PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM WOMEN LEADERS MEETING

9 June 2022
Virtual Meeting

OUTCOMES

The Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting (PIFWLM) was endorsed in 2021 by Forum Leaders as a standing Forum meeting. The inaugural meeting was convened virtually on 9 June 2022. The first meeting was important as it sets the foundation for all future meetings, establishing the PIF Women Leaders Meeting as the high-level regional accountability mechanism for gender equality and inclusion for the Blue Pacific Continent.

2. The meeting was chaired by Fiji as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, and attended by Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

3. Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), attended as members of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP). The full List of Participants is at Annex A.

4. The Chair of the meeting, the Hon. Rosy Akbar, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation opened the meeting with a few introductory remarks, followed by the PIF Secretary-General Henry Puna who provided welcome remarks. The keynote address at the meeting was delivered virtually by the Forum Chair and Prime Minister of Fiji, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama. The Right Hon. Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern; Hon. Prime Minister of Samoa, Fiame Naomi Mataafa; Vice President of the Republic of Palau, Hon. Jerrlyn Udutch Sengebau Snr; and H. E. Ambassador for Women and Girls, Australia, Christine Clarke also provided remarks at the opening session. These remarks are included in Annex B.

5. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM welcomed the recent Suva Agreement which reaffirms the Forum’s unity, which is vital to progressing gender equality.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

6. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM adopted the Annotated Agenda, attached at Annex C.
AGENDA ITEM 3: THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY, IN THE FUTURE OF OUR BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

7. Ministers and Delegates of the inaugural PIFWLM noted the many challenges that Pacific women and girls face and the added burden of COVID-19 and the effects of climate change which has exacerbated gender inequality. Ministers and Delegates also noted that the PIFWLM provides an opportunity to address gender inequality in the region.

8. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM:

   i. **welcomed** the strong statements made by Leaders at the opening session of the inaugural PIFWLM which are included as Annex B of this outcomes document;

   ii. **noted** the current context of the inaugural PIFWLM in relation to gender equality, focusing on its centrality to development across our region, including within the context of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, COVID-19 response and recovery, and the effects of climate change; and

   iii. **welcomed** the PIFWLM as an annual standing meeting on the Pacific Islands Forum calendar with outcomes to be reported to Forum Leaders.

AGENDA 4: PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION: WAY FORWARD FOR A REVITALIZED PACIFIC LEADERS GENDER EQUALITY DECLARATION

9. An update on the review of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and a proposed way forward was considered by Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM. The PLGED is a strong step forward for the region and must reflect current regional developments and priorities.

10. Ministers and Delegates of the inaugural PIFWLM expressed their gratitude and offered their support for the revitalisation process of the PLGED. Ministers and Delegates noted the importance of the Declaration and the role it can play in advancing gender equality in the region. Ministers and Delegates also noted the importance of engagement and communication and strengthened education systems to support progress on gender equality.

11. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM:

   i. **noted** and **endorsed** the findings of the review of the PLGED;

   ii. **endorsed** the proposed consultation process for the revitalisation of the PLGED;

   iii. **recommended** that a renewed PLGED has strengthened systems for governance and accountability, including plans to present to Forum Leaders for endorsement in 2023; and
iv. noted that the recommendations of the PIFWLM on the PLGED will be referred to Forum Leaders for their consideration.

**AGENDA ITEM 5: STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE ACTION AND POSITIONING ON KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES**

5(i) COHERENT AND STRENGTHENED PIF VOICE FOR A COLLECTIVE POSITION ON KEY REGIONAL PRIORITIES

12. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM considered and supported the proposed gender equality advocacy and messaging strategy, noting that it will build on the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) International Engagement and Advocacy Strategy and its processes by providing a gender lens to ensure gender dimensions are included. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM also noted the importance of having a collective voice to highlight issues of common interest including disproportionate impacts and effects of climate change and disasters on women and girls. Ministers and Delegates noted the development of the strategy and importance of having appropriate messaging that reflects the current Pacific context.

13. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM:

i. noted the proposed approach to develop common areas of engagement and advocacy priorities including the timeframe; and

ii. endorsed the development of a gender equality advocacy and messaging strategy for collective advocacy and positioning messages on gender equality issues of mutual priority to Members and aligned to the Forum International Engagement and Advocacy Strategy.

5(ii) PACIFIC WOMEN’S TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE AND PACIFIC MINISTERS FOR WOMEN MEETING OUTCOMES

14. An update on the 14th Triennial Conference and the 7th Meeting of Pacific Ministers for Women and Senior Officials was considered by Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM. The Ministers and Delegates noted the importance of women’s leadership at all levels and acknowledged the need for more and deeper engagement on issues relating to women and girls. Ministers and Delegates also noted the linkages to the Triennial and broader international commitments.

15. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM:

i. noted the 14th Triennial Conference Outcomes Document and committed to implement its actions and recommendations;

ii. encouraged Forum Members to take actions where they can, to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the full realisation of human rights for women and girls of
all diversities in the region, over and above the 14th Triennial Conference Outcomes Document; and

iii. **invited** Forum Leaders to note the 14th Triennial Conference Outcomes Document and support the implementation of its actions and recommendations.

**AGENDA ITEM 6: OTHER MATTERS - UPDATE ON THE 2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT**

16. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM acknowledged the Forum Chair, the Co-chairs of the FOC Subcommittee on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and the Secretariat for the work that has gone into the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

17. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM:

   i. **noted** the draft 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and **called for** Forum Members and development partners to ensure its gender-responsive implementation;

   ii. **recommended** that the Secretariat strengthen the gender equality language in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent before it is circulated to the FOC Subcommittee for finalisation; and

   iii. **welcomed** the emphasis placed by Forum Leaders on gender equality and **called for** gender equality to be reaffirmed as a regional priority in the context of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

**AGENDA ITEM 7: NEXT MEETING AND OUTCOMES**

**NEXT MEETING**

18. Ministers and Delegates of the PIFWLM **noted** that the Secretariat will advise on the arrangements for the next PIF Women Leaders Meeting to be held prior to the 2023 PIF Leaders Meeting.

**2022 PIF WOMEN LEADERS MEETING OUTCOMES**

19. Ministers and Delegates of the inaugural PIFWLM **noted and endorsed** the Outcomes and recommendations of the PIFWLM which will be conveyed to the Forum Leaders’ Meeting by the Secretary General consistent with the 2005 PIF Establishment Agreement, as outlined in the PIFWLM Terms of Reference.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva
9 June 2022
ANNEX A

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

AUSTRALIA

H.E. Christine Clarke
Ambassador for Women and Girls
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

H.E. John Feakes
Australian High Commissioner to Fiji

Julianne Cowley
Assistant Secretary Pacific Partnerships and Development Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Corinne Tarnawsky
Assistant Director
Pacific Gender Section
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Gerald Thomson
First Assistant Secretary
Pacific Economic and Development Division
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Emma Goodwin
Assistant Director, Pacific Regional Organisations and Governance Section,
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Geraldine Tyson
Assistant Director, Pacific Gender Section,
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Mona Balram
Counsellor - Regional Political and Economic Development
Australian High Commission, Suva

Sophie Temby

Counsellor - Development Cooperation,
Australian High Commission, Suva

Hannah Mc Knight
Graduate Policy Officer
Pacific Gender Section
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Angeline Fatiaki
Senior Program Manager - Gender Equality,
Australian High Commission, Suva

Mariner Illingworth
Senior Program Manager - Regional Political – Regional Organisations
Australian High Commission, Suva

COOK ISLANDS

H.E Jim Armistead
High Commissioner to Fiji

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Hon. Gardenia Aisek
Secretary of Education

Johnny Hadley
National Child Protection Coordinator
FSM National Government

FIJI

Hon. Rosy Akbar
Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

Hon. Veena Bhatnagar
Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Jennifer Poole
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Selai Korovusere
Director / Adviser
Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Mehrik Mehrvar
Gender Adviser to the Minister
Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Jade Ly Tham
Chargée de mission
MTS
Charlotte Teraiarue
Conseillère technique
Ministère de l’éducation et de la modernisation de l’Administration, en charge du numérique

NEW CALEDONIA

Veronique Mollot
Collaboratrice Egalite Des Genres
New Caledonia Government
Rose Wete
Official Representative of New Caledonia appointed to Fiji

NEW ZEALAND

Hon. Jan Tinetti
Minister for Women

H.E. Louisa Wall
Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Anna McDonald
Principal Policy Analyst
Ministry for Women
Melanie Roberts
Unit Manager
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Rosie Miller
Policy Officer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Georgia Grice
Policy Officer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Virginia Dawson
Counsellor
Pacific Regional and Fiji Development Cooperation
New Zealand High Commission
Suva
Surava Elaisa
Senior Development Programme Coordinator
New Zealand High Commission
Suva

PALAU

Hon. J. Uduch Sengebau Senior Vice President and Minister of Justice

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Nancy Kavop
First Assistant Secretary, Gender Development & Human Rights Department for Community Development & Religion
Wekare Mekigae  
Executive Director, Office for the  
Development of Women  
Department for Community Development & Religion

Jerry Ubase  
Secretary  
Department for Community Development and Religion

Jacinta Tony-Barrion  
Acting Head of Mission  
PNG High Commission  
Suva

**REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

Hon. Kitlang Kabua  
Minister of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Anjanette Kattil  
Secretary  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Yumiko Mark  
Foreign Service Officer  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Takaaki Ito  
Director, Gender in Development  
Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs

Rina Keju  
Deputy Chief of Mission  
Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Suva, Fiji

**SAMOA**

Peseta Noumea Simi  
Chief Executive Officer  
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Juliana Lafaialii  
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**SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Dr Cedric Alependava  
Permanent Secretary  
Minister for Women, Youth, Children, & Family Affairs (MWYCFA)

