I could not be more pleased to be commending this inaugural Pacific Trade Bulletin of the Forum, for your reading, feedback and sharing! Part of my own early career was head of the Department of Trade, Labour and Transport which later became the Ministry of Trade Transport and Tourism for the Government of the Cook Islands. This fostered a lifelong interest in the transformation and development of Pacific economies, along with the networks and people connections so important to linking opportunities and contacts at national, regional, and global levels. It is therefore a special bonus to have come from the Forum Leaders and the FEMM 2022 meetings in the closing weeks of our 50th Anniversary year, to a publication which brings the regional trade development and integration agenda to the fore.

It is important to recall too, that the Forum was initially established as the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC). The acronym changed over the years, to PIFS and now PIF, and in similar reflection of the changing times, we have continued to hold space for our nations to lead regional cooperation on finance, trade, tourism, transport, and a host of other key aspects of economic development.

Most recently, FEMM ministers in Port Vila have recommended a diverse blending of Trade and Economic Ministerial meetings to ensure we are better placed to meet the 2050 Strategy for our Blue Pacific continent.

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent now represents our ‘North Star’ towards which we are pursuing priorities set by our Leaders. There is ongoing work, such as the implementation of the Pacific Aid-for-Trade Strategy (2020-2025).

This already runs on the energy and vision of the 2050 and the endorsed Blue Pacific Economic Strategy concept note, and there is new work and transformative aspects which we must consider. Like this newsletter, the Outcomes of the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting and the 2050 Strategy just weeks before, show the importance of all parts of our continent working together, for a stronger, better, one Blue Pacific. Join us.

Mr Henry Puna
Secretary General

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**KEY INSIGHTS – PACIFIC BUSINESS MONITOR – RECOVERY SERIES Q1 2022**

- 84% of Pacific businesses reported a negative impact due to COVID-19 over Q1 2022.
- 74% of Pacific businesses have reported a decline in revenue due to COVID-19 over Q1 2022.
- 84% of Pacific businesses are confident that their business will build back stronger from the COVID-19 crisis.
E-Commerce:

E-commerce provides the best opportunities to overcome the tyranny of distance faced by our businesses, as it reduces or eliminates the cost and physical interaction required to sell their goods and services overseas. The Pacific E-commerce Initiative was launched in 2018 to boost the readiness of Pacific businesses and people to buy and sell their goods and services online. It first supported 11 national e-commerce readiness assessments and one regional assessment.

Based on those studies, a regional strategy was developed and approved in August 2021 which was based on the UNCTAD E-Trade Readiness methodology and comprises 54 priority measures. The Pacific E-commerce Initiative has brought together numerous partners who are already undertaking work in many of the seven e-commerce policy areas. Beyond its coordinating role, the Secretariat is supporting implementation by assisting with the development of national strategies, supporting the development of regional statistics, training our members on e-commerce negotiations, and developing practical toolkits for our MSMEs.

A regional E-commerce Portal will be launched in August to serve as regional repository.
The Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy 2020-2025 focuses on four thematic areas: Services, Connectivity, Ecommerce and Deepening Forum Markets which include Pacific Quality Infrastructure, Trade Facilitation and the development of the Pacific Kava Development Strategy. The Strategy is in line with the endorsed 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

A focus on Implementation
The Vanuatu National E-commerce Strategy

Recommendation 1.1.1 of the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap is to develop national E-commerce strategies in all FICs built on the model of the regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap. It is therefore with great pleasure that we welcome recent developments in Vanuatu.

On the 17 May 2022 Vanuatu’s Trade Minister, Honourable James Bule, launched the first-ever national E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap. The Strategy is a four-year plan to enhance domestic and cross-border e-commerce. In launching the strategy, Minister Bule noted that “E-commerce is becoming an integral part of our lives replacing traditional ways in which we do business. However, e-commerce benefits are not automatic. With this strategy, we aim to seize the development opportunities provided by e-commerce and leverage resources to accelerate its adoption”
The Pacific priority at the Twelfth World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC12) was to deliver a comprehensive outcome on Fisheries Subsidies that is meaningful, pragmatic, balanced and realises the mandate of SDG14.6. Although this was not fully realised, a partial outcome on Fisheries Subsidies was reached on a legally-binding agreement to prohibit two forms of harmful subsidies namely subsidies to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and to Overfished stocks (OFS) as well as subsidies to the high unregulated seas, and provisions to improve notification and transparency.

The partial outcome on Fisheries Subsidies also included a mandate to continue negotiations on the remaining pillar to discipline subsidies that contribute to Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF) as well as to provide for appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing country Members.

The conclusion of these negotiations is expected by MC13 which is proposed to be held in 2023 so as to achieve a comprehensive Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Failing this deadline, negotiations are required to be concluded four years after entry into force of the Agreement. The Fisheries Subsidies Agreement will enter into force after ratification by two-thirds of the 164 WTO Members, which may take at least three years.
Kava contributes to Pacific trade and is of strategic significance for the sustainable development of the region, as well as being one of the drivers of economic growth and poverty alleviation in the Pacific communities.

Since May 2022, the Forum Secretariat has begun virtual and face-to-face consultations with Members on priorities and challenges to be considered in the development of the Regional Kava Development Strategy.

Consultations are being conducted in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program (PHAMA Plus). Comprehensive findings will be considered in the drafting of the Regional Kava Development Strategy and shared for a final validation workshop, to be announced via formal communications to Members.

For more information on the Regional Kava Development strategy, please contact Ms Sapai Moana on sapaimt@forumsec.org
A two-day introductory workshop on the EU funded Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT) project was held on the 28th to 29th June in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Economic Development in Tonga.

Attended by private sector representatives, the workshop goal was to initiate and advance the assessment process of companies in Tonga that can export specific products to the European Union and assess the opportunities and challenges faced by the companies and aspirations for the future challenges faced.

The workshop was also a space to discuss planned interventions to strengthen private sector competitiveness in product value addition process and enable access to the European Union market.

A similar consultation on the European Union - Pacific African Carribean (PACP) and Melanesian Free Trade agreements was also conducted to members of the Vanuatu private sector, in early July.

Hosted in collaboration with the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat and the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce, the consultative breakfast meeting outlined the components of the Agreements which includes but is not limited to market access requirements and benefits. A critical outcome of this meeting was calls for more awareness to be conducted to outer islands and the development of a joint engagement plan with the Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce.

Noting that Vanuatu is on the verge of preference erosion by 2025 under the aegis of the EU- Everything But Arms Arrangement (EBA), it is imperative to commence discussions on continuity of market access.
SPECIAL UPDATE
WORLD MSME DAY - 27 JUNE 2022

THEME: RESILIENCE AND REBUILDING: MSMES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Samoan Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour CEO
Mr Pulotu Lyndon Chu Ling

Vanuatu Minister for Commerce, Trade and Ni-Vanuatu Business
Hon James Bule

NEW STAFF ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Mr Avinesh Gounder joins as Pacific Trade Invest (PTI) Network – Finance and Administration Officer
2. Mr Joeli Bili joins as SPIRIT Communications and M&E Officer
3. Mr Anuragh Narayan joins as SPIRIT Database Associate
4. Ms Julie Tuikubulau joins as SPIRIT Finance and Administration Officer

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