 6.9 If endorsed by Forum Leaders, the Secretary General will write to the applicant to confirm their Forum Dialogue Partner membership and initiate the induction process.
- 6.10 If the application is not endorsed at any stage of the process, the applicant will be notified by a letter from the Secretary General, with feedback and advice on possible next steps provided.
- 6.11 At any stage in the preparation of the application, the applicant can call on the Forum Secretariat to assist with queries or clarifications on the process and application progress.

Upon admission

- 6.12 Upon admission, a Forum Dialogue Partner will be provided with a briefing on the current work priorities and upcoming engagements of the Pacific Islands Forum, including a high-level meeting with the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum.
- 6.13 Upon admission, the Forum Dialogue Partner is to provide a three-year partnership plan, setting out, at a high level, the thematic priorities, strategies, initiatives and engagements with the Forum, in alignment with Forum Leader priorities and the *Blue Pacific Principles for Dialogue and Engagement*. The Forum Secretariat will facilitate feedback on the partnership plan with Forum Members and CROP agencies.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Short annual written submission

- 7.1 Ahead of the annual session of Forum Leaders and Forum Dialogue Partners as part of the annual Pacific Islands Forum meeting, Forum Dialogue Partners are invited to provide a short written submission detailing their regional engagement with the Forum/Pacific region over the past year and plans for the coming year. This is also to encourage strategic dialogue between Forum Leaders and Forum Dialogue Partners at the annual session, rather than statement reading.
- 7.2 These submissions will be consolidated by the Forum Secretariat and shared with Forum Members in advance of the annual session of Forum Leaders and Forum Dialogue Partners. The submissions will also facilitate a record of Forum Dialogue Partner commitment and engagement over time and can be provided to Forum Members upon request.

Triennial Reassessment

- 7.3 The Forum Secretariat will undertake a Triennial Reassessment of Forum Dialogue Partners, to confirm Forum Dialogue Partners ongoing alignment to the criteria for membership, commencing from 2022.
- 7.4 At the outset of the Reassessment Process, the Forum Secretariat will facilitate a briefing of Forum Dialogue Partners to ensure understanding of the Reassessment Process.
- 7.5 Forum Dialogue Partners will be required to provide a 3 - 4-page submission on current regional engagement and that planned for the coming three years, against the six criteria for membership. The Forum Secretariat, in consultation with Forum Dialogue Partners, Forum Members and CROP, will analyse and consolidate submissions received for the consideration of FOC, FFMM and Forum Leaders. Submissions will be analysed against a) the criteria for Forum Dialogue Partners including the *Blue Pacific Principles for Dialogue and Engagement*; b) alignment with Forum Leaders' current policy priorities; and c) the extent of the Forum Dialogue Partner's engagement over the past three years.
- 7.6 Following the consideration of Forum Leaders, the Forum Secretariat will provide feedback to Forum Dialogue Partners on the results of the Reassessment Process. This will include collective feedback on the priorities, trends, and challenges of Forum Dialogue Partner engagement in the region. It will also include individual feedback to Forum Dialogue Partners with regards to strengths and weaknesses with their engagement and opportunities to strengthen the partnership.
- 7.7 All Forum Dialogue Partners must participate in the Triennial Reassessment. Failure to participate will be brought to the attention of the FOC, FFMM and Forum Leaders. In the year that the Triennial Reassessment takes place, Forum Dialogue Partners will not be required to provide the short annual written submission (section 7.1).

8. RETIREMENT

- 8.1 A Forum Dialogue Partner may be retired in the following circumstances:
- a) Voluntary retirement, of which the Forum Dialogue Partner must notify the Secretary General in writing with at least six months' notice. The Secretary General will then write to all Forum Members to formally advise them of the retirement, which will cease the Forum Dialogue Partner membership.
 - b) As per a directive of Forum Leaders, due to factors which may include: (a) Forum Dialogue Partner's lack of Ministerial/participation in annual sessions with Forum Leaders; or (b) lack of participation in the Triennial Reassessment; and/or (c) if a Forum Dialogue Partner is deemed to have deliberately worked against the interests of the Forum.
- 8.2 The Secretary General will write to the Forum Dialogue Partner to advise of Forum Leaders' decision, which will cease the Forum Dialogue Partner membership.
- 8.3 Forum Dialogue Partners that have retired may then reapply for Forum Dialogue Partner status at a later date, as per the application process set out above.