Ms Mel Pryde  
Gender Technical Adviser  
Minister for Women, Youth, Children, & Family Affairs (MWYCFA)

Madolyn Yalu  
Second Secretary  
Solomon Islands High Commission, Suva

**TONGA**

Lavinia Palei  
Monitoring & Evaluation Officer  
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**TUVALU**

Hon. Isaia Vaipuna Taape  
Minister of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs  
Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs

Lily. T. Faavae  
Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs
Moira M Simmons
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Natano Elisala
Deputy Secretary

Manaema Saitala
Gender Affairs Department

Sokotia Kulene
Director of the Gender Affairs Department

Brigitte Leduc
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Adviser

Moira M Simmons
Deputy Secretary
Ministry of Justice, Communications and Foreign Affairs

Natano Elisala
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Manaema Saitala
Gender Affairs Department

Sokotia Kulene
Director of the Gender Affairs Department

Brigitte Leduc
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Adviser

COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE PACIFIC

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM FISHERIES AGENCY

Dr. Manumatavai Tupou-Roosen
Director General

Patricia Sachs-Cornish
Executive Officer

THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

Miles Young
Director
Human Rights Social Development Division

Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago - Elisara
Regional Director for Polynesia

Ms. Vuki Buadromo
Senior Adviser to Deputy Director-General

Neomai Maravakula
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VANUATU

Arthur Faerua
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Dr. Mary Hattori
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Dr. James Viernes
Regional Engagement & Development Officer

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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Secretary General

Dr. Filimon Manoni
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Paki Ormsby
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Sione Tekiteki
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Viliame Wilikilagi
Senior Adviser - Policy

Melinia Nawadra
Policy Adviser – Social Inclusion

Dr. Fiona Hukula
Gender Specialist

Manaini Rokovunisei
Policy Adviser – Social Policy

Talei Tuinamuana
Social Policy Officer

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
9 June 2022
ANNEX B

SPEECHES AND REMARKS AT THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM LEADERS MEETING

Hon. Rosy Akbar - Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

• The Prime Minister of Fiji and PIF Chair, Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimara,
• The Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Hon. Jacinda Ardern
• The Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon Fiame Naomi Mata’afa
• The Vice President of the Republic of Palau, Hon. Jerrlyn Uduch Sengebau Senior
• The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Mr. Henry Puna
• Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E. Christine Clarke
• Honourable Ministers
• Distinguished Delegates from Forum Member and Forum Associate Member countries
• Members of CROP
• Ladies, gentlemen, young people of our Blue Pacific and beyond listening in to the live stream of the opening segment of this inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

Ni sa bula Vinaka! It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting. Let me begin by saying what an honor it is to Chair this first annual standing meeting that recognizes the importance of an enduring focus on achieving gender equality in the Pacific. Your presence today is a reminder of just how important this work is.

This inaugural meeting is important as it sets the foundations for all future meetings, establishing the PIF Women Leaders Meeting as the high-level regional accountability mechanism for gender equality and inclusion for the Blue Pacific continent.

As we discuss and act on challenges facing Pacific women and girls to continue advancing gender equality, I ask you to also reflect on the many gains we have made in the region. I commend the efforts by our governments in adopting gender-responsive policies, laws and practices to address gender inequalities. For example, most of our countries have legislation addressing the pressing social issue of domestic violence. Women are also making progress in other sectors.
This is evident in the private sector’s progress on women in business leadership. The Asian Development Bank’s Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative report found that the region exceeds the global average for women’s representation in business leadership. Pacific women hold 31% of CEO positions compared to the global average of 4.4%. However, much remains to be done in the areas of access to finance for trade, including using online platforms to market and promote their businesses and products.

Excellencies, we know that there needs to be greater recognition and support to women and girls, in all their diversity, and this meeting will provide a platform for strengthened political voice and collective action on women and girls’ issues in the region.

While the region has made significant progress, the Pacific still has the lowest percentage of women’s political participation globally and violence against women and girls in the region is among the highest in the world. These challenges are further exacerbated by climate change and COVID-19 – with women often on the frontlines and most impacted by crises.

Therefore, we must draw on our collective strength to ensure improved gender equality makes a significant contribution to creating a prosperous, stable, safe, and secure Blue Pacific Continent for current and future generations.

I thank you all for being part of the meeting, and I look forward to all the fruitful discussions that will take place today.

I would now like to invite the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Mr. Henry Puna, to make some introductory Welcome Remarks.

**PIF Secretary-General Henry Puna**

Thank you, Madam Chair,

- The Prime Minister of Fiji and PIF Chair, Rear Admiral (Ret’d) Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimara,
- The Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Hon. Jacinda Ardern
- The Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata’afa
- The Vice President of the Republic of Palau, Hon. Jerrlyn Uduch Sengebau Senior
- Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, H.E. Christine Clarke
- The Minister of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs for Tuvalu, the Hon. Isaia Vaipuna Taape
- Honourable Ministers of our Blue Pacific Continent
- Distinguished Delegates from Forum Member countries
- Colleagues from CROP
Ladies, gentlemen and young people of our Blue Pacific Continent.

