



PIFS GVA/22-2022

To : Forum Island Countries (FICs)
Date : 30 March 2022
From : Mere FALEMAKA, PIF Permanent Delegation to the United Nations,
World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva
Subject: PIF-Geneva Update 1/2022

Please find attached, for your records, an update on the activities undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum – Geneva Office (PIF-Geneva) in January-February 2022.

2. For further clarifications or follow-up on Trade Negotiations, please contact me on 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
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

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 promotes the establishment of regional initiatives in the priority areas of the [Pacific Aft Strategy](#) and assists FICs, individually and collectively, to make better use of Aft opportunities.

Some non-trade work commenced in 2019 and is 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

The PIF Permanent Representative, Ambassador Mere Falemaka, delivered a statement at the [signing ceremony](#) of the MOU between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the WHO on 7 February, presented PIF regional priorities at the Pacific-EU Ambassadors Annual Meeting on 15 February and made a presentation on the WTO Fisheries Subsidies provisions on Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing at the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) [webinar](#) on Combating IUU Fishing on 28 February.

3. WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Following the postponement of the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) on 26 November 2021, consultations started in Geneva on a new date and venue. At the General Council Meeting on 23-24 February, Members agreed to reconvene MC12 in the week of 13 June. Members stressed the need to progress work on priorities for MC12 which included the WTO Response to the COVID 19 pandemic, Fisheries Subsidies, Agriculture and WTO reform, as well as the MC12 outcome document. Members also indicated that work should resume based on the documents circulated in late November 2021. However, since 24 February, work in the WTO including the negotiations have been hampered following the situation in Ukraine.

On [Fisheries Subsidies](#), the revised Text of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA) circulated by the Rules Negotiating Group (RNG) Chair on 24 November as basis for Ministerial engagement at MC12 remained on the table. During this period consultations were held with Members including in small group formats on how to restart work. At the RNG meeting on 15 February the Chair requested that Members focus on a few issues that remained to be resolved - e.g., non-specific fuel subsidies, territoriality, forced labour, reflagging of vessels, prohibition in the unregulated high seas, and special and different treatment provisions. Developing countries stressed the need to prioritise special and differential treatment (SDT) and not to leave this to the last minute. Some Members also pointed to other parts of the Text that needed to be addressed such as transparency. Consultations on territoriality started in small group format. Members also engaged in bilateral consultations.

On [Agriculture](#), Members continued to consider the revised Chair's Text for MC12 circulated on 23 November 2021. The Text 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. One meeting was held on 24 January to discuss how to take forward the work. Members highlighted special safeguard mechanism, domestic support, export restrictions and export competition, while work on public stockholding required consolidation. Members were urged to work together to narrow differences.

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On [WTO response to COVID-19 pandemic](#), consultations were held on India's request for a Mini-Ministerial meeting to provide political guidance on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver proposal. In late January a three-week work plan was launched to advance work on both aspects of the WTO response, namely the trade policy measures based on the Walker Text of 22 November 2021 and the TRIPS waiver which was discussed in the TRIPS Council. Given the contentious nature of the TRIPS waiver, a small group meeting of the quad (US, EU, Indian and South Africa) facilitated by the WTO Director General had also been working in parallel on an IP solution. The aim was to conclude the two aspects by the end of February. However, on 3 February the General Council Chair called for a strategic pause given differences amongst Members on how to proceed and what text to use. Some Members called for the circulation of the composite text to be the basis of work. Members were therefore urged to have bilateral discussions on how to progress work.

On the joint statement initiatives (JSIs) work continued to build on the significant progress made by proponents in 2021 on [E-commerce](#) and [Investment Facilitation](#). On [Services Domestic Regulation](#), and [MSMEs](#), proponents continued to work on implementation following agreement on the reference paper on domestic regulation and MSMEs package in 2021. On the Trade and Environment Sustainability Structured Discussions ([TESSD](#)), consultations were held on the priorities and sequence of work to be pursued in 2022 based on elements set out in the Ministerial Statement adopted in December 2021.

During this period, PIF Geneva issued 13 technical circulars on Fisheries Subsidies and Agriculture, and WTO Response on COVID 19; reports of key meetings - Trade Negotiations Committee, General Council, and regular bodies; as well as email briefs on various issues. The Office coordinated two Pacific Group statements that were delivered at the meetings on Fisheries Subsidies and at the February General Council. PIF Geneva also organized a Pacific Trade and Fisheries Officials Briefing on 20 January 2022 to review progress on Fisheries Subsidies negotiations and positions for resuming work in 2022.

4. AID-FOR-TRADE

4.1 Projects

4.1.1 Implemented

Implementation of the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) continued smoothly.

- Work on the Pacific E-commerce Portal commenced, including development of the Portal wireframe, drafting of business toolkits, collection of E-commerce statistics, and preparation of reporting templates on programs and projects targeting implementation of the [Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap](#)
- The regional training on E-commerce rules was [launched](#) and about 100 officials were nominated
- The annotated outline for the Samoa E-commerce Strategy was finalised, paving the way for face-to-face consultations
- Preparations accelerated on the [Pacific Islands E-Trade Dialogue](#), including scoping of pilot projects with E-commerce multinationals, due to take place on 4 March 2022

Work on the [Pacific Trade Facilitation Initiative](#) also progressed, including national consultations in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Fiji and Niue.

PIF Geneva continued to manage the consultancy team supporting the [Pacific Group](#) on WTO negotiations. The team prepared and presented an analysis for Pacific Trade and Fisheries Officials on the revised Fisheries Subsidies Agreement.

4.1.2 Completed/Secured

None

4.1.3 Ongoing

Dialogue with the Trade Advocacy Fund 2 ([TAF2](#)) is ongoing to ensure further support for the Pacific Group at the WTO.

A paper was submitted to the PACER Plus Implementation Unit ([PPIU](#)) identifying options for funding in the area of E-commerce which are aligned with specific components of the PACER Plus Work Program.

In partnership with the Standards Trade and Development Facility ([STDF](#)), the PIF Geneva promoted dialogue with Pacific partners to facilitate funding of a honey project, including a national component focussing on Niue and a regional component.

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

Along with PTI Europe's ongoing core work facilitating support and commercial outcomes for Pacific businesses, this period also saw PTI participate in some visits to markets to prospect business development opportunities.

In January, PTI Europe travelled to Dubai and whilst there participated in [World of Coffee Dubai](#). The trip unearthed some good export leads. Commercial highlights included facilitating a tuna deal (Solomon Islands) and assisting with negotiations for galip nuts (PNG). There is wealth in this market, an appetite for new products and sophisticated import capabilities. Whilst interested in the back stories of products, quality and luxury are more relevant drivers for buyers in this market - packaging needs to be reflective of these factors. There is decent opportunity for some Pacific food, beverage, and skin care products in the Middle East and significant interest in natural products. Businesses serious about this market should seek Halal certification.

In February, PTI Europe attended the [Salon International de l'Agriculture 2022](#). There are gains to be made for Pacific Island exports in assisting French Polynesian businesses to widen their market targets to non-French speaking Europe. Gains can also be made by leveraging relationships that these exporters have in place in France and Belgium to assist other exporters in the Pacific to access French speaking markets in Europe. To further cement the above opportunities and bring some non-French Polynesian Pacific products to French consumers, PTI Europe will attend the [Grand Pavois](#) later this year.