

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

Ambassador Mere Falemaka represented the Pacific as ACP Focal Point on Fisheries Subsidies and provided an update on Fisheries Subsidies at the ACP Ambassadors Meeting on 6 December. As a Member of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Advisory Board on ASYCUDA, she attended the Board meeting on 7 December. Dr Giacomelli promoted the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#) at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) Expert Group [Meeting](#) on Digital Trade (16 November), and; discussed Pacific Regional Trade Agreements and support to regional integration at the WTO [seminar](#) on LDC priorities in global trade (8 December).

3. WTO NEGOTIATIONS

During this period, discussions continued to focus on the implementation of MC12 outcomes; on how to restart negotiations in key issues such as Fisheries Subsidies and Agriculture; Work Programme on E-commerce; as well as the way forward for WTO reform as per the mandate provided in the [MC12 Outcome Document](#).

On [Fisheries Subsidies](#), second wave of negotiations was not started due to the impasse on the appointment of a Chair for the Negotiating Group on Rules (NGR). GC Chair was consulting members towards a consensus on a Chair. To keep momentum on Fisheries Subsidies, a Workshop was organised by the WTO on 23 November which focused on the evolution of negotiations on Overcapacity and Overfishing (OCOF). Another workshop is planned for 31 January 2023.

For the Pacific, the WTO organised a High-Level Pacific Regional Fisheries Subsidies Event that comprised of a Technical Workshop for Senior Officials of Pacific WTO members on 16-17 November and concluded with Ministerial Meetings including a Roundtable discussion between WTO Director General (DG) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and the Pacific Islands Forum WTO Ministers. The Event also culminated in a Special Forum WTO Trade Ministers Meeting on 18 November attended by Delegations from the eight Forum WTO Members (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu).

A [Ministerial Statement](#) was adopted by the Forum WTO Trade Ministers which outlined the region's priorities in the post-MC12 work. This included the region's way forward on the two streams of work in the Fisheries Subsidies: (1) ratification process of the Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA) adopted at MC12 and (2) preparations for the second wave of negotiations to address the outstanding issues not agreed at MC12.

On [Agriculture](#), no negotiations took place due to the impasse of the appointment of a Chair for the Committee on Agriculture – Special Session (COA-SS). Divergent positions noted at the informal retreat held on 24 October remained. On Food Security, work in the regular Committee of Agriculture

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had progressed with the adoption of a work program and questionnaire which focuses on the situation of net food importing developing countries (NFIDCs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Responses to the questionnaire would provide the basis for further work to be undertaken in 2023.

On the TRIPS waiver, the TRIPS Council met on five different occasions during this period (both formal and informal meetings), to advance discussions on the extension of the waiver to therapeutics and diagnostics. Divergent views continued to be expressed between the two solutions posed: (1) to extend the waiver *mutatis mutandis* to therapeutics and diagnostics or (2) to extend the deadline for the decision to be made by June 2023. As the TRIPS Council could not agree on a solution, the matter was taken to the General Council (GC) on 6-7 December which decided to extend the period for a decision on the waiver to the first GC meeting of 2023. The first GC will be held in March 2023.

On WTO Reform, the GC Chair held informal discussions with Members on 10 November to gauge their views on the way forward, on areas of reform interests and expectations of how the work should be organised. On Dispute Settlement, the Mechanism was still at an impasse. The U.S-led informal process of reviewing this issue was expected to result in text-based discussions in early 2023. The question of whether the discussions would be formalised into the WTO process remains unknown. The GC Chair planned to hold another round of informal discussions in early 2023 focused on the development issues of WTO reform.

Technical Support. During this period, PIF Geneva issued 5 circulars and briefs on the WIPO negotiations in the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore, the WTO Trade and Environment Sustainability Structured Discussions, and the Special Forum WTO Trade Ministers meeting in November; reports of key meetings (such as GC in December); as well as email briefs on various issues and ACP positions. The Office assisted the WTO with the organisation of the Regional High-Level Fisheries Subsidies Event held on 16-18 November 2022. The Office also co-organised with WIPO a Pacific Informal Briefing on the WIPO IGC process held on 24 November in preparation for IGC44. In addition, the Office organised a Pacific Ambassadors Meeting on 15 December to provide an update on the: WTO work; Human Rights (HR) issues concerning the Nuclear Legacy Resolution, HR and Climate Change and the HR situation in West Papua; WIPO IGC45 process; SIDS-related issues under UNESCO; and priorities for 2023. The Office also prepared four Pacific Group statements and talking points for the: meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee and Heads of Delegations on 30 November; TESSD High-level Stocktaking Event on 2 December; ACP Ambassadors Coordination meeting on 6 December; and the GC meeting on 19-20 December. The PIFS Geneva Office assisted by the Pacific Group consultancy team also provided technical support to the Delegations of the six Pacific WTO Members at the WTO Pacific Regional High-Level Fisheries Subsidies Event held in Nadi, Fiji on 16-18 November. In mid-December, the Regional Co-ordinator Intern, Mr Jonah Taravaki of the Vanuatu Customs Office, completed his six months WTO internship at the PIFS Mission. This internship is provided by WTO as a capacity building opportunity for Pacific Trade Officials to be placed in the PIFS Mission for six months.