*Kia orana and ni sa bula Vinaka!*

Warm greetings from Suva this morning. It is my great pleasure to be part of the opening formalities to champion gender equality at this inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

I am reminded today of the realities Pacific women and girls face every day – from experiencing domestic violence, bearing the burden of unpaid work, to barriers limiting their economic empowerment and participation in public life. I could go on! And if this isn’t enough, they have to deal with the disproportionate impacts of climate change and COVID-19.

To support the progress of gender equality, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders endorsed an annual standing Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting, in 2021, reaffirming the importance of advancing gender equality in the region.

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders demonstrated their commitment to realizing gender equality through the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. I am pleased to share that this important Declaration was made in Rarotonga when I was the Prime Minister of Cook Islands.

I am also pleased to share that the Secretariat undertook an independent review of the Declaration in 2021, and we are now in the process of preparing for consultations on the revitalization of the Declaration.

The independent review findings tell us that we have work to do – there needs to be better visibility, coordination, and ownership of gender equality at national and regional levels. This includes the need for better alignment of all gender equality related actions and to other priorities.

The independent review also highlights the need for a strong governance and oversight mechanism that can support progress on gender equality and be a conduit for shared learning. It is for this reason that we are revitalizing the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration to ensure it truly delivers for Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity.

The work of revitalizing the Declaration is happening at an opportune time as we are also finalizing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The strategy represents the region’s commitment to collective action to develop long-term approaches to critical challenges including gender issues.

Women and girls play an important role in implementing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Gender equality is an essential strategic pathway to a sustainable Blue Pacific Continent tomorrow. Only when we have gender equality will we achieve Forum Leaders’ vision for the Pacific – one of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives. While the region has made some progress, we need to do more.

I also want to highlight that within the CROP family, we recognize the benefits of more diversity and representation and have established the CROP Women of the Wave Network to help boost and support women of CROP to further their career and leadership aspirations. We
know that promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality will strengthen how we support our members.

If you look around the room today, and you wonder why I and my officials are dressed in black, that is because we, along with the [CROP] agencies are supporting the Thursdays in black global movement to end violence against women and girls.

It is increasingly important to note that actions that champion gender equality requires the collective support of men, women, boys, and girls. By engaging men and boys in these conversations, we can work towards addressing some of the cultural barriers that impede our efforts to address gender inequality in our region.

That is why, Excellencies, the discussions here today must lead to concrete actions to advance gender equality in our Blue Pacific.

I thank you all for being here today and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Vinaka vakalevu and meitaki ma’ata.

Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, Foreign Affairs and Forestry, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama

Keynote Address at the Opening of the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting

Your Excellencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Blue Pacific Continent.

Bula Vinakato you all.

I am honoured to join you for a special and significant day for the Pacific — our first-ever Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting.

Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge every woman in this meeting today – specifically, what it has taken for you to sit at this proverbial table.

Some of you were the first woman in your family to get a degree. Others were the first heads of their agencies; or the first woman Prime Minister in your country.

You have had to defy conventions, traditions, and perhaps, even your family, to reach where you are today. And whatever the journey has been - you have undoubtedly worked harder than your male colleagues.

Yet, despite the injustices and obstacles, you encountered along your own paths; here you sit, determined to change the narrative for the women and girls you now lead. That is not only praise-worthy, but deeply inspiring.
Women and girls across our region face many common challenges, including the impacts of COVID-19, climate change, geo-strategic competition and gender inequality. It should go without saying that, without the full inclusion of women in decision-making roles, we have zero hope of achieving effective, practical solutions to the myriad of 21st century challenges we face.

Yet, it has taken us decades to convene a women-centered political forum, despite the data telling us of the multiple barriers our girls and women are up against.

Up to 60 percent of women and girls in our region have experienced violence at the hands of partners or family members.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union reports that globally, women comprised 25.5 percent of national Parliamentarians as of January 2021, but the percentage of women in Pacific Parliaments was around 6.4 percent. As a father of five hardworking daughters – these numbers alarm me.

The UN continues to warn us that the pandemic has had a dis-proportionate impact on women and threatens to roll back decades of hard-won progress on the fight against inequality.

Women’s employment, for example, fell globally by 4.2% in 2020 compared with 3% for men as sectors in which women tend to work more – such as tourism – were ravaged by necessary restrictions used to curb the spread of the virus.

Now, however, as our borders across our region continue to reopen to the world and new life is breathed into our economies - Fiji is more optimistic than ever that the disruptions we have all so painfully endured over the last two years can be shaped into something better.

I believe that now, more than at any other point in history, the Pacific is primed and ready for a regional development “reset”.

