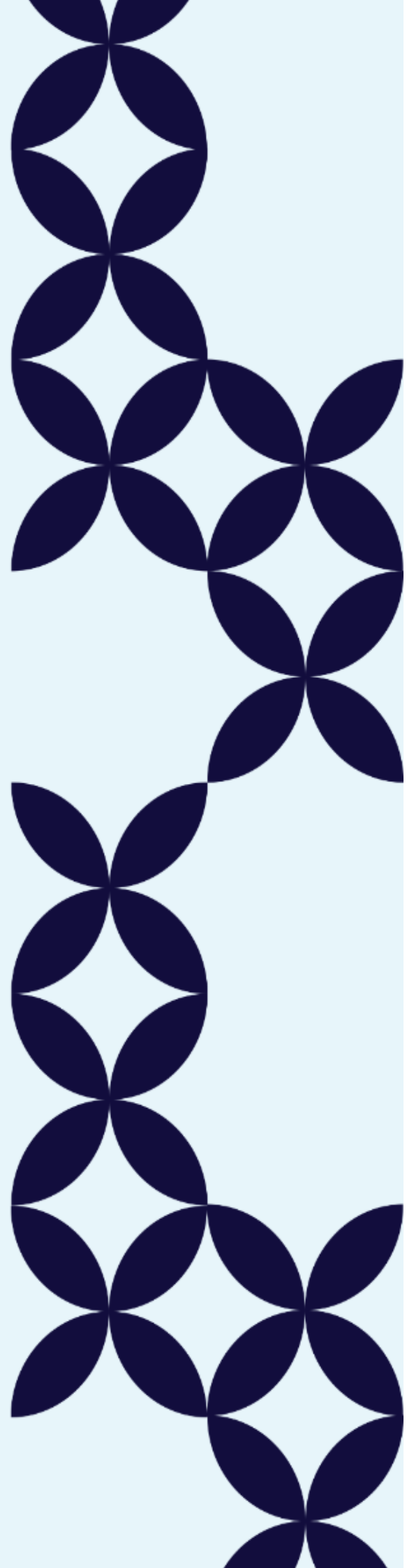
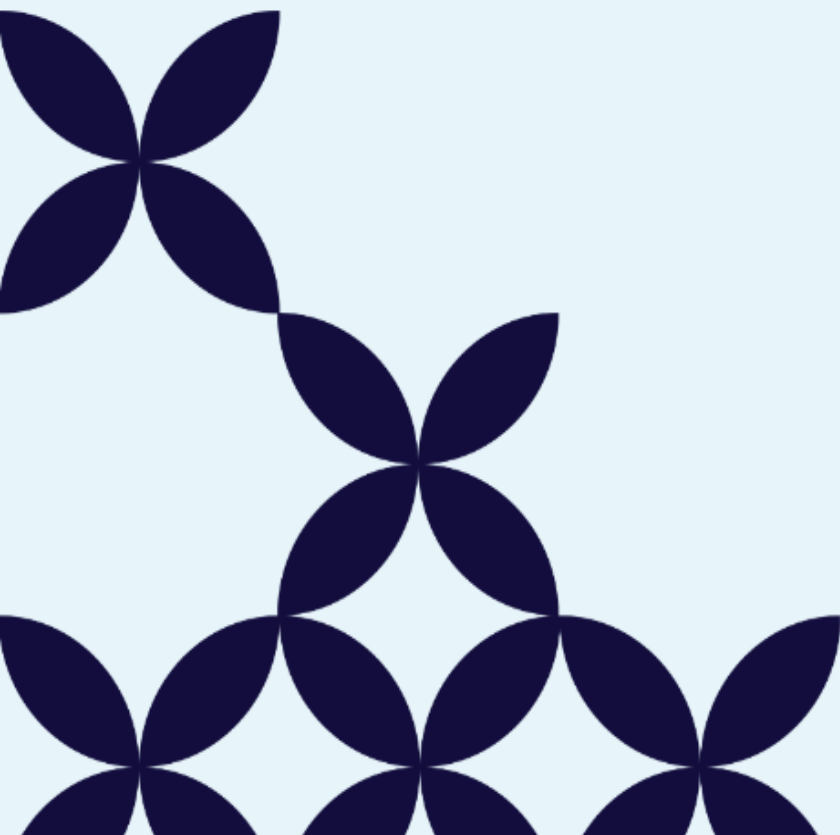


