



PACER Plus

PP.MIN.004/C/FINAL

MINISTERIAL MEETING: 27 JULY 2022

COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the Ministerial representatives of the Parties to the *Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus*¹ met virtually on 27 July 2022. The Meeting was hosted by the Government of Kiribati and chaired by the Honorable Bootii Nauan, the Minister of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives.

2. We discussed the significant progress made on the delivery of the Development and Economic Cooperation (DEC) Work Programme since the last PACER Plus Ministers Meeting on 30 June 2021, and the role of PACER Plus in supporting economic recovery in the region.

3. We welcomed Tuvalu as the newest member of the PACER Plus family and noted that Vanuatu's ratification process is in the final stages of completion which would bring the total PACER Plus membership to ten (10) countries. We recognise that the growing Parties to the Agreement brings benefits to all members as we create a more integrated Pacific region. In this regard, we encourage the swift ratification by the remaining signatories to fully realise the vision for an inclusive Agreement.

4. We note that the COVID-19 pandemic and Climate Change have continued to present ongoing health, social and economic challenges to our region. These

¹ See Annex 1 for the List of Representatives

challenges have been exacerbated due to other global events. These challenges notwithstanding, Parties have continued to strengthen our connectivity, recognising that economic integration and access to regional and international markets will drive inclusive economic recovery for our region. Our collective Pacific voice is a monumental strength and benefit to PACER Plus, and we will use this to our advantage in advocating for sustainable and equitable progress in the region.

5. We recall our intentions to work together under PACER Plus to address challenges and develop new and innovative solutions to facilitate access to markets, support economic recovery and strength connectivity beyond pre-COVID levels.

PROGRESS

6. As tasked, PACER Plus officials, alongside the PACER Plus Implementation Unit worked together to develop a comprehensive work programme and identify early wins by the end of August 2021. Despite the challenges generated by COVID-19 and other events, this work programme was largely implemented prior to this year's PACER Plus Ministerial Meeting. We acknowledge that a more comprehensive work programme has been developed and approved, based on the priority needs of each of the PACER Plus Parties and guided by the discussion and expertise of PACER Plus subsidiary bodies and the DEC Work Programme.

7. We reaffirm our conviction that the PACER Plus DEC Work Programme must be underpinned by our principles, including inclusion, mutually agreed priorities, complement existing regional activities, represent value for money, be subject to regular review and be timely to support Parties' economic recovery.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

8. We recall the Strategic Partnership model endorsed at our previous meeting that would enable development partners active in the Pacific to support the PACER Plus work programme and economic integration in the Pacific.

9. We encourage further discussion between Parties to develop a considered approach on next steps and how best to utilise our collective voice to advocate for outcomes that benefit the entire PACER Plus family. We task officials of the Joint Committee and PACER Plus Implementation Unit to develop this approach. Parties may bilaterally continue to engage with potential partners on shared interests under the Agreement.

LABOUR MOBILITY

10. At our previous meeting, we acknowledged that the Arrangement on Labour Mobility was an important outcome from the PACER Plus negotiations and emphasised the importance of advancing efforts to enhance labour mobility schemes to maximise development benefits for all participating members.

11. We note the progress made in working towards a regional and holistic labour mobility policy setting, informed by evidence, and integrated into broader national strategic development agendas. This includes looking at existing labour mobility schemes and working with labour-receiving countries to expand coverage to new industries and sectors.

12. We welcome our fruitful discussions to date that will aid in ensuring the opportunities of labour mobility are balanced with improving the lives of people and communities engaged in these programs, while supporting economic recovery and sustainable socio-economic development.

13. We acknowledge that enhancing the mutual gains of labour mobility are hinged on effective regional cooperation and therefore commit ourselves to progressing initiatives such as the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM), to promote labour mobility cooperation amongst the Participants as well as collaborations with regional and international stakeholders.

LOOKING FORWARD

14. We are proud to note Parties resilience and progress despite the continued challenges and pressures brought about by the global pandemic and other events. Each of our countries will continue their engagement with the PACER Plus DEC Work Programme in this crucial economic recovery stage.

15. With great anticipation, we look forward to our next meeting in 2023 to review the ongoing progress of PACER Plus implementation.

ANNEX 1

List of Representatives

Party Representatives

- (i) Honourable Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Trade, Australia
- (ii) Ms Tapaeru Hermann, Special Envoy of the Minister of Business Trade and Investment Board, Cook Islands
- (iii) Honourable Bootii Nauan, Minister of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives, Kiribati
- (iv) Honourable Phil Twyford, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand
- (v) Honourable Dion Taufitu, Acting Minister for Central Agencies, Niue
- (vi) Mrs Peseta Noumea Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa
- (vii) Honourable Jeremiah Manele, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands
- (viii) Honourable Samiu Kuita Vaipulu, Acting Minister of Trade and Economic Development, Tonga
- (ix) Honourable Rev. Dr. Kitiona Tausi, Minister of Fisheries and Trade, Tuvalu

Signatory Representatives

- (x) Ms Momoyo Scotty, Acting Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Nauru
- (xi) Mr Joe Pakoa Lui, Director of External Trade, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade, Vanuatu

PIFS Representative

- (xii) Mr Paki Ormsby, Director, Policy/Acting Secretary General's Representative, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat