



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

Welcome by H.E Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru

Ekamowir omo!
The people of Nauru welcome all to the 49th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting.

Some know Nauru as the smallest island nation in the world, but we have never felt this way because we are a large ocean state and a member of a much bigger family, the Pacific Islands Forum. Together, we are one 'blue continent' covering more than 35million square kilometers of oceanscape.

The theme for this year's meeting is Building a Strong Pacific: Our People, Our Islands, Our Will. I believe it captures the spirit and aspiration of the Pacific Islands Forum's Agenda.

The Forum Agenda aims to secure the health and wellbeing of all our people, particularly the most vulnerable among us.



ral resources, regional and global conflict, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, changing multi-lateral relations, and an increasingly crowded and complex diplomacy in the region.

There has never been a greater need for our ocean of islands to strengthen their resolve to work together for the benefit of our people and our environment.

It promotes strong collective action in areas such as regional peace and security, and enhancing the resilience of our communities, our ocean, our resources, and our economies. The Agenda is underscored by our desire to manage our own development in our own unique Pacific way.

Today we face many challenges including the effects of climate change and disaster, rising inequality, depletion of natu-

The future of the Pacific must be determined by its people. I have no doubt that this Blue Pacific region contains enough riches to ensure that we continue developing in sustainable ways that promote our Pacific Vision of a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific

Welcome by Meg Taylor DBE, Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Greetings from your Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Once again, our Pacific Leaders gather to discuss how we can continue to build a strong region together.

We do this informed by our Blue Pacific narrative which Samoa's Prime Minister, Rt Hon Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi expressed so well at the recent Forum Foreign Ministers meeting when he said, "I see the Blue Pacific as a powerful narrative to call us together, drawing on our shared ocean identity, ocean geography, and ocean resources. It serves to empower us – reminding us of the value and potential of our region, encouraging us to think and act from a position of strength."

Climate change represents the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of our people. This week Forum Leaders will look at how we can further strengthen our resilience to the adverse effects it brings to so many of us. Forum Leaders will discuss a new regional security declaration designed to refresh our existing security arrangements. To meet both the region's current and future security challenges, the declaration seeks to address the varied impacts of climate change as well as emerging issues including cyber security and transnational crime.

The Forum continues to work towards increasing the benefits of our tuna and coastal fisheries for Pacific people and this week will provide an opportunity for Leaders' to take stock of progress over the last twelve months.

Also for discussion will be



the Report prepared by the Forum's Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism. This year it recommends that Forum Leaders reinvigorate their commitment to addressing non-communicable diseases in the region, with a specific focus on childhood obesity. It also highlights the need for a more concerted approach to regional advocacy around ocean governance and management, particularly with respect to the management of high seas and maritime zones.

Forum Leaders of Smaller Island States will be the first official meeting this week followed by the Pacific members of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of States. There will also be meetings with the Forum's eighteen Dialogue Partners, and representatives of the private sector and civil society on the understanding that we can only achieve our development aspirations by working together.

I look forward to welcoming all Pacific Forum Members and their delegations. In particular, I very much look forward to the frank discussions, which Leaders have as part of their Retreat, the decision-making process by consensus out of which the Forum Communique is determined.



The Pacific Islands Forum

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