Pacific Regional Plan

May 2025



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Purpose of this document

The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has developed this Plan to guide the planning and management of New Zealand’s regional engagement with the Pacific, and as a foundation for dialogue with partners and stakeholders.

The Plan is used to bring clarity to what work should be prioritised, and to help monitor progress towards shared outcomes and strategic goals.

This is a living document that will be reviewed with partners and updated periodically to ensure it responds to changes in country / regional context, including the impacts of any external shocks.

An integrated approach to Pacific engagement

New Zealand pursues an integrated approach to our regional engagement in the Pacific. We focus on coherence across our diplomatic, trade and economic, climate change, environment, security and development objectives to deliver sustainable progress in developing countries, and advance New Zealand’s interests and values. As such, our development contribution (both policy and financial) is an integral pillar of our foreign policy – it reflects our network of international relationships and commitments, and is an expression of our values.



Pacific Regional overview

Pacific Regional context

The Pacific region is dispersed across an ocean covering nearly 20% of the Earth's surface and is home to over 45 million people, rich and diverse Pacific cultures and traditions, extensive biodiversity and unique ecosystems and important natural resources. The region, though small in population and economy, is highly diverse and faces unique development challenges. While rich in natural beauty and resources, the region's vulnerabilities to climate change, geographic isolation, and limited economic diversification continue to shape its development trajectory.

A priority challenge for Pacific countries is climate change. Rising sea levels, increasing storm frequency, food insecurity, and higher temperatures threaten the very existence of some low-lying nations, like Tuvalu and Kiribati. Climate change is impacting the health, location and availability of marine resources, including fish.

There are other, significant transboundary challenges in the Pacific. Regional security issues are becoming more prominent, in particular the increase in and impact of Transnational Serious and Organised crime (TSOC).

Fisheries are vital to the Pacific, contributing to strong economies and community well-being, as the Pacific Ocean is home to some of the world's richest tuna fishing grounds. Countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu rely heavily on fishing licenses, allowing foreign nations to fish in their exclusive economic zones (EEZs), as a significant source of national revenue.

Agriculture is the primary activity for the vast majority of people in many Pacific countries, generating income, supporting livelihoods and generating exports, as well as maintaining the food security of the region. Climate change represents a significant threat to agricultural and food production and to the region's exports. This puts the region's food security, and broader security, at serious risk over the coming years.

For a number of Pacific countries, the tourism sector is a significant contributor to economic development, employment and exports. However, tourism remains vulnerable to external shocks such as natural disasters and global economic downturns, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when tourism revenues plummeted. Going forward, there is a need to support a greater focus on more sustainable and higher value tourism through a destination management approach.

Pacific countries face several trade and investment challenges due to their geographic isolation, small domestic markets, limited infrastructure, and vulnerability to natural disasters. High transportation and logistics costs make it difficult to compete in global markets, while dependence on a narrow range of exports increases economic vulnerability. These challenges limit the region's ability to attract sustainable investment and diversify its economic base.

Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) in the Pacific region face significant challenges. Women hold around 7% of parliamentary seats in the region, one of the lowest rates in the world, and the prevalence of gender-based violence in the Pacific is among the highest in the world, with some countries reporting more than double the global average. Disability inclusion efforts are gaining traction, however access to education for children with disabilities remains a challenge in many Pacific countries, highlighting significant gaps in services and support. Despite these challenges, regional commitments such as the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy are driving initiatives to improve outcomes, though deeply rooted cultural norms and resource limitations continue to restrict the full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and other groups at risk of marginalisation across many Pacific Island countries.

