



PROTECTING THE PACIFIC.



**8th Polynesian Leaders Meeting
2018**

The Polynesian Connection – Taina Fakapolenisia

8TH POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP COMMUNIQUE 2018

Funafuti, Tuvalu

1. The 8th Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) Summit held at the Talimalie II falekaupule on Funafuti on 28 June 2018, was opened by the Governor General of Tuvalu His Excellency Sir Iakoba Taea Italeli. The Summit was attended by the Leaders of American Samoa, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna. The Leaders of Cook Islands, Mao'hi Nui, Niue conveyed their apologies.
2. Leaders conveyed their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the government and the people of Tuvalu for their warm hospitality and splendid hosting.
3. In attendance were observers from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Director General of Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Chief Executive Officer of South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and senior officials from Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of Pacific Community (SPC), University of the South Pacific (USP), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Conservation International (CI), Climate Analytics (CA).
4. In attendance also were the Executive Secretary of the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and a representative of the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
5. The meeting was chaired by The Right Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu. In assuming the Chair, the Prime Minister acknowledged and commended the Kingdom of Tonga, for their strong leadership during their term as Chair of the PLG.
6. The Chair reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that PLG concerns would be adequately and precisely addressed through regular consultation with PLG members. Leaders reaffirmed their support to the theme of the 8th PLG Summit on Protecting the Pacific – the Polynesian Connection - Taina Fakapolenisia.

Procedural Matters

7. Leaders underscored the importance of inclusion of all Polynesian peoples to the PLG. In consideration of the membership applications from Hawaii, Maori and Rapa Nui the Leaders strongly supported their inclusion and agreed to formalise their membership at the next PLG meeting in American Samoa. The Leaders encouraged other Polynesian groupings to join the Group, taking into consideration their unique circumstances. The Leaders tasked the Secretariat to explore criteria for an expanded membership.
8. Leaders recalled the 2011 PLG Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the establishment of the PLG and the decisions by Leaders in 2017 for a PLG Charter. The Leaders considered the draft Charter and agreed to finalise it at a special meeting of the PLG at the margin of the PIF Leaders Meeting in Nauru. Leaders invited members to submit their views on amendments to the draft Charter particularly in relation to provisions on Chairmanship, Secretariat, Voting, and Membership by end of July 2018 to the Chair of the PLG8.
9. Leaders reaffirmed their decision for Samoa to host the PLG Secretariat, and welcomed their offer to provide an operational interim PLG Secretariat for the initial two years. Further, the Leaders acknowledged the need to establish long-term financial arrangement to assist with the operations of the Secretariat.

Sustainable Development Goals and Polynesian Countries.

10. Leaders recalled the importance of the SDGs 2030 and the SAMOA Pathway and emphasized the key work on reviewing the implementation of the SDGs 2030 in 2019/2020. Leaders underscored the vital role of countries national sustainable development strategies and their inextricable link to the SDGs 2030 and their implementation. Leaders noted that the successful implementation of national strategies will significantly contribute to the protection of the Pacific. The contextualization and localization of SDGs are key to the integration of the SDGS at the national level.
11. Leaders called for Polynesian countries, territories and peoples to continue work towards achieving the SDGs and agreed for CROP Agencies and development partners to provide the necessary support in this important area of work.
12. Leaders underscored the importance of oceans on Polynesian people livelihoods and the leadership of Polynesian countries and territories in making commitments to conserve marine resources and advocating for oceans in international fora.

Climate Change and Oceans

13. Leaders reiterated the real and adverse impacts of climate change. Leaders specifically called for urgent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

14. Leaders reaffirmed that the Paris Agreement is the key international legal instrument to address climate change. Leaders look forward to the completion of the Paris Agreement Implementation Guidelines at the COP24 in Katowice, Poland. Leaders believe that a comprehensive approach to the implementation guidelines is necessary and that it should be a complete package on the implementation of all elements of the Paris Agreement. In this regard Leaders gave particular attention to the inclusion of Loss and Damage (Article 8) in the Implementation Guidelines.
15. Leaders recognized the importance of working together to ensure that the Paris Agreement is implemented; and agreed for the Polynesian countries and territories to collaborate at all levels to provide Hope for the future generations of Polynesia from the threats posed by climate change.
16. Leaders emphasised the need to make a resounding call for urgent action on combating climate change, to be reiterated at the upcoming PIF Leaders Meeting in Nauru, the UN General Assembly and the COP 24.
17. Leaders recognised the range of actions, assistance and collaborative efforts of CROP, bilateral and multilateral partners in climate change solutions in support of PLG members , although Leaders felt more support is needed for targeted actions on the ground to accelerate responses to climate change.
18. Leaders emphasised the inextricable link between Oceans and Climate Change and the need to promote regional efforts to finalise baseline and maritime boundaries to ensure that they are fixed in perpetuity irrespective of sea level rise.
19. Leaders recalled the Ocean conference in 2017 and recognised the need to sustainably manage and maximise economic returns in the use and management of the Pacific's ocean resources, in particular through existing negotiations, with distant water fishing nations; and exploring new cost effective technologies for monitoring and surveillance, particularly in relation to Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.
20. Leaders agreed to support the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Atoll Adaptation in Tuvalu to improve research and development on adapting to climate change in atoll nations.
21. Leaders endorsed the Amatuku Declaration on Climate Change and Oceans, which is attached as an Annex 1 to this Communique.

Tourism and Regional Aviation

22. Leaders emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism practices in the protection of Polynesian culture , language and traditions. PLG acknowledged the vital role of tourism into the economies of Polynesian countries through economic and employment opportunities and improving of standards of living. PLG noted the capacity constraints of some members, including limited infrastructures, air transport connectivity, to support the tourism industry.

23. Leaders agreed to explore options for establishing cruise ship and other tourist boat routes that connect Polynesia countries and territories.
24. Leaders agreed for the Secretariat to work with Tahiti Nui to explore the island hopping air connectivity with the Polynesian countries, and to further consider the Coral Air project.

Connectivity, Infrastructure, Innovation, ICT and Transportation

25. Leaders emphasised the vital role of infrastructure in building resilience in countries and ICT Connectivity into economic and social development in the Pacific including the Polynesian countries and territories. Leaders called for members to collaborate on improving infrastructure to maintain and increase resilience building in the respective national jurisdictions.
26. Leaders noted growing concerns on cyber crime and threats in the region and call for collaborative efforts to enhance cyber security.
27. Leaders welcomed efforts to develop telecommunication connectivity in the PLG region.

Education

28. Leaders recognized that quality Education is fundamental to the protection of the Pacific and requested the genuine partnership and support from development partners and CROP agencies in maintaining the quality of education in the PLG members.
29. Leaders called for the Polynesian countries and territories to continue upholding the values of 'Education for All' approach and to carefully consider the local contextualization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Health

30. Leaders also recognized the effects of climate change on the health of our people and committed to advocate for the inclusion of health issues in relation to climate change, as appropriate, in future agendas of sub-regional, regional and international fora, with the aim of enhancing the resilience of our people's health.

PLG Leaders Engagement with Civil Society Organisations (CSO)

31. Leaders welcomed the opportunity to interact with CSO representatives at the Breakfast Meeting prior to the opening of the PLG Summit.
32. Leaders agreed that an interactive session with CSO should be regular event at each PLG meeting.

Chair for 2019 9th PLG Summit

33. Leaders confirmed American Samoa as the In-coming Chair for the 9th PLG Summit in 2019.
34. Leaders agreed to hold the 9th PLG Summit in American Samoa in 2019.

Other Matters

35. Leaders noted with appreciation the statements made by development partners and CROP Agencies.