The Forum Trade Ministers Meeting was held in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands on 11 May 2012. The following Member countries were represented at the meeting: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Tuvalu and Vanuatu. New Caledonia attended as an Associate Member. Representatives from the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) were also present at the meeting. The Meeting was chaired by Honourable Phillip Muller, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Honourable Michael Konelios, Minister for Resources and Development of RMI.

2. The objective of the meeting was to consider and make decisions on matters regarding the Secretariat’s trade-related work programme; operations of the Permanent Delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva (Geneva Office); operations of the Pacific Islands Trade & Invest (PT&I) Offices; Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Intellectual Property (IP) related work; Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus negotiations; the operations of the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA); engagement with the Non-State Actors (NSAs); updates on Members’ engagement in trade negotiations; reporting on trade priorities for the Pacific Plan; and other trade-related matters of importance for the region.

3. In his welcoming remarks, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, His Excellency Christopher J. Loeak urged the Members to work cohesively through the various regional trade initiatives to achieve the Leaders’ vision for a peaceful and prosperous Pacific region. H.E. Loeak urged that the trade initiatives must be negotiated in a manner that accrues
benefits to the people, and provides the platform for comprehensive economic growth that creates a dynamic environment for private sector development. H.E. Loeak stated that RMI’s recently approved Trade Policy Framework (TPF) will assist RMI in participating effectively in trade negotiations and agreements as it proposes bold reforms, including liberalisation of a number of sectors, to improve the basic infrastructure services such as transportation, telecommunication and education, which are key to reducing the cost of doing business in RMI. The President urged that Forum Members as a region seek economic integration with more vigour and at a faster pace. H.E. Loeak added that the lack of commitment and the hesitation in intensive engagement on trade matters was depriving the region from deriving the real benefits of regional trade, and encouraged Members to look at ways in which they could intensify their engagement in regional economic integration.

4. In his introductory remarks, the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, highlighted the significant challenges to trade development faced by smaller remote economies in the Pacific. Mr Slade added that these factors were recognised in the Pacific Plan adopted by Leaders in 2005, which seeks to develop comprehensive and practical strategies and solutions to enhance coordination, and efforts for regional cooperation and integration to raise the living standards of all Pacific people. The Secretary General emphasised that it was therefore fundamental to ensure an effective and inclusive approach to the development of the trade agenda at the national, as well as at the regional level. Mr Slade congratulated the Government of the RMI for the launching of its first comprehensive TPF.

5. The meeting adopted the Agenda and the Working Procedures for the FTMM.

SESSION 1 (a): UPDATE ON THE OPERATIONS AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GENEVA OFFICE; AND UPDATE ON THE DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, INCLUDING MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

6. The meeting considered an update on the operations of the Geneva Office, the funding arrangements for the Geneva Office, and an update on the Doha Development Agenda.

7. Samoa was congratulated for the significant milestone of officially becoming the 155th Member of the WTO on 10 May 2012. Vanuatu was also congratulated for progressing their final stages of WTO accession. Financial and technical assistance provided by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, and PIFS in the accession process to WTO and the support of FIC WTO Members was acknowledged.
8. WTO Members present at the meeting confirmed commitment to the conclusion of the Doha round of negotiations, and noted the importance of the Aid for Trade programmes which is expected to assist FICs’ in building their capacity to trade.

9. Members noted the important role of the Geneva Office in supporting the FICs in their engagement with the WTO, and for providing regular updates on trade-related developments. Members noted the interest expressed by Vanuatu for the next WTO intern to be from Vanuatu to assist in their post-accession work.

**Decisions**

10. Forum Trade Ministers:

   a) noted the developments pertaining to the operations of the Geneva Office, including the funding arrangements for 2012;

   b) acknowledged the 2012 funding contributions from FIC-WTO Members and Observers, Australia and the European Union towards the Geneva Office;

   c) noted the relocation of the Geneva Office to the Commonwealth Secretariat Small States Office;

   d) congratulated Samoa on officially becoming a WTO Member on 10 May 2012;

   e) noted Vanuatu’s final stages of accession to the WTO; and

   f) noted the most recent developments relating to the Doha Development Agenda.

