



## COMMUNIQUÉ

### OF THE

### ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 21 June 2019)

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#### OFFICIAL OPENING

1. The Eleventh Conference of the Pacific Community (SPC) met on 21 June 2019, at the Headquarters of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Noumea, New Caledonia. The meeting was opened by the Deputy Director-General (Noumea), Mr Cameron Diver. Following the opening prayer by H.E. Mr Luke Daunivalu, High Commissioner of Fiji to Australia, and words of welcome from Pacific Community Director-General, Dr Colin Tukuitonga, Hon. Philippe Germain, President of the Government of New Caledonia gave the initial address as outgoing Chairperson. Cook Islands was then invited to take on the role as Chair of the Eleventh Conference, and Hon. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, made his opening statement as Chairperson. The biennial meeting was also attended by:

Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Government of Samoa,

Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Vanuatu,

Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Government of Australia,

Hon. Jeremiah Manele, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Government of Solomon Islands,

Hon. Aupito William Sio, Minister for Pacific Peoples of the Government of New Zealand,

Hon. Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg, Minister of State of the Government of Palau

H.E. Laura Clarke, Governor of Pitcairn,

M. Sosefo Motuku, Vice-Président de l'Assemblée territoriale de Wallis et Futuna TU'IASOA, ministre chargé de la Culture du Royaume de ALO, Wallis and Futuna,

Hon. Milton Dube, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Nauru,

H.E. Mr Luke Daunivalu, High Commissioner of Fiji to Australia,

H.E. David Teaabo, High Commissioner of Kiribati to Fiji,

H.E. Tregar Albon Ishoda, Ambassador of the Republic of Marshall Islands to Fiji,

H.E. Lucy Bogari, High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea to Fiji,

H.E. Mr Temate Melitiana, High Commissioner of Tuvalu to Fiji,

Hon. Samson E. Pretrick, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Federated States of Micronesia,

M. Hervé Dejean de la Batie, Représentant permanent de la France auprès de la CPS, Délégation française auprès de la CPS, Paris, France,

Ms Peleni Talagi, Acting Secretary of the Government of Niue,

M. Maurice Lau Pou Cheung, Délégation aux affaires internationales, européennes et du Pacifique, Bureau des affaires internationales, européennes et du Pacifique, French Polynesia, Mr Tiso Fiaola, Planning and Strategic Officer of the Government of Tokelau, Mr Mahe Tupouniua, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Tonga, and Mr Tim Gallaudet, Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Deputy NOAA Administrator, Government of the United States of America.

2. Invited dignitaries included Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, and Professor Gilles Bœuf, Lead French Scientist, Sorbonne Université. The following observers and partners also attended: Mr Jean-Paul Penrose, Development Counsellor at the Pacific British High Commission in Fiji, Mr James MacBeth Forbes, Director Programmes, Pacific Islands, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Mr Corrado Pampaloni, Acting Head of Delegation of the European Union in Fiji (European Union, EU), Mr Sione Tekiteki, Director for Governance and Engagement of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and Mr Kosi Latu, Director General, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).
3. The meeting was held at SPC Headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, and Pacific Community members expressed their deep gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality of New Caledonia, and recognised the excellent work and presence of the Pacific Community in the Pacific region, and its dedicated work in the last period that had been reported to Conference.

#### **AGENDA 1: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

4. The Director-General led the meeting through the agenda, followed by the Chair's request for a motion for its adoption. Australia and Samoa moved that the agenda be adopted, and the Chair declared the agenda adopted.

#### **Election of the Drafting Committee**

5. The Secretariat noted the drafting committee nominees: Australia, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Kiribati, Tuvalu and New Caledonia.

#### **AGENDA 2: OCEANS SCIENCE – A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC**

6. The Conference addresses were delivered by the following delegates and on the following themes. The full speeches would be appended to the Conference meeting record.

