



PIFS GVA/6-2022

To : Forum Island Countries (FICs)  
Date : 3 February 2022  
From : Mere FALEMAKA, PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations,  
World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
Subject: PIF-Geneva Update 6/2021

Please find attached, for your records, an update on the activities undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum – Geneva Office (PIF-Geneva) in November-December 2021.

2. For further clarifications or follow-up on Trade Negotiations, please contact me on [mere.falemaka@pifs-geneva.ch](mailto:mere.falemaka@pifs-geneva.ch)
3. For further clarifications or follow-up on Aid-for-Trade, please contact Dr Andrea Giacomelli (Mr), Trade Policy and Aid-for-Trade Adviser on [andrea.giacomelli@pifs-geneva.ch](mailto:andrea.giacomelli@pifs-geneva.ch)
4. For further clarifications or follow-up on PTI Europe, please contact Ms Jodie Stewart, PTI Trade Commissioner to Europe on [Jodie.Stewart@pacifictradeinvest.com](mailto:Jodie.Stewart@pacifictradeinvest.com)

Mere FALEMAKA

**Ambassador**

**PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations,  
World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva**

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Pacific Islands Forum Geneva Office ([PIF Geneva](#)) comprises two sections: Trade Negotiations and Aid-for-Trade (Aft). The Trade Negotiations section provides policy and technical advice on multilateral trade issues to Forum Island Countries (FICs) which are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and coordinates their participation in multilateral negotiations. The Aft Section assists FICs, individually and collectively, to make better use of Aft opportunities provided by Geneva and Europe-based organisations.

Some non-trade work commenced in 2019 and is currently limited to support advocacy on selected regional priorities such as climate change, oceans, and COVID-19.

In addition, PIF Geneva hosts Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) Europe. PTI Europe focuses on the development and promotion of Pacific Island exports across international markets in Europe and the United Kingdom.

## 2. REPRESENTATION

Permanent Representative, Mere Falemaka made a presentation to the [Forum Fisheries Committee](#) on the state of play of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations on 29 October.

Progress with the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) was showcased by Dr Andrea Giacomelli, PIF Geneva Aid-for-Trade and Trade Policy Advisor, at the [TradeCom II Knowledge Sharing Seminar](#) (24-25 November) and the [Internet Governance Forum](#) (9 December), which took place virtually.

Ms Jodie Stewart, PTI Europe Trade Commissioner, attended the [Food Ingredients Trade Show](#) held in Frankfurt, which focusses on products that have bulk capacity to offer to food manufacturers in Europe.

## 3. WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Preparations for the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC12) scheduled from 30 November to 3 December 2021 intensified on the three priorities for MC12 (fisheries subsidies, WTO response to COVID-19, Agriculture) and the outcome document. However, MC12 was postponed on 26 November following an outbreak of the COVID-19 variant omicron. Leading up to the postponement, although some differences remained, significant progress were made in all the expected MC12 outcomes.

On [Fisheries Subsidies](#), a revised Text of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA) was circulated by the Rules Negotiating Group (RNG) Chair on 8 November as basis for intensive work to try to provide a clean text to be adopted at MC12. Following three weeks of intensive meetings, a revised Draft Text was released on 24 November to be the basis of Ministers engagement at MC12. The Text reflected significant progress made by Members although a few issues remained to be resolved (e.g. non-specific fuel subsidies, forced labour, reflagging of vessels, prohibition in the unregulated high seas, territoriality, and special and different treatment provisions). Some Members also pointed to the lack of balance in certain aspects of the Text.

On [Agriculture](#), a revised Chair's Text for MC12 was circulated on 23 November 2021 which included decisions on future work in seven areas (market access, domestic support, export competition, cotton, special safeguard mechanism, public stockholding, transparency), as well as a decision on the exemption of World Food Program purchases for humanitarian purposes. Members continued to be divided on the ambition and the elements in the Text.

On WTO response to COVID-19 pandemic, the Facilitator for this work presented his report to Members on 22 November as well as a Draft Declaration including an Action Plan for future preparedness. The Draft Declaration was to be the basis of a decision at MC12. The Draft Declaration was in the form of a political commitment and not legally binding rules. However, many Members continued to push for a comprehensive outcome that included both the trade policy tools contained

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in the Facilitator's Text as well as the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights ([TRIPS](#)) waiver discussed in the TRIPS Council.

On the Outcomes Document, a revised draft was presented to Members on 22 November reflecting many areas of agreement, but a number of areas which remain to be agreed were on WTO reform, the WTO's negotiating function, as well as inclusion of new issues such as women in trade, micro-small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), trade and environment and trade for peace.

On the joint statement initiatives (JSIs) significant progress were made by proponents. On [Services Domestic Regulation](#), proponents continued to work on implementation through modifications to their GATS schedules after the adoption of the reference paper in 2020. On [MSMEs](#), implementation commenced after a package of six recommendations was adopted early this year. The [E-commerce](#) and [Investment Facilitation](#) initiatives also saw good progress on the draft Texts. In the Trade and Environment Sustainability structured discussions ([TESSD](#)) a draft Ministerial Statement identifying areas of work was launched in December paving the way for more focussed work in 2022.

In December the Chair of MC12 (Kazakhstan) had proposed to Members to convene MC12 in the first week of March 2022. Members were therefore urged to complete work by end of February 2022.