One that not only includes women more fully, but that is genuinely co-led by women – from trade, agriculture and industrial policies; to education, training and labour market needs; from environmental challenges to human rights-based solutions.

This Women Leaders Meeting brings to the table thinkers and doers from across our Blue Pacific, with the power to make change happen by design. We can only achieve more sustainable solutions for our people if men and women work together as equals.

We know that we need a Green-Blue recovery – because it’s vital for our planet and it’s good for our economies. Nature-based climate solutions; renewable energy; decarbonization of the shipping industry – this is where our money needs to be directed.

We need a Digital recover – because our economic sectors need to be supported in leveraging technology to become more agile in the face of disruption, and more sustainable.

We need a recovery that prioritises STEM; more specifically, one that emphasizes the education and inclusion of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.
Giving women equal opportunities to pursue and thrive in STEM careers, helps narrow the gender pay gap, enhances women’s economic security and ensures a diverse and talented workforce.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am not exaggerating when I say that, for any of this - and more - to be achieved; for us to even come close to meeting our 2030 SDG targets - a Pacific development reset must be underscored by gender-inclusive recovery.

The good news is that we are not starting from scratch. Thanks to the tireless work of scores of people over the last few decades – including many of you present here today - we have mechanisms in place and regional frameworks that demonstrate our commitment to equality.

This includes the 2012 Gender Equality Declaration and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Human Rights 2018–2030. For our part, I’m proud that Fiji’s commitment to merit-based hiring has put more women in our Civil Service than ever.

As you begin today, I ask that you keep in mind our 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent - which is to be considered by Forum Leaders next month.

I want to leave you with a brief but sobering excerpt from the “ambitions” section of the strategy.

“In 2050, the Pacific region will thrive based on its unique and positive cultural values and identities; by its commitment to ensuring full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people by defending and promoting human rights, gender equality and social inclusion so that no one is left behind; and by providing quality, affordable and accessible education, health, training, financial and other services for all Pacific people.”

It’s a mighty task, but not an impossible one. Indeed, it is a duty. And I have the utmost faith in your contribution to make this future a reality.

My sincere good wishes for your deliberations.

Vinaka vakalevu – Thank you.
Speech to the (virtual) inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders’ Meeting, 9 June 2022

- E ngā mana, e ngā reo, tēnā koutou katoa [All peoples of the world, all speakers, greetings to all that are gathered here]. Warm Pacific greetings.
- Bula vinaka Chair, Secretary General Mr Henry Puna, esteemed leaders, and distinguished representatives of our Blue Pacific whanau. Kia ora also to my Minister for Women, the Hon. Jan Tinetti, who is representing Aotearoa New Zealand at this important gathering.
- It is my honour and pleasure to address the inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders’ Meeting. I recognise the effort that has gone into establishing this as a standing meeting on the Forum calendar.
- I extend my gratitude to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Forum Chair, Fiji, for their work in bringing us together virtually. With border restrictions beginning to ease, I hope we can all reconnect in person at future meetings.
- With the underlying premise of this meeting to advance gender equality, I am reminded of the whakataukī “He waka eke noa.” This Māori proverb signifies we are all in this together and has been a strong and consistent message from the New Zealand Government and the values we promote for equality.
- We know that women and girls in all their diversity continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and persistent barriers to the realisation of their fundamental human rights.
- Gender inequality stagnates social and economic progress. Gender equality is an essential foundation for building peaceful societies, thriving economies, sustained development, regional resilience, and the realisation of full human potential.
- Unfortunately, women and girls across our Blue Pacific Continent experience unacceptable rates of violence, limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and economic insecurity. These challenges and hardships are amplified by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and disasters.
- These myriad challenges highlight the magnitude and urgency for our collective action, and I would emphasise the importance of action beyond just dialogue. But we can be confident that our shared commitment to eliminating all forms of gender inequality and exclusion remains firm.
- The Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders’ Meeting is well placed to inform and advise Forum Leaders on gender issues in our Pacific region. It will strongly position the region to action our shared gender priorities.
• Meaningful leadership and participation of all women and girls is critical to changing the status quo. Women and girls are powerful agents for change and will best drive improved outcomes for women and girls in all their diversity.

• Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to addressing gender inequality and realising the rights of all women and girls both domestically and globally, recognising we still have a lot of more to do.

• Aotearoa New Zealand’s Pacific Resilience policy reinforces our commitment to increased representation of women in leadership, politics, and decision-making as a catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with this, we recently appointed Ms Louisa Wall as Aotearoa New Zealand’s Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific) / Tuia Tāngata.

• I look forward to seeing how this meeting strengthens the wider Forum architecture, and drives our commitment to the realisation of human rights for all people in our Blue Pacific Continent.

• I wish you a productive and empowering day.

• Ngā mihi tino nui. Vinaka vaka levu.