#### ***Keynote address***

7. **The Honourable Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands**, gave the keynote conference address, on the theme, *Building a sustainable Blue Pacific*. The Prime Minister noted that the

failure of the developed world to adapt and adopt stronger mitigation measures, including reducing global carbon emissions, threatened the Blue Pacific's very existence. However, Pacific people were not standing idly by waiting for others to offer solutions. Our Blue Pacific future required moving beyond an understanding of climate change as an existential threat, to understanding the extent, nature and severity of that threat through scientific and technical studies, data and interpretation. It involved empowering our people to formulate strategies, policies and actions to adapt and protect our way of life. Cook Islands had declared its entire exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – close to 2 million square kilometres – as the *Marae Moana*, or “Sacred Ocean”. This marine protected area was just one example of how Cook Islands was putting the Blue Pacific narrative into action.

8. Cook Islanders, like Pacific people everywhere, took their ocean stewardship role seriously, by balancing commercial interests against their conservation ambitions. The pearl farms of the Cook Islands were a great example of this dedication to balance. An enormous effort was made to conserving the natural environment, not only because it was part of our Blue Pacific identity, but also because the farmers knew that a healthy lagoon led to a healthy harvest. The Prime Minister hoped that, when he had finished serving as Prime Minister, he could return to the lagoons of his youth and watch future generations experience the wonders and riches of our shared oceans, as part of a sustainable Blue Pacific.

#### ***Presentation of the theme***

9. **Dr Audrey Aumua, Deputy Director-General (Suva), SPC**, presented on the Conference theme: *Oceans Science – A sustainable future for the Blue Pacific*. The Deputy DDG described the intimate connection of Pacific people with the oceans – intertwined with every aspect of life – as key to the future of the region and its people. Climate change was the single-biggest threat to the ocean and Pacific identity. To realise “our vision” of the Blue Pacific, the Deputy DDG concurred with the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, that it was critical to move beyond thinking of climate change as a poorly defined threat to the region, and seek to better understand the extent, nature and severity of that threat through scientific and technical studies, data and interpretation.
10. The oceans were a primary or secondary source of income for more than half of the population of this region, and livelihoods, culture and ecosystems were all at risk due to climate-related impacts, such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification and warming of our seas. Strategic management of these essential resources required detailed scientific monitoring, including in the context of modelling biomass distributions under different climate change scenarios. National governments, international and regional organisations and Pacific communities required accessible and adaptable technical information based in rigorous science, applied in the context of this region to make evidence-based decisions for the sustainable management of ocean resources, and for enhancing the ecosystem services the ocean provided to the communities and economies of the region.
11. The threat we faced was immediate, but the solutions required a long-term strategic response, strong partnerships, and regional approaches. SPC, and its CROP partners, were ready to support members and help make the upcoming “Decade of Ocean Science” a decade of Pacific leadership.
12. **Ms Tapaeru Herrmann, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cook Islands**, presented the

Conference theme, in the context of the sustainable approach to oceans management exemplified by the *Marae Moana* marine protected area. Cook Islands' entire EEZ of almost 2 million square kilometres had been declared a multi-use marine protected park, with a 50 nautical mile exclusion zone around each of the 15 islands, dedicated to protection, conservation and integrated management. The comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the consultative process that was used to establish *Marae Moana*, more than seven years ago, had been unprecedented. Further action had involved detailed marine planning and the critical collation of data from the deep ocean, in collaboration with institutions and organisations such as private mining companies. *Marae Moana* embodied the identity of Cook Islanders, and had been established with a number of principles that spoke directly to the value of ocean science in decision making for a sustainable future.