Pacific peoples – both in the islands and the diaspora – are resilient, with strong support networks based on a collective community focus. The enduring kinship bonds between Pacific countries and diaspora communities



in New Zealand, Australia and beyond remain strong through family connections, remittances, and regular travel and exchanges.

New Zealand's partnerships with Pacific regional agencies

Pacific regional agencies are regionally owned and governed intergovernmental agencies that exist as an extension of Pacific country capacity and capability. They are mandated by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to provide policy, coordination and technical services to Pacific countries in support of their development goals; and to strengthen Pacific regionalism. Regional agencies provide pooled regional services and goods, and amplify Pacific priorities including at global fora. New Zealand's partnerships with regional organisations are a crucial pillar of our engagement in the region.

The Pacific Regional Plan places a high priority on supporting effective regionalism, recognising its contributions to social and economic resilience at both regional and national levels. New Zealand invests in the centrality of the Pacific Islands Forum, ensuring it remains the pre-eminent regional platform for collective decision making on Pacific regional priority issues under the direction of Forum Leaders. Important technical struts in this architecture are Pacific regional organisations such as the Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and The University of the South Pacific (USP). These organisations play a key role in supporting science and evidence-based decision making with respect to shared Pacific interests. Other regional, sector-specific organisations can play key roles in supporting technical capacity in the region, for example the Pacific Aviation Safety Authority, the Pacific Tourism Organisation and the Oceania Customs Organisation.

We will continue to invest in the Pacific regional architecture, particularly the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), to underpin a regional response to 21st century challenges, in line with the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. New Zealand's core funding to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) supports the sustainability of the organisation and its ability to coordinate delivery of regional priorities. As a Forum Member, we are able to have conversations with PIFS about its progress against its key results areas, and any other organisational issues that arise.

Our core funding for Pacific regional agencies provides stability in resource planning and shows our commitment to working with them. New Zealand plays an active role in their governance including through member Councils, audit committees and High Level Consultations engagements.

We are committed to collectively tackling shared security challenges in the Pacific. Through regular Ministerial, cross-party and senior officials' level engagements and active participation in regional architecture, New Zealand works with Pacific partners to develop shared understandings of key security challenges and mechanisms to build greater regional resilience. New Zealand contributes to regional security and stability through practical cooperation, training and knowledge exchanges. In keeping with the Pacific Island Forum leaders' commitment to meet security needs from within the region, New Zealand police and defence personnel are deployed when called upon by Pacific partners.

Partner plans relevant to the relationship

In 2022 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders launched the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent¹ which sets out a blueprint for how Pacific countries will work together towards our shared ambitions and aspirations for our region. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and its Implementation Plan – the subject of much work across Pacific countries and regional organisations – serves both as an articulation of our region's priorities and as a blueprint to secure our region's future in a dynamic global environment. As such, we expect

¹ See: [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat](#)



the Strategy to be a reference point and anchor for our regional architecture and our region's engagements with external partners.

Leaders subsequently endorsed the Implementation Plan for the 2050 Strategy² that maps out steps the region will take from 2023-2030 to achieve the ambitions in the 2050 Strategy. It articulates Regional Collective Actions (RCAs) across seven thematic areas that will help realise our collective vision for the future.

New Zealand's primary objective is to ensure that the Strategy is implemented in a coordinated way, that aligns with our interests, and allows external partners to 'dock in' in a manner that supports Pacific priorities and helps the region realise its aspirations.

The 2050 Strategy and the Implementation Plan will guide us towards a resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity that ensures all Pacific peoples can live free, healthy and productive lives. This closely mirrors New Zealand's own priorities for our work at a regional level, which are: our unity with the Pacific and people-to-people links; our economic and health connectivity with the region, including through population movement; the linkages between climate impacts, instability and population displacement; and our national security interests, including the transboundary nature of threats facing the Pacific.