4. AID-FOR-TRADE

4.1 Projects

4.1.1 Implemented

Under the [Pacific E-commerce Initiative](#), the first Pacific E-commerce Committee [meeting](#) took place on 2 December. Members welcomed the first M&E [report](#) on the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap indicating actions for 43% of the Strategy's measures; agreed a way forward to enhance the Strategy's M&E framework, and; approved Terms of Reference for the Committee, together with the establishment of two Sub-committees.

Under the [Pacific Trade Facilitation Initiative](#), the validation workshop of the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy took place on the 6 December. Participants validated in principle the Strategy,

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tasked the Secretariat to incorporate the improvements put forward at the workshop, and noted the need to develop and validate an Action Plan (Roadmap) before submission to Forum Officials and Ministers. The resolutions of the validation workshop were discussed and partly actioned at the [workshop](#) jointly organised by the World Bank, the Secretariat, and the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) from 13-16 December in Sydney. The 2021 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) [report](#) on Digital and Sustainable Trade facilitation in Pacific Island Developing Economies, co-authored by the Secretariat, was released on the 8 November.

PIF Geneva continued to manage the consultancy team supporting the [Pacific Group](#) on World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. A major focus was preparations for the WTO High Level Pacific Regional Event in Nadi on 16-18 November – for which support provided by TAF2+ was highly appreciated. In Geneva, despite concentrated efforts it proved impossible to make further progress on the follow up to the MC12 TRIPS Agreement Decision and discussions had to be rolled forward into 2023. The team monitored developments in a number of other areas including Investment Facilitation for Development. Prior to the Christmas break, a Stock-taking Meeting was held between PIF Geneva and the project team, which reviewed the situation across the board in areas of interest to the Pacific and looked ahead to likely developments in 2023.

4.1.2 Completed/Secured

The Secretariat was delighted to welcome USD 520,000 of additional financial support from the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This [grant](#) will be managed through the Trade Advocacy Fund 2 (TAF2) and assist the WTO Pacific Group until July 2024.

Overall, during the course of 2022, the PIF Geneva Office mobilised about USD 1,907,700 to support implantation of agreed regional Aid-for-Trade priorities. A breakdown of the assistance is reported below.

Organisation (donor)	AfT leveraged (USD)
Pacer Plus Implementation Unit (Australia and New Zealand)	40,000
Sidley Austin LLP	15,000
Trade Advocacy Fund 2 (Australia and UK)	582,000
Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (multiple donors)	20,000
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (EU)	1,000,000
E-Trade Alliance (USA)	50,000
World Bank Group (multiple donors)	100,000
World Trade Organization (multiple donors)	100,000 ¹
TOTAL	1,907,000

4.1.3 Ongoing

Work on a project proposal to support implementation of the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement (FSA) started.

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

As part of PTI's ongoing commitment to Pacific Women's economic empowerment, Pacific Trade Invest Europe collaborated in November with bilum brand Among Equals to host a buyers' event for their handwoven designer bags at the [Alex Eagle Studio](#) in London, with the aim of forging connections

¹ Excludes value of Special Forum WTO Trade Ministers Meeting of November 2023

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and amplifying industry awareness within the European market. The event, which saw media and industry personnel in attendance, highlighted the artistry and work of the women behind the female-led industry. Papua New Guinea-based bilum meri and artisan Florence Jaukae Kamel hosted the 'meet and greet'-style in person event, sharing stories about the local craft and the women who practice it, and the impact the industry has on their livelihoods. PTI has worked alongside the bilum meris and their communities for close to two decades, and events like these allow us to further lift the international profile of bilum, facilitate buyer connections within the European market, and work towards building an ongoing pathway of sales outside of the traditional tourist market. Bilums are now stocked in prestigious international stores such as Selfridges and Shopbop and we believe more high end UK and European retailers will consider ranging in 2023.

Whilst the bi-monthly reports give a snapshot of the bigger activities that PTI Europe engages in and how budget expenditure is allocated, sales work is an ongoing endeavour and is constantly in action. PTI Europe is happy to close having achieved the following in 2022:

- **AUD 5.2 million** in assisted sales to Pacific Islands businesses -predominately businesses in countries with EPA + French Polynesia;
- 125 services provided to Pacific Islands businesses;
- 43 services to women lead businesses; and
- 70 new sales contacts created for CRM.