**SESSION 1 (b): UPDATE ON PACIFIC ISLANDS TRADE & INVEST, INCLUDING THE TEN YEAR STRATEGY TO PROMOTE PACIFIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN SELECTED MARKETS**

11. The meeting considered an update on the activities of the PT&I, and the opportunities available in selected markets, including the services provided by the PT&I network.

12. Members noted updates on some of the successful exports and investments resulting through the initiatives of the PT&I offices. Members noted the good work undertaken by the PT&I offices and the rebranding initiatives for effective and integrated marketing which will profile the Pacific island opportunities internationally.

13. Members noted specific opportunities for the FICs in creative arts, pacific food products, niche tourism markets and potential for joint-venture investments. Members encouraged PT&I efforts in continuing marketing of the region’s products and services, and attracting investment from the specific targeted markets.
Decisions

14. Forum Trade Ministers:
   a) **acknowledged** the achievements of PT&I in 2011;
   b) **welcomed** progress made in 2011 to strengthen the agency’s performance;
   c) **noted** that the Strategy will be reconsidered in 2012 in light of the current Review of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat;
   d) **noted** the combined 2011 Annual Report will be released prior to the Forum Leaders Meeting; and
   e) **urged** Forum Island Countries to submit information on possible joint-venture investment projects to PT&I, for the forthcoming investment summit in September 2012.

SESSION 1 (c): UPDATE ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WORK, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL TRADEMARKS APPLICATION SYSTEM

15. The meeting considered an update on the Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Intellectual Property (IP) work, including the establishment of the Regional Trademarks Application System (RTMAS).

16. Members noted the importance of TK & IP work being undertaken in the region, and urged the Secretariat and other technical agencies to continue to support the FICs in progressing their TK & IP work, particularly in developing cultural industries. Members acknowledged the work undertaken by PIFS under the TK Action Plan (TKAP), and urged that FICs yet to be part TKAP be supported under this initiative.

17. Members noted the critical role of the RTMAS and encouraged extensive consultation for the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) relating to the setting up of the RTMAS.

Decisions

18. Forum Trade Ministers:
   a) **acknowledged** the assistance provided by the technical agencies and development partners in progressing the TK and IP work for the region;
   b) **noted** the ongoing work being undertaken by the Secretariat in the area of TK and IP;
c) **agreed** that the priority for Phase 2 of the TK Action Plan be to extend the technical assistance for the drafting of TK policy and legislative frameworks to those FICs that are yet to be assisted, and a focus on the commercialisation of TK and cultural industries;

d) **requested** the Secretariat to seek to secure necessary funding and partnerships with technical agencies to develop Phase 2 of the TK Action Plan;

e) **urged** FICs to complete consultations on the proposed MOU for the Regional Trademarks Applications System, and submit comments on the MOU by end September 2012;

f) **urged** FICs to sign the MOU on the Regional Trademarks Application System as soon as practicable so that necessary technical assistance can be secured for the implementation of the MOU;

g) **agreed** that FICs provide their requests for TK and IP technical assistance to the Secretariat by end August 2012 so that a comprehensive workplan on support for TK and IP can be developed for the FICs;

h) **recognised** the lead role of PNG in setting up the Regional Trademarks Application System and recommend that it and other interested FICs identify the implementation of the MoU as an area requiring development assistance; and

i) **agreed** that participating FICs identify the implementation of the MoU as a priority in the context of the regional Aid-for-Trade agenda.

**SESSION 1 (d): PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT’S TRADE RELATED WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2011/2012**

19. The meeting considered an update on the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat’s trade-related work programme for 2011/2012.

20. Members noted the important contribution made by the Hub and Spokes programme in building capacity for trade negotiations, development of trade policies, and complementing the work of the national trade offices in the region. Members also urged continuation of the Hub and Spokes programme beyond June 2012, and for PIFS to commence work on a successor programme.