### ***Discussion on the theme***

13. **Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa**, spoke to the words of Epeli Hau'ofa, the late Tongan and Fijian writer and anthropologist: "Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean..." The *Blue Pacific* identity reinforced the potential of shared ownership of the Pacific Ocean and reaffirmed the connection of Pacific peoples with their natural resources, environment and livelihoods. It aimed to harness our shared ocean identity, geography and resources to drive positive socio-cultural, political and economic development. Therefore securing the wellbeing and potential of the Blue Pacific was at the centre of our regional agenda.
14. At the UN Ocean Conference that focused on the implementation of SDG14, on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and maritime resources, Samoa made 13 voluntary commitments. In support of healthy ocean ecosystems, Samoa had restricted the importation of plastic bags since 2006. The consultations processes on the Samoa Ocean Strategy 2020–2030 were well underway, with the Strategy to be finalised later in 2019. Samoa was making progress in the determination and negotiation of its maritime boundaries with its neighbours – which was a priority directive by Pacific Leaders – and was engaged in discussions for the protection of possible areas beyond national jurisdiction for marine biodiversity. An integrated regional approach to multidisciplinary ocean-related scientific studies and partnerships with international and regional partners in ocean science would be critical in ensuring a sustainable future for the Blue Pacific.
15. **Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean**, thanked representatives of Pacific Island states for supporting the 2017 and the 2020 UN Ocean Conferences, in advance of the next UN Ocean Conference that would be held in Lisbon, in June 2020. The conference would be the launching pad for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021–2030.
16. The Ambassador noted that, just over fifty years ago, humanity looked back at Earth from the moon and saw the first colour photos of our planet from afar – a beautiful blue ball, slowly spinning in the dark void of space. With a sense of awe, we saw on that spinning ball the broad extent of the Pacific Ocean, dubbed by our Leaders in 2017 as the *Blue Pacific*. In exploring the outer reaches of space, humanity had taken for granted a basic element of our existence – neglecting the blue heart of our own planet, the ocean – an interconnected body of water with multiple seas. The ocean that was the heart that maintained the balance of conditions for the

fostering and support of the universe's rarest of commodities – *Life*.

17. The Ambassador stressed that harmful fishing practices were decimating fish stocks, and the plastic plague was poisoning people and the environment. The next ten years would be more important for humanity than the last hundred for our survival. It was critical that we all paid due attention to the findings of ocean science, and played our rightful part in the communal decision-making processes necessary for the future well-being of all life on planet Earth. The Ambassador invoked the Fijian, '*tabu soro*' – no surrender. For the sake of our grandchildren and those who come after them, we would not lose this long struggle to restore humanity's relationship with the ocean to one of balance and respect.
18. **Professor Gilles Bœuf, Lead French Scientist, Sorbonne Université, Paris**, thanked the meeting for allowing a scientist take the floor. He discussed the history of human relationship to the ocean, highlighting that our ocean is one interconnected whole, and that we should recognise the unique role of the ocean in climate regulation. The ocean was the origin of life, where the oldest living things were found in the tiniest bacteria – organisms that had sustained whole ecosystems. We needed to confer the deepest respect for corals as we respected rainforests on land.
19. Professor Bœuf mentioned that the declining health of ecosystems, and consequential species loss, was a critical issue: the 7th Session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), held in Paris earlier this year, came to the disturbing conclusion that the Earth was at risk of losing between 500,000 and one million species, as a result of ecosystem decline caused by human activity. Ecosystems and biodiversity were critical to human life and wellbeing. He noted that the Pacific Ocean was an incredible open-air laboratory – half of all drugs were synthesised from nature, while 26,000 active ingredients in medicines were derived from ocean products. Ocean organisms were migrating due to water temperature rise, which impacted ocean-reliant communities.
20. He noted that the parlous state of the planet was attributable to three principal human factors: lack of planning, arrogance and greed. His message: *It was not too late to act*. Humanity needed to change its habits, and live more sustainably in harmony with our oceans. Nature could not adapt if environmental change was too rapid – the ocean was resilient, but to be resilient it needed be alive. We needed to reconcile ecology and the economy to reach sustainable solutions to these challenges.
21. Members responded to the various presentations, with detailed interventions provided by Australia, Fiji, Palau, Pitcairn, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, United States and Vanuatu.
22. Vanuatu noted that the focus on 'ocean science' was not only timely but also appropriate, given the critical juncture in relation to the pursuit of national development objectives pertaining to our ocean, and in responding to SDG 14. Members of the Pacific Community needed to continue to recognise the value of ocean science, which remained critically important in ensuring that our future, our 'Blue Pacific', was managed, protected and sustained. Vanuatu commended the early achievements of the Pacific Centre for Community Ocean Science, and looked forward to sustained efforts to complement national ocean management strategies and objectives. Vanuatu urged Pacific states to act as one, and change the regional mantra from "victim" of the world's polluters and high carbon emitters to "guardians of the Pacific" – to adopt a united voice that stated clearly that Pacific states could

no longer remain passive as climate change and pollution destroyed our islands, our home.