09 June 2022

_________________________________
Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Samoa

The Prime Minister of Fiji, Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern The Minister for Women of Australia, Hon. Katy Gallagher The Vice-President of the Republic of Palau, Hon Jerrlyn Uduch Sengebau Senior The Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation of Fiji, Hon. Rosy Akbar, Mr Henry Puna, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers and women leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum and beyond, Distinguished Delegates, I am delighted to provide this address for the inaugural meeting of Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders.

As Samoa’s first female Prime Minister, a Samoan matai, a woman leader in my family, extended family and village community, and long-time cabinet minister and representative of my country, this is both a privilege and an honour. On behalf of my government, I express deep appreciation to you.

We have an expression in Samoa: “E au le ina’ilau a tama’itai”. Women achieve what they set out to do.
Our meeting today deals with an issue so fundamental in character, and so often shaped by the interests of so many. When viewed through different lenses, be they political, economic, social or environmental, the commitment to and implementation of priorities to promote and advance gender parity in leadership and decision-making, and the empowerment of all women and girls, will always vary. It is high time we re-focus our attention on further employing effective interventions in support of these efforts.

Our meeting is to “ensure an enduring focus on the critical role gender has on issues in the Pacific”.

The ‘issues in the Pacific’, as many of you will know, are copious, complex, and intricate. They are nonetheless central to our wellbeing and sustainable development efforts. If ever there was a more appropriate time to further advance gender equality priorities and integrate gender perspectives across the raft of challenges that we face in our Blue Pacific region – that time is now.

Pacific women have and continue to contribute to the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through our culture and traditions, families, village communities, private sector, civil society organisations, governments, and legislative bodies. The glass ceiling may still exist today across various sectors and parts of our societies, but we are, most assuredly, bringing these barriers down.

The spread of the pandemic across our Blue Pacific region has been relentless, the impacts significant. The acute socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 that we are facing will no doubt be significantly compounded by the effects of climate change and natural disasters. These add to existing challenges and vulnerabilities faced by our communities across all sectors.

Forum Leaders have declared climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific. Taken together, these considerations are critical to any dialogue we hold in our plans to build back better post-COVID-19.

I want to recognise the significant and bold strides we have made in gender equality policies and legislation in our region and countries over these past two decades. Through the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the SAMOA Pathway, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, regional agreements like the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), the SPC’s triennial conferences of Pacific Women and various human rights and UPR reports to name a few, these continue to drive and inform our work today.

But as with many developmental aspirations, women and girls continue to face challenges and barriers in advancing these important efforts. The pandemic has had a marked impact on our people and their livelihoods, particularly on key industries such as tourism, causing a slowdown in our efforts towards achieving sustainable development.

Our focus is to ensure the social wellbeing of our citizens, in particular women and children, and vulnerable groups affected by the downturn in the trajectory of socio-economic development and increased poverty. Our response also includes community outreach on preventative measures as well as on gender-based violence. We are committed to building a nation in which our women and girls are able to realise their full potential - from shaping the future of their families to shaping the future of the nation. It is our collective responsibility to empower women and girls economically, socially, educationally and also politically.
COVID-19 has exacerbated domestic violence and gender-based violence. The social and economic costs and impacts of family violence on our countries and families are high and we will spare no effort to address domestic violence, including violence against women and children. Our commitment and determination to defeat this issue is a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach.

We must continue to advocate strongly for the promotion, respect for, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction of any kind, to ensure that no one is left behind.

Excellencies, and sister participants,

Women are every bit as capable of being good responsible leaders as men. We need to move beyond rhetoric and enhance our effort to promote and educate, and to lift the representation of women in decision-making roles in politics, businesses, and communities. We must do better to strengthen outcomes for women and girls across key national and regional priorities and ensure that Pacific women and girls are not left behind.

We must also improve connectivity in all viewpoints so that there are coordinated, collaborative and effective approaches to implementation. If we did all this, we can advise Forum Leaders on the priorities and work with all our CROP agencies and partners to translate their decisions into tangible progress.

The irony is not lost on me that at present time, there are only two women heads of government at the Forum Leaders meeting. This however should not diminish the important role and contribution of Forum Leaders in this work and I wish to pay tribute to all our male Forum Leaders, past and present, and all Pacific men who have and continue to champion gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls alongside us.

The importance of partnership to our development aspirations cannot be understated. I wish to warmly acknowledge the support of all our development partners, CROP agencies, the UN and intergovernmental agencies, and CSOs and the private sector – thank you for your continued assistance and support to our Blue Pacific region and countries.

To all women leaders, present and past, and to sister participants from our Blue Pacific in all their diversities, I salute you. Soifua

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Hon. J. Uduch Sengebau Senior, Vice President and Minister of Justice, Republic of Palau
Remarks

His Excellency Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji; Her Excellency Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand; Her Excellency Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister of Samoa; Honorable Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women in Australia; Honorable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in Fiji; Honorable Henry Puna, Forum Secretary General; distinguished guests and colleagues, alii, ni sa bula and good morning! It is my honor and pleasure to participate in the inaugural virtual meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders. I express warm greetings to everyone here today, both virtually and in-person at the Forum Secretariat.