During this period, PIF Geneva issued four technical Circulars to Members on Fisheries Subsidies and Agriculture; reports of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) and General Council; as well as email briefs on various issues. The Office coordinated eight Pacific Group statements that were delivered in various WTO meetings and organised two consultations with the Chair on fisheries subsidies. PIF Geneva also organized a Pacific WTO Trade Ministers Meeting on 24 November in preparation for MC12.

#### **4. AID-FOR-TRADE**

##### **4.1 Projects**

###### *4.1.1 Implemented*

The [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) gathered further speed. The contracts to assist the Secretariat with the development of a state-of-the-art Pacific E-commerce Portal, the training of Pacific negotiators on E-commerce rules, and to support Samoa with the drafting of its National E-commerce Strategy were all awarded. Inception meetings and other preparatory work started in December, with the view of delivering the desired outputs by mid-2022.

Following Forum Trade Ministers' approval to develop a Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy, a regional [inception workshop](#) took place on 10-12 November 2021. The workshop noted tentative priorities for regional action, agreed to undertake national virtual consultations in early 2022, and tasked the [World Bank](#) to develop a draft regional strategy, to be reviewed and cleared by the Secretariat before being presented to a regional validation workshop in the second quarter of 2022.

PIF Geneva continued to manage the consultancy team supporting the Pacific Group on WTO negotiations. The main focus of support was in providing status updates and analysis for the delegations visiting Geneva for MC12. This included briefings on trade and environment, services, domestic regulation, WTO reform, the WTO response to the pandemic, e-commerce, and two briefings on agriculture. On fisheries subsidies, support was provided in analysing new proposals, preparing interventions, undertaking bilateral meetings with New Zealand/Canada and the EU, and a consultation with the Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR) Chair. As the scheduled date for MC12 approached, the team provided a summary of the latest changes to the Chair's text, and an oral and written briefing to Pacific Trade Ministers.

###### *4.1.2 Completed/Secured*

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The Geneva Office's enhanced collaboration with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit ([PPIU](#)) facilitated the PPIU's decision to fund an E-commerce Assessment and Strategy for the Cook Islands, a project which would be undertaken in 2022, and which aligned with the recommendations of [the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap](#).

Development of a USD 500,000 grant agreement with the Pacific Digital Economy Program ([PDEP](#)) was also concluded, which will pave the way to the establishment of an [E-Commerce Unit](#) at the Secretariat.

Overall, during the course of 2021, the PIF Geneva Office mobilised about USD 1,280,000 towards implementation of the agreed regional Aid-for-Trade priorities. A breakdown of the assistance by partners is reported below.

Organisation	Aid-for-Trade leveraged (USD)
Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation (multiple donors)	250,000
Pacific Digital Economy Program (Australia)	500,000
International Trade Centre (multiple donors)	100,000
PACER Plus Implementation Unit (Australia and New Zealand)	120,000
World Trade Organization (multiple donors)	50,000
World Bank (multiple donors)	150,000
E-Commerce Aid-for-Trade Fund (Australia)	110,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,280,000</b>

#### 4.1.3 Ongoing

Dialogue with United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)) to leverage expertise and resources from the [E-Trade Alliance](#) saw good progress. A *Pacific Islands Digital Trade Dialogue* to showcase and refine the outcomes of this collaboration will take place in the first quarter of 2022.

#### 4.2. Apply! Demand-driven Aid-for-Trade facilities accepting applications

(1) [Standards Trade and Development Facility](#) (2) [Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation](#) (3) [Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility](#)

### 5. PTI EUROPE

The focus for PTI Europe over this period was very much on [Food Ingredients](#) trade show in Frankfurt which consumed the month of November with 4 weeks of meetings preparation, followed by 1.5 weeks of virtual appointments and 4 days of in person appointments. This resulted in overwhelming interest for ginger and coconut oil (including one motivated enquiry for 500 tonnes), a good partner able to assist with kappa carrageenan entry to market and some quotes for cocoa powder, coconut water, vanilla, oils (botanicals), and sea salt.

Accordingly, the focus of the month of December was on follow up emanating from this event. Some assisted deals with Fijian ginger producers are imminent, with early signs of kappa carrageenan introduction encouraging, subject to testing requirements. As we strengthen Quality Infrastructure in Pacific Islands, this will dissolve some barriers to accessing European markets. Some strong leads for virgin coconut oil (VCO) were also followed up, although the required quantities are larger than what our producers can reliably supply - with majority of buyers looking at 20+ container buys. It was the first time PTI attended this show, and overall the commercial outcomes have well justified the spend.

In this month progress has also been made forging a relationship with [Cacao Latitudes](#) – a division of [ECOM](#), a leading European merchant and sustainable supply chain management company. This has facilitated introductions to Solomon Islands cocoa grower groups with the view of accessing better freight rates. A plan is being prepared to leverage these rates to promote exports for 2022.

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In 2022 PTI Europe will prioritise activities that:

- offer the best possible sales / marketing platform opportunities for our Pacific Island clients;
- are focused on optimal market segments such as Hotel/Restaurant/Café (HoReCa), Premium, Free-from etc;
- are focused in specified geographical markets (European Continent, UK and emerging high growth markets such as the Middle East)