23. New Zealand was delighted to announce that the country would be supporting oceans science for the Pacific over the next three years, working with SPC on the establishment of the Pacific Centre for Community Ocean Science, to help strengthen Pacific regionalism and sustainable ocean management. Good governance and management of the ocean needed to be underpinned by access to reliable scientific data and traditional knowledge so support sound decision-making. This was vital to the sustainability of the Blue Pacific continent that we lived in.
24. Solomon Islands noted that the health of our ocean was declining rapidly and the livelihoods of our people were under threat. This conversation needed to continue. Pacific states needed to map out our global waters – and science needed to drive ocean policy.
25. Australia welcomed the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), and was actively contributing, including through the work of the Bureau of Meteorology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). Australia was committed to the region’s “Blue Pacific” agenda and wanted to work more closely to build a stronger, more prosperous and secure Pacific.
26. Securing the region’s maritime boundaries was a key priority for the development and security of the Blue Pacific continent. The Australian Government was proud of its long-term partnership with SPC to assist Pacific Island countries to establish their maritime zones. Australia announced that it would increase its support for Pacific maritime boundaries, with additional support to SPC to develop the scientific evidence base to safeguard maritime zones in the face of climate change impacts, such as sea level rise. This new project brought Australian investment in Pacific maritime boundaries support to AUD 8.5 million (2014-2023). This project responded to the call by Pacific leaders for urgent action to secure maritime boundaries.
27. Pitcairn, despite its small size and remote location, was deeply committed to playing its part on the critical global issues under discussion today – and in particular in protecting our oceans and our sea life, and tackling the scourge of plastic pollution.
28. Pitcairn was proud to be home to a marine protected area of 835,000 square km. The sea life there was extraordinary. Henderson Island, one of the three uninhabited Pitcairn Islands, had the highest density of plastic pollution anywhere in the world. A scientific expedition was underway, clearing up the plastic, studying it and its impact on the environment, and highlighting the plight of plastic pollution to the wider world. Pitcairn would share the outcomes of the expedition – in terms of science and communications – with its Pacific Community partners. Pitcairn highlighted the United Kingdom’s bid for presidency of COP26, in partnership with Italy.
29. The Government of Fiji committed to a complete ban on single-use plastics by January 2020, followed by a Styrofoam ban in 2021, and acknowledged the interventions of other members in supporting action on ocean plastic pollution.
30. Palau committed, from 2020, to codifying a national marine sanctuary law, aiming to close 80% of its waters to marine fishing for conservation purposes. Palau also mentioned that while all countries had nature reserves, Pacific Island countries needed more UNESCO World Heritage sites.

31. The US echoed the sentiments of other members in supporting PCCOS, as well as other institutions operating in this region.
32. Conference:
  - i. endorsed the development of a regional strategy for the collection of scientific and technical ocean data and information that will translate the Blue Pacific narrative into regional, national and local action for sustainable management of the Pacific Ocean, and will also inform sustainable management of all oceans around;
  - ii. endorsed SPC as the entity responsible for collecting, managing and interpreting the regional datasets that will underpin this work, and the representative Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agency for implementing activities in this context;
  - iii. endorsed an integrated approach to ocean-focused activities, both at the agency level through the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science, and at the CROP level through the Marine Sector Working Group, with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner and other partnerships.