21. Members noted the need for developing comprehensive TPFs to guide their engagement in international trade, and for technical agencies and key trading partners to assist in developing and/or implementing the TPFs.

22. Members noted RMI’s historic achievement in adopting it’s first comprehensive TPF which contains clear recommendations for RMI to undertake the necessary reforms, which include the introduction of a consumption tax, to enable RMI to participate in various trade agreements including the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), Economic
Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU, and PACER Plus. The Framework also identifies RMI’s trade and development needs and priorities, including RMI’s national Aid for Trade Strategy, which will be used to mobilise technical and financial assistance to implement the Trade Policy.

Decisions

23. Forum Trade Ministers:
   
a) noted the work of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in the provision of trade-related assistance in 2011;

   b) directed PIFS to progress trade-related work programme for 2012, including the continuation of the Hub and Spokes;

   b) noted the urgency in progressing the refresh and renew process of the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy, and directed that the Secretariat provide a timeframe for the completion of the process by end-June 2012; and

   c) agreed that Members involved in the development of the joint strategy for the export of kava are to be supported under the Increasing Agricultural Commodity Trade (IACT) project to progress the kava initiative endorsed by the Pacific ACP Trade Ministers in August 2011.

SESSION 2(a): UPDATE ON THE FOURTH PACER PLUS OFFICIALS MEETING

24. The meeting considered the update on the Fourth PACER Plus Officials’ meeting.

25. Members noted the good progress made at the Fourth PACER Plus Officials meeting, and urged the intensification of PACER Plus negotiations so that the Parties to PACER Plus agreement can commence benefiting from the agreement. Members encouraged that the intersessional meetings be utilised effectively to progress work on the common priority areas and build the momentum for improved engagement by Forum Members. Members urged that adequate funding be provided to ensure effective participation of FIC representatives in the intersessional meetings on key priority issues for PACER Plus.

26. Members reemphasized that PACER Plus should not result in a conventional free trade agreement and that it should contain provisions that would ensure sustainable growth and development of the FICs.

27. Members noted that the OCTA has made attempts to brief Fiji on the PACER Plus negotiations as directed by Forum Trade Ministers, including the submission of a written brief on PACER Plus on 23 April 2012 to which Fiji is yet to respond.
28. Members noted the importance of preferential access to education in Australia and New Zealand as an important issue relating to the development of the region that will require further consideration. FICs urged Australia and New Zealand to consider a special derogation for FIC students to study and work temporarily in Australia and New Zealand under a preferential arrangement.

Decisions

29. Forum Trade Ministers:

a) **noted** the Outcomes from the Fourth PACER Plus Trade Officials’ Meeting held from 27 – 29 March 2012, in Brisbane, Australia;

b) **agreed** that inter-sessional meetings will be held to progress work on the six priority areas of labour mobility, Rule of Origin, Customs Procedures, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, Technical Regulations, Standards and Conformity Assessment Procedures, and Development Assistance before the next PACER Plus Officials Meeting;

c) **directed** officials to increase engagement and make rapid progress on the six priority issues at the intersessional meetings and agree on a roadmap for the remaining negotiating issues;

d) **agreed** that the first meeting will be held in Vanuatu no later than July 2012. Dates for other inter-sessional meetings would be mutually agreed by the Parties and communicated to the PIFS;

e) **noted** that OCTA will raise the issue of the application of the concessional and preferential fees to FIC students in Australian and New Zealand educational institutions at the intersessional meeting of officials;

f) **agreed** that the outcomes from the inter-sessional meetings will be agreed ad-referenda at the next PACER Plus Officials’ Meeting; and

g) **agreed** that subject to Ministerial approval, Australia and New Zealand would fund the participation of up to four FIC representatives for each negotiating issue to be considered at the intersessional meetings.

SESSION 2 (b): UPDATE ON THE SECOND NON-STATE ACTORS’ (NSAs) DIALOGUE ON PACER PLUS

30. The meeting considered an update on the Second Non-State Actors’ Dialogue on PACER Plus held on 26 March 2012.
31. Members supported the need for ongoing engagement with the NSAs to ensure that the private sector and the broader civil society is engaged in the trade negotiations, and to enable an inclusive approach to trade policy development.

**Decisions**

32. Forum Trade Ministers:

   a) **noted** the consultations undertaken with the NSAs on PACER Plus, and the future engagement as outlined in the Summary of Discussions of the Second Dialogue on PACER Plus, as follows:
      - NSAs welcomed progress made since the first NSAs Dialogue, in particular the recruitment of a NSA Liaison by the Forum Secretariat and the development of an information website by OCTA;
      - NSAs welcomed the commitment by OCTA to strengthen consultations and engagement with them, and the announcement of a workshop for NSAs proposed by OCTA for the final quarter of 2012;
      - NSAs requested that PIPSO and Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) be included in national and regional consultations, and that national representative organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce and the national NGO umbrella organisations be included in national consultations, workshops and training to strengthen their participation in, and contribution to, PACER Plus negotiations;
      - NSAs reiterated their need for increased and dedicated resourcing to support meaningful NSA engagement in national consultations and PACER Plus negotiations, recognising the capacity constraints faced by national governments, particularly in Small Island States;
      - NSAs called for strengthened and more effective consultative mechanisms at the national level, and emphasised the need for national governments to work with national umbrella organisations to develop these mechanisms;
      - FIC Officials and private sector representatives emphasised the importance of ensuring consultations were linked to progress in the negotiations, and noted that they must be timely if they are to be effective; and
      - The Dialogue supported further discussions at the national and regional levels to better define the “Plus” in PACER Plus.

   b) **noted** that the convening of the proposed NSA workshop by the OCTA in the final quarter of 2012 will be subject to availability of funding.

**SESSION 2 (c): UPDATE ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE CHIEF TRADE ADVISER (OCTA)**

33. The meeting considered the update on the operations of the OCTA.
34. Members noted that the new Chief Trade Adviser will officially take up his post on 1 June 2012. Members thanked Australia and New Zealand for the conclusion of their respective funding agreements with OCTA and for the disbursement of the funds.

35. Members thanked the OCTA for the technical support provided in progressing the PACER Plus negotiations and noted the plans for OCTA to increase its capacity to better support the FICs.

Decisions

36. Forum Trade Ministers:

   a) noted the update on the establishment of the OCTA;

   b) agreed that update on the OCTA should be removed as a standing agenda item at PACER Plus Officials’ Meeting, and other Forum meetings; and

   c) congratulated Dr Edwini Kessie for his appointment as the Chief Trade Adviser to the Forum Island Countries, and thanked Dr Julia Tijaja for the caretaker responsibility assumed in the interim.

SESSION 3: DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS ON TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

37. The meeting noted the consultations and negotiations of trade and economic agreements that are being undertaken by Members.

38. The meeting noted that the Pacific ACP States are ready to conclude a development friendly EPA with the EU in 2012, as directed by the Pacific ACP Leaders. The EPA is expected to contribute towards addressing the unique trade needs and challenges of the Pacific.

SESSION 4 (a) REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE STATUS COMMITTEE ON PACIFIC ISLANDS PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATION’S (PIPSO) REQUEST FOR OBSERVER STATUS AT FTOM/FTMM

39. The meeting considered the report of the Consultative Status Committee on PIPSO’s request for observer status at FTOM/FTMM.

40. Members noted that the importance of private sector engagement in trade negotiations and the implementation of trade agreements. Members also noted the important role of PIPSO in the region.
Decisions

41. Forum Trade Ministers:

   a) **granted** PIPSO an observer status at the FTOM/FTMM on the proviso that PIPSO’s participation at the FTOM/FTMM will be determined by Forum Members;

   b) **agreed** that Members could exclude PIPSO from selected sessions by declaring the sessions ‘closed’;

   c) **agreed** that PIPSO be entitled to participate in the FTOM/FTMM discussions only at the invitation of the Chair, with the concurrence of the meeting; and

   d) **agreed** that PIPSO’s observer status at FTOM/FTMM is contingent on continuing to meet the observership criteria as set out in the PIFS’ Policy on Consultative Status and Accreditation between the PIFS and regional NSAs.

SESSION 4 (b)  NEW CALEDONIA’S REPORT ON WORK UNDERTAKEN TO ACCEDE TO PICTA

42. The meeting considered the update on the work that New Caledonia has undertaken since their announcement to accede to PICTA at the FTMM in May 2011.

43. Members noted the substantial fiscal reforms currently being undertaken in New Caledonia, following which the formal process of accession to PICTA will be pursued. Members encouraged New Caledonia’s eventual accession to PICTA.

SESSION 4(c)  EARLY DISCUSSIONS REGARDING TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

44. The meeting considered an update on the early discussions regarding trade and development agreement with the USA.

45. Members noted the importance of FICs seeking a preferential, non-reciprocal, development orientated broader trade and economic agreement with the USA, and the need to ensure coordination with respective technical agencies.

46. Members noted that engagement in trade negotiations with the USA should be undertaken bearing in mind the limited capacity of the FICs to engage in multiple trade negotiations, and that the current regional integration initiatives should not be compromised.
Decisions

47. Forum Trade Ministers:
   a) noted the update on the preliminary consultations between Pacific Island Countries and the USA;
   b) provided the necessary support to enable Pacific Island Countries to secure a trade and development arrangement as requested by the Pacific Island Leaders; and
   c) directed that the Secretariat formulate a strategy for FICs’ negotiations with the USA on the trade and development agreement with a multi-sector approach, for FICs’ consideration.

SESSION 4(d): ASSESSMENT OF THE TRADE PRIORITY UNDER PACIFIC PLAN

48. The meeting noted an update on assessment of the trade priority under the Pacific Plan.

49. Members discussed the need to renew their individual and collective efforts to achieve the broad and specific trade priorities under the Pacific Plan.

Decisions

50. Forum Trade Ministers:
   a) noted the approach to implementation of a pilot performance framework for the Pacific Plan as noted by Forum Leaders in 2011 and its linkages to regional trade strategies;
   b) noted the role of Trade Ministers in assessing progress under the Pacific Plan;
   c) noted that the Pacific Plan priorities are being reviewed;
   d) noted the draft assessment of progress of the trade priority under the Pacific Plan rated as ‘slow progress and some issues’, which will be included as part of a summary performance report to Leaders on progress against a number of other priorities; and
   e) urged that the performance framework be supplemented with simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound indicators given the complex nature of trade related work that is being progressed under Pacific Plan.
PACIFIC HORTICULTURE AND MARKET ACCESS

51. Members thanked Australia for the funding of the Pacific Horticulture and Market Access (PHAMA) project which has helped Tonga export watermelons to New Zealand. Members encouraged continued support of the project and requested New Zealand to consider supporting the PHAMA initiatives.

IMPORT RESTRICTIONS ON KAVA

52. Members noted Australia’s undertaking to provide a response on its restriction on kava imports prior to the next PACER Plus meeting in November 2012.

NEXT MEETING OF FORUM TRADE MINISTERS

53. The meeting welcomed the invitation by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa for the next Forum Trade Ministers Meeting to be held in Apia.

54. Members thanked Dr Claus Dirnberger of Australia for his attendance in twelve Ministerial meetings. Members also thanked Dr Chakriya Bowman for her contributions as the ex-Director of the Economic Governance Programme.

55. The Chair thanked the Ministers for their participation in the meeting. Ministers congratulated the Chair for the effective management of the meeting, and thanked the RMI for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

Pacific Island Forum Secretariat,
Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands
11 May 2012
FORUM TRADE MINISTERS MEETING (FTMM)

Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands

11 May 2012

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Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat,
Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands
11 May 2012