



COMMISSION
TWELFTH REGULAR SESSION
Bali, Indonesia
3 - 8 December 2015

**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT OPENING STATEMENT TO
WCPFC12**

WCPFC12-2015-OP12
1 December 2015

Paper by Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
12th Regular Session, 3 to 8 December 2015, Indonesia
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Observer Statement

1. Thank you to the WCPFC and its members for the opportunity for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to participate as an observer at this meeting. These discussions are important for PIFS in providing policy advice across a range of key development issues, and in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating implementation of Pacific Island Forum Leaders' decisions. They are also vital to informing our work in supporting our Secretary General, both as Secretary General of PIFS and as the Pacific Ocean Commissioner.
2. 2015 has been an important year for regionalism in the Pacific, with the Framework for Pacific Regionalism in its first year of implementation. The Framework articulates Leaders' expectations that the regional agenda strive for a higher level of ambition, and that our coordinated and collective regional efforts deliver results that make a practical and positive difference to the lives and well-being of Pacific people. The Framework also represents Leaders' commitment to inclusivity and transparency in the development of regional public policy. A key innovation of the Framework is that anyone in the Pacific can contribute proposals for regional action. Sixty eight submissions were received from governments, international and regional organisations, academic institutions, and, in particular, from non-government organisations and individual citizens.
3. The priorities selected by Leaders at their recent meeting in Papua New Guinea (PNG) – on fisheries, climate change, information and communications technology, cervical cancer and West Papua – are big challenges, but they are also the kinds of challenges the Forum was set up to address.
4. On fisheries:

Leaders reaffirmed the central importance of increasing economic returns and ensuring the sustainable management of fisheries. Leaders further reaffirmed strengthening maritime surveillance and enforcement, noting the multi-dimensional nature of these issues.

Leaders acknowledged the current effort based management system (VDS) that has brought significant economic return to Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA). Leaders endorsed the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries and directed that increases in economic return be achieved within five years. Leaders agreed that a joint taskforce of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), PNA and the Forum Secretariat would lead the development of a programme to increase the sustainable economic returns of fisheries, including examining a quota management system, and report back to Leaders in 2016. Leaders also welcomed New Zealand's offer for ministers and officials to visit New Zealand to study New Zealand's quota system.

Leaders tasked Fisheries, Economic and Foreign Ministers to undertake a joint comprehensive evaluation of the regional monitoring, control and surveillance, and compliance regime and report back to Leaders in 2016. Leaders noted that the evaluation should reflect the importance of sharing technology and information. Leaders expressed their appreciation to Australia and New Zealand for their assistance on surveillance.

5. These decisions were also considered at the recent meetings of Economic and Trade Ministers. As acknowledged and supported by Economic Ministers, the Forum Secretariat will have a role in convening meetings of the taskforce and reporting on progress of implementation of Leaders' decisions.

6. The first meeting of the joint taskforce on fisheries will be convened in early 2016. Amongst other issues, the taskforce will discuss next steps, roles and responsibilities, and resourcing to implement the Leaders' decisions on fisheries.
7. The Forum Secretariat welcomed the statement by WCPFC's Executive Director Feleti Teo, made to Leaders in PNG, which called for strengthened alignment between WCPFC and the Post-Forum Dialogue relations. In this context, we look forward to working with WCPFC Members, many of which are Post-Forum Dialogue partners, as we progress implementation of the Leaders' decisions on fisheries.
8. The Forum Secretariat is dedicated to the political and economic ambitions of our region and works with our technical agencies, including FFA, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), to support member countries. This includes through mechanisms such as the Marine Sector Working Group and broader partnerships such as the Pacific Ocean Alliance.
9. The first meeting of the Alliance, *High Hopes for High Seas*, was held in Fiji earlier this year. Over 100 participants from Pacific Island countries, international and regional organisations, academic institutions, donors, private sector and civil society gathered to discuss the region's priorities and interests as they relate to areas beyond national jurisdiction. Many of the countries and organisations present here in Bali were also represented at the Alliance meeting, including the WCPFC Secretariat. We'd like thank all of you once again for your valuable contributions during the meeting. The discussions at the POA meeting and the technical working group that followed will inform advice to Pacific Island Countries as they engage in upcoming international negotiations on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the

Pacific Ocean Commissioner, I invite all of you here to join us in this important partnership where we can exchange ideas and strengthen our oceanic ties.

10. This year is also a crucial year for the Pacific as we engage in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris. Forum Leaders and the Smaller Island States Leaders recently issued two declarations on climate change for COP 21, which add momentum to and reinforcement of other high level statements made by the region for the Paris meeting. These messages were reinforced by Forum Leaders in discussions with France, the COP 21 Chair, at the France-Oceania summit on 26 November. In recognition of the close links between Ocean and Climate, the Secretary General as Pacific Ocean Commissioner and other representatives from the Pacific will attend ocean-related events in the margins of COP 21, to highlight the challenges faced and the work being undertaken by the region to maintain the health of our ocean resources.
11. We look forward to continuing to work with the WCPFC Secretariat and other regional and international partners as we support implementation of the Pacific region's priorities.
12. Thank you