### **AGENDA 3: DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S OVERVIEW REPORT TO CONFERENCE**

33. The Director-General provided Conference with an overview of the activities and achievements of the organisation over the past two years. He noted that SPC was well placed to face the challenges of the future. The D-G noted that SPC had made excellent progress on the change and transformation process commenced in 2015. A prioritisation process had agreed "high" and "low" priority areas, while the financial outlook had improved substantially.
34. Recent independent reviews had confirmed that members valued the work of the organisation, and were satisfied with the progress made by SPC. Reviews had identified areas for further improvement. A staff engagement survey confirmed high staff engagement, and tellingly, more than 90% of staff were committed to its mission. The independent Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020 confirmed that SPC was adding value to the region, and highlighted the strategic challenges faced by the organisation. SPC was making good progress in many areas of the Strategic Plan, especially in the provision of technical advice, information and capacity building. The D-G noted the desire from members and the Secretariat for SPC to have a greater presence in member states.
35. Integrated Programming and Country Programming were progressing, and the Secretariat's aim was to reduce single sector planning and design, and increase cross-sectoral programmes. This was challenging, but good results were being produced in some areas, particularly for the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS), the Pacific Data Hub, RESCCUE, One Health, Food System for Health and the Nutrition Integrated Programme. A new wave of



Country Programmes had been completed or were in progress for Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

36. The D-G acknowledged the range of donors and other partners that support SPC in its work and operations. The D-G noted that a large share of project funding for SPC limits flexibility, and the Secretariat and members have acknowledged the importance of moving to programming where possible. There had been no increase in assessed contributions despite historical deficits, and there had been no changes to Host Country Grants despite CRGA approval for new rates in 2013. Most members paid assessed contributions on time, but a small group was habitually in arrears, which materially affected SPC's budgets. SPC had implemented the CRGA policy on dealing with arrears.
37. The D-G observed that a recent staff engagement survey showed excellent engagement and commitment to SPC's mission, while reward and recognition, communication and collaboration had been raised as areas for improvement, which the organisation was working on. He summarised the operations of SPC's various divisions and programmes, and discussed the achievements, highlights and results across the organisation's divisions and programmes, which were highlighted in the Pacific Community Results Report 2018.
38. The strong strategic partnerships with Australia and New Zealand had continued, and a new partnership with New Caledonia had been signed. A partnership agreement with France was in draft. The D-G welcomed the new donors, Norway, Sweden, and the relationship with GIZ was well established. The relationship with the EU was fundamentally sound, and SPC had secured EUR 130 million of the EDF11 cycle, to be implemented by SPC and its partners.
39. The D-G indicated that the success of the operation was measured against the impact that SPC had made to the lives of Pacific people. He suggested that members had every reason to be optimistic about SPC and its future. He thanked members for the opportunity of working for the organisation and for Pacific people.
40. Conference noted:
  - i. the key achievements of the Pacific Community over the past two years, and the highlights during the term of the Director-General;
  - ii. Dr Colin Tukuitonga's gratitude and pleasure in serving as Director-General of the Pacific Community, for the benefit of the people of the Pacific region.

**AGENDA 4: LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF CRGA 49 TO THE CHAIR OF CONFERENCE 11  
ON CRGA 49'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONFERENCE, AND DECISIONS TAKEN BY CRGA 48 IN 2018**

41. The Chair of the 49th meeting of CRGA spoke to the matters discussed by members at CRGA. Two issues required CRGA to reach consensus decisions. The first was the issue of applications received by SPC for Permanent Observer status of the EU and Germany. CRGA had warmly welcomed the interest in permanent observer status with SPC by the European Union and Germany, and resolved to defer decision on the applications, pending further consultations between members, the Secretariat and the applicants, with advice to be provided to CRGA by



no later than CRGA 50 in 2020. The second was in consideration of the appointment of the next Director-General, which was discussed in camera, and CRGA's recommendation had been forwarded to Conference.