The Boe Declaration on Regional Security, signed by Leaders in 2018, acknowledges the importance of national and collective regional security and articulates transnational crime as one of five key security threats facing the region.

Strategic framework for the the Pacific Regional Plan

The IDC Priorities Framework 2024-27³ is a guiding document for the Pacific Regional Plan. It shows how the IDC Programme contributes to MFAT's overall goals, as set out in the MFAT Strategic Framework⁴, and articulates priority outcomes that we aim to advance through the IDC Programme.

The Pacific Regional logic diagram included on the next page, sets out our ambitions for our work at a regional level, in alignment with the IDC Priorities Framework. It represents integrated delivery across development, foreign policy, trade, and security.

The logic diagram sets out how our strategic goals drive more specific medium and short term outcomes. New Zealand will work towards these outcomes in partnership with Pacific regional agencies. The medium term outcomes in the logic diagram describe our interests in more detail. The short term outcomes cover our areas of immediate focus, rather than all the initiatives required to deliver these medium term outcomes.

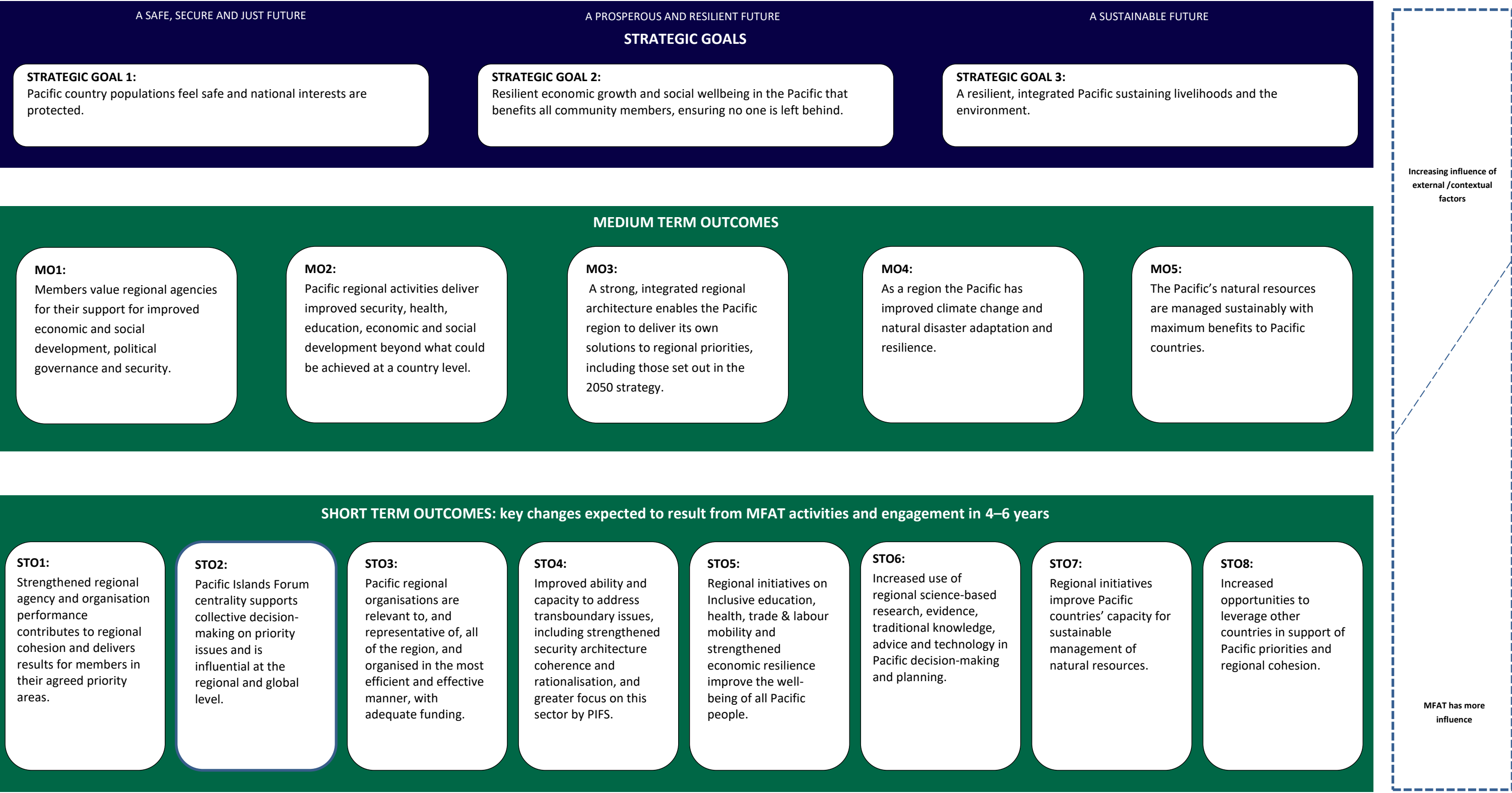
² See: https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/2050-Strategy-Implementation-Plan_2023-2030.pdf

³ See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid/Aid-General/IDC-Priorities-Framework-2024.pdf>

⁴ See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/About-us-Corporate/MFAT-strategies-and-frameworks/Strategic-Intentions-2024-2028.pdf>



Logic diagram for Pacific Regional Plan



How we put this Plan into action

New Zealand's IDC funding for this Plan is managed over a three year period. There is flexibility to move funds into and between Plans in order to respond to rapidly changing contexts. Current information about New Zealand's overall International Development Cooperation budget for the current funding triennium is on the MFAT website⁵.

How we will work to deliver on this Plan

New Zealand's International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development (ICESD) Policy⁶ identifies four development principles that guide New Zealand's work with partner countries, and sets out a commitment to deliver development that is effective, inclusive, resilient and sustained.

A strong, coordinated regional architecture working in support of the 2050 Strategy — owned and supported by all Pacific countries — enables the Pacific to deliver its own solutions to priority regional challenges and take advantage of strategic opportunities. Support for Pacific regional agencies will enable them to apply their technical and policy capacity, established programmes and relationships, and deep knowledge of the region to support Pacific countries to strengthen their resilience. New Zealand's core funding to these organisations supports them to deliver on their work programmes and strategic priorities in line with the 2050 strategy.

New Zealand's place in the Pacific means we have significant influence with partners on how to engage effectively in the region to deliver outcomes that support Pacific priorities and our own national interest and values. Our principles for third country engagement enable us to have robust discussions with partners to support Pacific-led solutions. We ask all partners to engage with the Pacific through existing regional architecture, processes, and organisations, because these institutions represent the entire region's interests and priorities.

Who we will work with to deliver on this Plan

Most of our regional capacity-building and technical assistance is delivered through regional institutions, which is important for enshrining regional leadership on key priorities and building technical expertise among Pacific citizens. Regional development cooperation is also delivered by New Zealand Government agencies (NZ Inc) directly to their counterpart organisations in Pacific countries, and by New Zealand and local civil society, reflecting long-standing partnerships for the transfer of knowledge and expertise. We will also look to technical experts within Pacific communities and New Zealand's Pacific diaspora, who can contribute important cultural, linguistic, spiritual and traditional knowledge and understanding to development partnerships.

Our partnership with the Pacific region is an 'all of New Zealand Government' effort. The New Zealand public sector engages with regional agencies on shared priorities, including governance, education, health, fisheries, agriculture, biosecurity, safe and secure communities, disaster management and building climate resilience. IDC delivery through NZ Inc takes a 'system to system' approach with agencies working directly with their regional counterparts to build and maintain capability, capacity and institutional links.

⁵ www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid/where-our-funding-goes/our-planned-aid-expenditure/

⁶ See: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/Policy/Policy-Statement-New-Zealands-International-Cooperation-for-Effective-Sustainable-Development-ICESD.pdf>



We will look to take a more strategic approach to working with likeminded countries in the Pacific, to harmonise and leverage investment wherever possible. In parallel, we will continue our work in the PIF to reform how the Forum engages with Dialogue Partners, with added emphasis on PIF centrality.

We will work especially closely with fellow Pacific Islands Forum members, including the region's largest donor, Australia. We will also work in partnership with other important and likeminded Pacific partners including the US, Japan, the EU and the UK. In New Zealand, we will continue our outreach and engagement with the diplomatic, business and Pacific diaspora communities.

How we will assess progress against this Plan

The logic diagram sets out the strategic goals, medium and short term outcomes we hope will result from New Zealand's activities and engagement with the Pacific region.

We report back on progress towards our goals in the Pacific region via the annual Minister of Foreign Affairs Report on the IDC appropriation⁷. We also measure progress through high-level reporting by Pacific regional organisations, such as Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) Annual Reports.

Progress against the Plan will be assessed with the following indicators:

Strategic Goals	Indicators
Goal 1: Pacific country populations feel safe and national interests are protected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators
Goal 2: Resilient economic growth and social wellbeing in the Pacific that benefits all community members, ensuring no one is left behind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDG 8.1.1 - Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita SDG 8.6.1 - Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training SDG 1.2.1 - Proportion of population below national poverty lines (% of population)
Goal 3: A resilient, integrated Pacific sustaining livelihoods and the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ND-GAIN Readiness score ND-GAIN Vulnerability score SDG 14.4.1 - Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (not overexploited)

⁷ See <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-approach-to-aid>



Short Term Outcome (STO)	Indicators
STO1: Strengthened regional agency and organisation performance contributes to regional cohesion and delivers results for members in their agreed priority areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of progress against the goals identified in regional agencies' strategic plans.
STO2: Pacific Islands Forum centrality supports collective decision-making on priority issues and is influential at the regional and global level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of PIF operating as a collective and focused on regional collective outcomes. Evidence of political engagement through PIF from partners. Evidence PIF caucuses enable effective communication of Pacific priorities at international fora.
STO3: Pacific regional organisations are relevant to, and representative of, all of the region, and are organised in the most efficient and effective manner, with adequate funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of efficiency, effectiveness and collective endeavour in regional organisations.
STO4: Improved ability and capacity to address transboundary issues, including strengthened security architecture coherence and rationalisation, and greater focus on this sector by PIFS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of coherence and rationalisation across regional security bodies. NZ security agencies participate actively in regional security architecture.
STO5: Regional initiatives on inclusive education, health, trade & labour mobility and strengthened economic resilience improve the well-being of all Pacific people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people participating in a labour mobility initiative. Number of people receiving training / capability-building support in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> equity and inclusion health education (education professionals). Percentage of government revenue from fisheries; Number of jobs from fisheries.
STO6: Increased use of regional science-based research, evidence, traditional knowledge, advice and technology in Pacific decision-making and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that science-based information is used in Pacific decision-making and planning.
STO7: Regional initiatives improve Pacific countries' capacity for sustainable management of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in fisheries and oceans. Evidence that capability learning is applied at national and regional levels.
STO8: Increased opportunities to leverage other countries in support of Pacific priorities and regional cohesion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of co-funding/cooperation to support Pacific priorities. Evidence of enhanced PIF dialogue partner engagements.



For further information

To find out more about New Zealand's engagement with Pacific Island countries also go to the MFAT website, at www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/australia-and-pacific/.

This document is one in a series of Plans published by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and managed by the Ministry's Pacific and Development Group. For the latest version please go to www.mfat.govt.nz

ISSN 2744-7278

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⁸ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

⁹ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0047/latest/DLM51358.html>