As island nations, we are bound by our respective cultures as independent people of our homelands, and it is these very cultures that bring us together at the political table to discuss
and to negotiate on mutual interests, shared principles and values. These cultures are a part of what makes us contribute as individuals and as people of our respective nations, and they allow us to grow and prosper as a region. We are leaders and we are women leaders because our cultures allow it, just as our fellow men are leaders in our Blue Pacific Region.

I am truly blessed to be a Palauan woman, and a Palauan woman leader, in the traditionally matriarchal Belau. But even in this historical matriarchy, elected leaders are overwhelmingly male, even though women are the ones who put them there. We organize the campaigns. We go door to door. We get them into the government. Traditionally, Palau is matrilineal. The women hold the power because we make decisions regarding lands and traditional wealth. When a man is a chief, he has to listen to his sister. It is my distinct privilege to honor my Palauan culture, and embody my foremothers' strengths through supportive leadership and uplifting policies.

The 2012 Forum Leaders equality declaration to promote women in leadership in the Pacific has never been more relevant. Gender equality should always be front of mind at the highest levels of the Forum, and this meeting of the Pacific Women Leaders ahead of the Forum Leaders Meeting will only help to ensure that our highest level of political leaders is aware of the critical role gender has and will always have in our respective politics and the collective politics of our region as a whole.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world to adopt new ways of working. Although such adoptions have provided results that have been better than imagined, especially with the greater involvement of technologies to facilitate and support digital collaboration, we cannot ignore the devastating disruption it has had and continues to have on our small island nations and our people. COVID-19 has altered our livelihoods, affecting people across various sectors of our societies. Our tourism industries have had to close doors, forcing commercial agriculture and fisheries operations to cut down on labor, supply and productivity. This has further contributed to an impact on the local communities due to the drop in demand, causing business closures, layoffs and loss of income for many due to shutdown induced unemployment.

Madam Chair, excellencies, distinguished guests and colleagues, given the unprecedented nature of COVID-19, challenges continue to impact the ability of communities to build back, and to build back better in light of the global recession that likely have long lasting effects. The worsened prospects of the pandemic have drastically challenged the interconnected national economy of our Blue Pacific Region, leaving people and communities counting the costs. It is with certainty that I can say that many in the room can attest to all that I have shared as we are all in this pandemic together.

It is only through collaboration as Pacific Women Leaders, alongside our men leaders of the region, that we can overcome the pandemic as a region, and stimulate regional recovery and a return of stability. It is only through collaboration in a gender equal manner that we can overcome the escalating threats of the impacts of climate change. It is only through this very manner that our collective efforts as leaders of our small and vulnerable Pacific Island nations can ensure the achievement of our regional vision of securing the future of our Blue Pacific.

The effect of COVID-19 on international trade and shipping has now more than ever highlighted the necessity of local and regional partnerships, support, and programs. Women as economic and political actors influence policies and institutions towards greater provision of public goods, such as energy, water and sanitation, and social infrastructure, which tend to matter more to women and support climate resilience and disaster preparedness.
As women, we are so deeply interconnected to our communities, and have a holistic perspective of the land we work, the sea we depend on for its bounty, and of our own needs as well as those of our families and communities. Because of these, women's voices in decision and policy making are imperative for lasting, sustainable development.

Madam Chair, excellencies, distinguished guests and colleagues, let this inaugural meeting be an event focused on the power and strength of women and how together, we can work to effect change. Like the men in our societies, in their traditional and political roles, we, the women of the Pacific, also play vital roles in our societies.

Let us use this opportunity and this occasion to network and build strong partnerships and solidarity as we continue to champion our mutual interests, shared principles and values as a region for the good of our people, our nations and the world.

Ko kmal mesulang, vinaka and thank you.

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**Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls - H.E. Christine Clarke**

*Speech to the (virtual) inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders’ Meeting, 9 June 2022*

Secretary-General Puna,

Prime Minister Bainimarama,

Minister Akbar,

Prime Ministers, Ministers, and friends.

Warm greetings from Australia.

I would like to Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land from which I speak today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

I acknowledge the Blue Pacific we meet across and the people who share it. Wherever we are joining from today, it connects us all.

Secretary-General, on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Hon Penny Wong, and the Minister for Women, The Hon Katy Gallagher and the Australian Government I congratulate the Pacific Islands Forum for establishing the PIF Women Leaders Meeting.

And Minister Akbar, our Chair, thank you again for Fiji’s hosting of this inaugural meeting. We deeply appreciate your personal leadership on gender equality and Pacific women’s issues.

This inaugural meeting is a strong demonstration that in the Pacific we value women in leadership.

It is critical that we use this new piece of PIF architecture to raise our collective ambition and effort in addressing gender inequality and eliminating gender-based violence.
At the heart of this is the need to ensure women can play a central role in decision-making on issues affecting their lives and communities.