42. Conference was also informed that:

- i. CRGA adopted the 2018 audited financial statements for the Pacific Community and the Pacific Community Provident Fund, noting that they were unqualified and presented a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of these entities in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards.
- ii. CRGA was updated on SPC's ongoing efforts to continue to strengthen its financial position and, in particular, on the much-improved rate of project execution across the organisation, and the improvement in the average project management fee recovery rates. Significantly, CRGA noted that in 2018 SPC reported a budget surplus, and the reserves position had been improved sufficiently to sustain three months of liquidity to cover operating costs.
- iii. The Chair of the SPC Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) presented the report of ARC to update CRGA 49 on ARC's work over the past 12 months. The ARC had welcomed the much-improved rate of project execution across the organisation, and the improvement in the average project management fee recovery rates. These, together with firm expenditure control, were contributing to a more optimistic outlook for SPC's overall financial position. CRGA considered two proposed changes to the ARC Charter, involving inviting the Director-General to attend relevant parts of ARC meetings, and a member leave of absence provision.
- iv. The Secretariat presented the financial performance review of the revised 2019 budget up to the 1st Quarter ended March 2019. The revised 2019 budget was adopted out of session by CRGA in December 2018, based on a detailed review and recommendation by both the ARC and the CRGA Subcommittee on Strategic Plan Implementation.
- v. The Secretariat presented perspectives on SPC's long-term financial sustainability, including an update on the 2020 budget process and the ongoing reviews of assessed contributions and host country grants. The Secretariat proposed a process for greater member engagement on assessed contributions and host country grants, involving ad hoc working groups. CRGA decided that the draft 2020 budget be adopted at a special SPC session to be held back-to-back with the Forum Officials Committee budget meeting later in 2019, and approved the establishment of two ad hoc working groups tasked with taking forward consultations with members on the review of assessed contributions and host country grants, and to make detailed recommendations on both matters to CRGA in 2020.
- vi. CRGA supported a proposal from the Secretariat that SPC actively seek to accede its human resource dispute escalation processes to the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT), following appropriate staff

consultation, in response to jurisdictional issues around labour laws arising in the New Caledonia host country.

43. The D-G updated Conference on the shift from CRGA in June to November in each year, which aligned preparation of the budget with CRGA, to allow for meaningful discussion of the budget at these governance meetings.
44. Conference endorsed the recommendations of CRGA as communicated in the *letter from the Chair of CRGA 49 to the Chair of the 11th Conference of the Pacific Community*.

#### **AGENDA 5: YEAR 2021 CONFERENCE VENUE AND ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON**

45. Conference was updated by the Director-General on the general practice for determining the location of Conference, which as a matter of practical consideration of costs had conventionally been held at SPC's Headquarters in Noumea. Conference acknowledged with appreciation an offer from Vanuatu to host the Twelfth Conference of the Pacific Community in 2021, and agreed that the Pacific Community would continue discussions with Vanuatu in relation to the proposal, particularly in relation to budgetary matters. On the basis of the established order of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Conference in accordance with the *Rules of procedure of the Conference of the Pacific Community*, New Zealand would be Vice-Chair.
46. Conference:
  - i. agreed that the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Pacific Community would be convened in Vanuatu, in November 2021;
  - ii. agreed that the Secretariat would discuss and finalise practical modalities with the Government of Vanuatu.

#### **AGENDA 6: APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL – CONSIDERATION OF CRGA 49'S RECOMMENDATION**

[Closed session for members only]

47. Conference agreed to accept the recommendation of CRGA 49 in relation to the appointment of the next Director-General of the Pacific Community.
48. The Chair reported to Conference plenary the outcome of the closed session of Conference's deliberations on the next Director-General of the Pacific Community. The Chair congratulated Dr Stuart Minchin for being the successful candidate for the position of Director-General of the Pacific Community.

49. The Chair commended the candidates shortlisted for consideration for the position, in particular, SPC's current Deputy Directors-General, Mr Cameron Diver and Dr Audrey Aumua.

#### **AGENDA 7: ADOPTION OF CONFERENCE OUTCOMES**

50. Conference recognised the work done during the 49th meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), which took place at SPC headquarters, from 18 to 20 June 2019, under the able chairing of Palau, and:
- i. adopted the *Ministerial Statement of the Conference of the Pacific Community: Ocean Science – A sustainable future for the Blue Pacific* (attached as Annex A);
  - ii. resolved to circulate the draft conference outcomes to all members for out-of-session adoption on a "silence-as-assent" basis, and the present outcomes were duly adopted out-of-session on 19 July 2019.

