

**2023 Korea-Pacific Islands Leaders' Declaration:
A Partnership in Pursuit of Freedom, Peace and Prosperity
for a Resilient Pacific**

29 May 2023

Overviews

1. The first Korea-Pacific Islands Summit was held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea (ROK) on 29 May 2023. The Summit was co-chaired by President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea and Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands, the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and attended by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and representatives. The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) also participated in the meeting.
2. Under the theme of “*Navigating towards Co-Prosperity: Strengthening Cooperation with the Blue Pacific*,” Leaders and representatives from the ROK, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Secretary General of the PIF (“*the Leaders*”) discussed matters of shared cooperation and ways to further strengthen the collaboration between Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum in the areas of sustainable development; climate change, environment, disaster risk and resilience; ocean, maritime affairs and fisheries; people-to-people exchanges and other matters of mutual interest.
3. The Leaders acknowledged the maturity in the diplomatic relations between Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum for more than half a century. Recognising that the Korea-Pacific Islands Foreign Ministers’ Meeting has been established as a key forum for consultations to deepen mutual understanding and promote substantive cooperation since 2011, the Leaders welcomed the inaugural Summit as an opportunity to elevate high-level exchanges between Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum to the Head of State/Head of Government level. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders expressed appreciation for Korea’s recognition of the Pacific Islands Forum, including the invitation to all PIF Members to attend the Summit in keeping with the One Blue Pacific Principle and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which emphasizes the unity and solidarity of the PIF Members.

Korea-Pacific Islands Partnership: Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Pacific

4. President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea, in supporting the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent for a resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, expressed Korea’s willingness to cooperate with the Pacific Islands Forum Members for the realization of the Strategy.
5. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders welcomed Korea’s intentions to strengthen its contribution to the Pacific, and reaffirmed that free and peaceful development and prosperity of the Pacific region is of great importance to the wellbeing of our people. The Leaders will further strengthen cooperation to expand the nexus between the 2050

Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy between the Pacific Islands Forum and Korea, as key partners to effectively address global challenges and co-prosper.

6. To this end, the Leaders committed themselves to promote mutually beneficial and action-oriented cooperative relations between Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum. Forum Leaders conveyed their appreciation on the efforts taken by Korea to strengthen its development assistance to the Blue Pacific region as implemented through its Action Plan (Annexed). The Leaders welcomed the commitment by Korea to work in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum at the officials' level to further develop and refine cooperation projects and initiatives in alignment with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and its Implementation Plan.

Regional Cooperation in the Pacific

7. To strengthen a rules-based regional and international order, Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum, recognising shared universal values including freedom, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, including the right to development, will expand and strengthen solidarity and cooperation.
8. Recognizing that strengthened Pacific regionalism will contribute to responding to multi-layered and complex global challenges as well as geopolitical challenges, and lead to greater stability and prosperity in the region, the Leaders expressed support for bolstering inclusive regionalism and cooperation through existing regional strategies, mechanisms and organizations. Korea acknowledges and respects the role of the PIF and the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) in enhancing regional and global solidarity and collaboration and will increase engagement and cooperation with PIF Members as a PIF Dialogue Partner.
9. Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum will mutually seek to strengthen diplomatic relations, which lays the foundation for long-term cooperation. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and Niue prior to the Summit and Korea's consideration of future plans to open additional diplomatic missions in the Pacific region.

Cooperation for a Peaceful Pacific

10. Noting that peace and stability in the Pacific region are interlinked with global peace and stability, the Leaders acknowledge the need to strengthen development cooperation and security collaboration including maritime security, climate security, energy security, cyber security, human security, public health and transnational security.
11. Reiterating our firm commitment to international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Leaders will work together to

protect and preserve the marine environment, promote maritime security and safety, and the lawful and sustainable use of the seas, and to enhance the capacity to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in the region. To this end, the Leaders recognised the sovereign rights of Pacific Island Countries to implement zone based measures to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries within their Exclusive Economic Zones in accordance with international law.

12. Considering particularly special circumstances faced by Pacific Islands and their concerns thereto, Korea supports the 2021 PIF Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise, which proclaims that maritime zones, established in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, shall continue to apply, without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate change-related sea-level rise.
13. The Leaders will work together to strengthen cybersecurity cooperation to build an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful cyberspace, and to support the development of digital connectivity, education and the digital economy in the region.
14. Recognizing the value of achieving universal health coverage and ensuring good quality of life for the population on sustainable development and human security, in order to respond to infectious and non-communicable diseases in the Pacific region, the Leaders will work together to achieve innovation in the regional and national health systems through digital health and enhancement of capacities of healthcare workforce. The Leaders agreed to encourage their relevant authorities to meet regularly, preferably on an annual basis.
15. The Leaders shared the view that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear and missile programs are a direct and serious threat to international peace and security. The Leaders emphasized that denuclearization of the DPRK is essential for a peaceful region and urged the DPRK to immediately return to negotiations. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders expressed their continued support for Korea's 'Audacious Initiative' for a denuclearized, peaceful and prosperous Korean Peninsula.

Cooperation for a Prosperous and Resilient Pacific

16. Korea will expand development cooperation with the Pacific Islands in pursuit of inclusive, sustainable economic growth and co-prosperity in the region. Korea, in close consultation with the Pacific region, will seek ways to expand and shape tailored cooperation projects that meet the needs of the Pacific Islands under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and its Implementation Strategy, and to double the scale of ODA for Pacific Island Countries by 2027.
17. Korea will explore additional funding initiatives that provides support to the Pacific region in an inclusive manner that takes into account the development realities of individual PIF Members. Noting with appreciation the role of the ROK-PIF Cooperation Fund (RPCF), which has contributed to the capacity-building of the

Pacific Islands and strengthening of the relations between Korea and the Pacific Islands since 2008, the Leaders will continue to work together to ensure the effectiveness, efficient management and promotion of awareness of the Fund, and even more effective implementation of the key priorities outlined in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Korea will pursue efforts to gradually expand the Fund.

18. Noting that the PIF Leaders have declared a Climate Emergency in the Pacific region, the Leaders will work together on the implementation of the Paris Agreement to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, which remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific. In particular, the Leaders reaffirmed the need to scale up climate ambition and implementation to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and enhance developed countries' efforts for the provision of financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support for developing countries in addressing climate change.
19. Noting that climate change and associated disaster risks continue to be the greatest challenge to sustainable development in the Pacific region, Leaders called on all parties to make substantial technical progress in the ad hoc work programme of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on Climate Finance in 2023 and to set an ambitious NCQG at the 29th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change(COP29) in 2024, ready for mobilisation and implementation in 2025 with at least 50% allocation for adaptation finance for developing countries, to facilitate the operationalization of the new funding arrangements, including a fund, for responding to loss and damage agreed to be established at COP27; and to consider supporting Pacific-led initiatives such as the Pacific Resilience Facility and the region's work on the issues of statehood and the protection of persons affected by sea-level rise. Leaders also called on multilateral climate funds including the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund to ensure simplified access modalities to climate change finance to allow better access to the most vulnerable countries.
20. The Leaders welcomed and supported cooperation related to the groundbreaking Resolution adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 29 March 2023 regarding the *Request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change*.
21. Recognizing that the Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to threats posed by extreme natural disasters, the Leaders will expand cooperation to minimize damage and strengthen resilience to natural disasters through technological support and capacity-building in the areas of climate and disaster prediction and response. The Leaders, also recognizing the socio-ecological and economic value of forests for climate crisis response and economic development, agreed to strengthen forest cooperation, including through the establishment of a mangrove forest technology center, forest restoration, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+), capacity-building in forest-related disaster management, and forest investment in various forest resources including timber.
22. The Leaders will work together for the effective conservation and management of the marine resources, and for the protection of marine ecosystems and the environment in

the Pacific region. The Leaders will seek ways to establish a sustainable ocean environment and resource management system in the region through capacity-building in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture, marine renewable energy, and marine environmental monitoring.

23. The Leaders reaffirmed their shared views on the criticality of keeping the ocean and maritime resources free of environmental pollution by radioactive wastes and other radioactive matter. In this regard, the Leaders stressed the importance of ensuring international consultations, international law, and independent and verifiable scientific assessment to protect and preserve the maritime waters and resources.
24. The Leaders underlined their grave concern over the continuing threat of nuclear weapons proliferation and its risk to the peace and security of the planet; and stressed that the total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the shared goal. We affirm unity in our continued commitment to the cornerstone *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, and recognize the valuable contribution by the *South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty*, toward our goal of a world without nuclear weapons.
25. The Leaders welcome the recent conclusion of negotiations on an internationally binding instrument under the UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Leaders called on the United Nations to expedite the adoption and ratification of this important agreement.
26. The Leaders will cooperate to support the Pacific region's response to the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and in line with national and regional economic recovery strategy. Drawing upon Korea's experience, the Leaders will work together to facilitate educational opportunities, employment, entrepreneurship, trade and investment, and to promote innovation, the digital transformation, small and medium-sized enterprises, regional development and financial capabilities, and improvement of agro-fishery food productivity and distribution systems in the Pacific Islands. The Leaders also agreed to cooperate more closely and meaningfully on the sustainable development of the fisheries sector, which has long been the basis for establishing the ties of friendship and cooperation between Korea and the Pacific Islands.
27. Emphasizing that revitalization of people-to-people and cultural exchanges, including youth exchanges, is a valuable basis for long-term solidarity between future generations, the Leaders will work together to forge mutually beneficial and sustainable ties between the peoples of Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum.
28. Noting the potential for cooperation in the tourism field with the unique culture and natural environment of the Pacific region, the Leaders will continue efforts to strengthen infrastructure cooperation including air and sea transportation between Korea and the Pacific Islands Forum to ensure a well-connected region.

Cooperation on Global Issues

29. Korea requested the support of the Pacific Islands Forum for Korea's bid for hosting of the World Expo 2030 in Busan. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders welcomed Korea's willingness to share the development experience and present a vision for sustainable development in rising to the challenges faced by the international community through its bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Busan, and welcomed Korea's bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Busan.
30. Korea appreciated the continued support of the Pacific Islands Forum for Korea's initiatives and efforts in the international arena, and requested support for Korea in the elections for international organizations, such as for serving as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2024-25 term.
31. Pacific Leaders requested Korea's support for Australia's bid to host the thirty-first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in partnership with Pacific Island Countries in 2026.
32. Leaders welcomed the interest by the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Korea to submit their candidacies to the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2025 – 2027.

Next Meeting

33. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders expressed their appreciation to the Korean Government for hosting the first Korea-Pacific Islands Summit, and for inviting and welcoming all the PIF Members for the first time. The Leaders recalled the agreement reached to hold the Korea-Pacific Islands Foreign Ministers' Meeting every two years, and affirmed their will to hold the next Korea-Pacific Islands Summit at a time and place mutually agreed upon by the two sides.
34. This Declaration is made in the respect of the competences of the respective governments.

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