We look forward to working with our Pacific partners to ensure these objectives are given the highest priority at Leaders level.

The Australian Government, led by Prime Minister Albanese, is firmly committed to working with all partners to improve gender equality and reduce gender-based violence across the region, including in Australia.

In Australia’s recent federal election over a dozen more women have been elected to the Australian Parliament. This includes a number of newly elected First Nations women, bringing the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in our Parliament to ten.

The Hon Linda Burney is the first First Nations woman to be appointed Minister for Indigenous Australians.

Not only is this representation critical in Government, but evidence shows that when women are represented in senior leadership roles in the private sector the gender pay gap reduces and profitability and productivity improve.

In the Pacific, it is impressive that women’s participation in senior management in the private sector and on boards is above the global average.

But of course, when we speak about gender equality and women’s empowerment, we speak to this as a shared challenge – we all still have far to go on the journey towards true gender equality and we have much to learn from each other.

One in four Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former intimate partner since age 15.

We know this is a problem well known to the Pacific, where two in three women have experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner. For all of us, this is unacceptable.

Australia is committed to working with Pacific nations to end violence against women and girls and promote gender equality – including by sharing experiences and learning from each other.

Building a stronger Pacific family together requires us to make real progress towards gender equality in all aspects of our communities.

Our societies, our economies, our security all benefit when women are in leadership.

This is why an early priority for the new Australian Government is making gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a key objective of Australia’s development program. And it is why we will ensure at least 80 per cent of Australia’s aid investments address gender issues.

Our region faces multiple challenges to its security and prosperity – with the ongoing economic health and safety impacts of the pandemic, natural disasters wreaking havoc on communities and the climate crisis affecting us all, but especially the most vulnerable.
The Australian Government recognises that nothing is more central to the security and well-being of the Pacific than climate change.

In committing to work with our Pacific family to address the deep impacts of climate change and disasters, we understand that women and girls are disproportionately affected.

We also appreciate that women are powerful leaders in the region addressing this critical issue.

Through our Pacific Women Lead program, Australia is working in partnership with PIF Secretariat, the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific women’s organisations and development partners on women’s leadership and women’s rights in the region.

This work builds on nearly a decade of support, following on from the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration made in the Cook Islands in 2012.

Australia looks forward to our work together on a refreshed Declaration on gender equality that is both ambitious and practical, and which speaks to Leaders and Pacific citizens alike and keeps us all accountable.

Today, we take another step as women leaders and advocates to secure prosperity for all, now and into the future.
ANNEX C

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM WOMEN LEADERS MEETING

Thursday 9 June 2022
10.00am – 5.00pm FJT
Virtual Meeting

PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA AND MEETING TIMETABLE

1. **Official Opening and Formalities** (10am – 10.50am)

   The Chair of the meeting, Fiji, will call the meeting to order, and opening formalities will be observed. Proceedings will begin with an opening prayer and brief may include remarks from Leaders attending the meeting, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General.

2. **Adoption of Agenda** (10:50am – 11:00am)

   *Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.2Rev*

3. **The Role of Women and Girls, in all their diversity, in the future of our Blue Pacific Continent** (11:00am – 11:45am)

   This paper provides a contextual setting for the inaugural Pacific Islands Forum Women’s Leaders Meeting (PIFWLM) focusing on the centrality of gender equality to development across our region including within the context of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and COVID-19 recovery.

   *Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.3*

4. **Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration: Way forward for a revitalized Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration** (11:45am – 12:45pm)

   This paper presents the key findings the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) review and PLGED revitalisation process to progress gender equality in the region and seeking Leaders refreshed commitment.

   *Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.4*

   **Lunch break** (12:45pm – 1:45pm)

5. **Strengthening Collective Action and Positioning on key Gender Equality Issues** (1:45pm – 3:00pm)

   a. Coherent and strengthened PIF voice for a collective position on key regional priorities.
The paper outlines the development of a strategy for a coherent collective political voice and action on gender equality in the region, to support advocacy at regional and international intergovernmental processes including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

*Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.5(i)*

b. **Pacific Women’s Triennial Conference and Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting Outcomes**

Presents the Outcomes of the 14th Pacific Women’s Triennial Conference and 7th Pacific Ministers for Women Meeting and the recommended actions for Leaders’ attention.

*Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.5(ii)*

6. **Other matters** (3:00pm – 3:30pm)

a. **Update on the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent**

The paper provides an update on the development and focus of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent particularly the gender equality and social inclusion dimensions within the Strategy.

*Please refer to meeting paper PIFS(22)PIFWLM1.6*

7. **Next meeting and Adjournment of Meeting** (3:30pm)

*Afternoon Tea Break* (3:30pm – 4:00pm)

8. **Consideration and Endorsement of the 2022 PIF Women Leaders Meeting Outcomes** (4:00pm – 5:00pm)

Consideration of the 2022 PIF Women Leaders Meeting Outcomes document prepared by the Drafting Committee.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
9 June 2022