#### **AGENDA 8: CLOSE**

51. The Chair, on behalf of Conference, acknowledged the dedicated service and leadership of the Director-General, Dr Colin Tukuitonga, in his six-year tenure as Director-General of the Pacific Community. The Chair noted the significant sacrifices that Dr Tukuitonga had made in exercising the functions of head of this large regional organisation, and his significant achievements in improving the organisation, and working for the benefit of Pacific people. Members, in various interventions, echoed the Chair's sentiments, and wished Dr Tukuitonga well in his future endeavours.
52. Dr Tukuitonga thanked the Chair, members, the Executive and staff of the Pacific Community, and his family, and acknowledged the honour and pleasure it had been to serve the organisation and Pacific people.
53. The Chair called the Eleventh Conference of the Pacific Community to a close.

**Annex A: Ministerial Statement of the Conference of the Pacific Community:  
Ocean Science – A sustainable future for the Blue Pacific**



## **ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**

(21 June 2019, Noumea, New Caledonia)

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### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY: *Ocean Science – A sustainable future for our Blue Pacific***

1. The Pacific Community (SPC) is committed to working for the wellbeing of Pacific people through the effective and innovative application of science and knowledge, guided by our deep understanding of Pacific Island contexts and cultures.
2. Our large ocean states, their maritime zones and adjacent high seas areas, taken together, represent an area greater than all of the Earth's continents combined. Our region is rich in traditions, resources, cultures and knowledge. We believe that the future of the Pacific must be determined by the people of the Pacific, who are best placed to understand and lead this region towards a sustainable and prosperous future.
3. We meet, at this, the 11th Conference of the Pacific Community, at a time of ongoing regional environmental and economic uncertainty, due in part to the adverse impacts of climate change, and the other security challenges addressed in the *Boe Declaration*.
4. Under the theme of *Ocean Science: A sustainable future for the Blue Pacific*, we gather to examine the interrelationship of our oceans with every aspect of Pacific life, to highlight the role of both traditional knowledge and scientific data in guiding our policies, and to determine areas we can prioritise as a region, in order to meet our national development objectives and to take urgent action to protect the future of our Pacific home.

5. In this context, we, the representatives of the Pacific Community's member states and territories:
- a. **welcome** the UN Secretary General's recent visit to the Pacific region and high-level dialogue with Pacific leaders ahead of the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019, which highlighted the unique vulnerabilities and challenges of our region, and unique moral authority to call for urgent, ambitious climate action
  - b. **commend** Chile for hosting COP25 and for its efforts to highlight the synergies between ocean conservation and climate action to address the impacts of climate change and to stem the tide of biodiversity loss
  - c. **note** that the upcoming Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) is expected to provide information about, and raise awareness of, opportunities and challenges around the linkages between the oceans and climate
  - d. **encourage** the expansion of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS) as a convenor of partnerships, knowledge exchange and action, and as a key initiative to strengthen the collaborative contribution of ocean science to sustainable development in the Pacific region
  - e. **invite** national, regional and international organisations from across the Pacific to coordinate with, and contribute to, the Pacific Data Hub, to create a publicly accessible, comprehensive resource map for Pacific knowledge products, statistics and information
  - f. **highlight** the recent IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which points to the "unprecedented" erosion of species and habitats – the very foundations of Pacific economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life – and a consequent decrease in resilience to the impacts of climate change.
6. We also encourage practical and measureable actions be taken, and:
- a. **request** the Pacific Community and partner organisations to pursue scientific efforts on oceans to help fill the knowledge gaps against SDG14 targets
  - b. **support** the Pacific Community in taking a leading role in efforts to attain the SDG14 targets, in particular those maturing in 2020

- c. **call on** Pacific Community stakeholders to increase investment in scientific research on the impacts of a changing climate on our oceans, islands and natural resources, and in the science and technical work required to inform the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies for the region
  - d. **encourage** the Pacific Community to use its Green Climate Fund (GCF) Accredited Entity (AE) status to enhance access to climate finance for members, to support the implementation of projects linked to country priorities.
7. We wish to recognise the achievements of the outgoing Director-General of the Pacific Community, Dr Colin Tukuitonga, and commend him on his successful stewardship of our organisation over the last six years.
8. We welcome Dr Stuart Minchin as the incoming Director-General, and express our confidence that under his leadership, the Pacific Community will continue to be the leading scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific, and will continue to positively impact the lives of all Pacific people.