PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

2026 PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM LEADERS' OCEAN STATEMENT





Photos courtesy: WWF-Pacific and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

Preamble

1. Knowing that our ocean is at the heart of Pacific identities, cultures, livelihoods, food security, health, and economies,

2. Guided by our ocean priorities set under the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* (2050 Strategy), the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Ocean Statements of 2014, 2016, and 2021, and other relevant regional frameworks and instruments,

3. Reaffirming our shared commitment to the rules-based international order founded on the *Charter of the United Nations* and adherence to the *1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements, which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the ocean and seas must be carried out,

4. Embracing our Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge to continue to guide and shape our relationships with the ocean, grounding our ways of living, knowing, and stewarding,

5. Deeply concerned that the ocean is in crisis from the ongoing harm from the Triple Planetary Crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as from overfishing and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, while recognising that our stewardship of the Blue Pacific ocean combats these harms by contributing to global planetary climate stability, global food security, and conservation of some of the world's richest marine biodiversity, including globally significant coral reef ecosystems that underpin Pacific cultures and livelihoods,

6. Recognising fisheries as a cornerstone of food security, livelihoods, economic development, public revenue and cultural identity across the Blue Pacific Continent with our sustainably managed tuna fisheries demonstrating that collective action can deliver both sustainability, increased economic returns and self-reliance for Pacific peoples,

7. Underlining the centrality of peace to the health and resilience of the ocean as outlined in the *Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Ocean of Peace Declaration,*

8. Acknowledging the enduring nuclear legacy faced by Pacific communities and reaffirming our shared commitment to a Pacific free from nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons testing, and the dumping of radioactive waste, as set out in the *1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty* (the Rarotonga Treaty),

9. Recognising that ocean action at all levels must be inclusive of all Pacific peoples, including women and girls in all their diversity, persons with disabilities, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other persons in vulnerable situations, by ensuring their full, equal, inclusive, effective and meaningful participation, leadership, protection, accessibility, and benefit,

10. Positioning this Statement to guide and propel urgent and sustained implementation of ocean action towards the upcoming UNGA81, Pacific Pre-COP and COP31 to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), COP17 to the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), COP1 to the *Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction* (BBNJ Agreement), the fourth United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC), and beyond,



WE, THE LEADERS OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM, THEREFORE:

Strengthened Political Leadership

11. Commit to responsible stewardship of the Blue Pacific ocean in the interests of current and future generations,

12. Commit to strengthened political leadership by convening a Pacific Ocean Ministerial Meeting in advance of the fourth UNOC, as part of a regional preparatory process led by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner and supported by CROP, and the Pacific Ocean Alliance in collaboration with the hosts of the fourth UNOC,

Ocean-Climate-Biodiversity Nexus

13. Seek to strengthen and elevate the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus across multilateral processes including UNFCCC and the *Paris Agreement*, the CBD, and UNCLOS and its implementing agreements, and in national and regional ocean, climate, and biodiversity policies, recognising the importance of integrated ocean governance across sectors,

14. Call on States to join Pacific Islands Forum countries in taking bold and decisive action to close the ambition gap and meet the goals of the *Paris Agreement,* reiterating the vital importance of keeping 1.5°C within reach,

15. Call for the UNFCCC Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue to be strengthened into a more action-oriented implementation forum with more direct connection to UNFCCC decisions,

16. Call on States to take action to address the escalating threat of harm and loss arising from climate change-related sea-level rise, including supporting the *2021 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise* and the *2023 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons Affected by Climate Change-related Sea-level Rise* and cooperating to achieve their purposes, and utilising, as appropriate, the 2024 Advisory Opinion by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea clarifying obligations of all States relating to protection of the marine environment in relation to climate change, and the 2025 Advisory Opinion by the International Court of Justice in respect of States' obligations in relation to climate change,

17. Call for timely ratification and effective implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, ensuring that its operationalisation fully respects the sovereign rights, special circumstances, and capacity constraints of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and is guided by the principle of equity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits, and encourage members to utilize the established regional BBNJ coordination mechanism led by the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner with support from CROP and the Pacific Ocean Alliance, and to support joint initiatives to raise financing for implementation,

18. Commit to the progressive implementation of the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* under the CBD, and ensure and enable effective conservation and management of at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, marine and coastal areas of the Blue Pacific Continent by 2030, through ecologically representative, well-connected, effectively governed and equitably managed protected and conserved areas, including through marine spatial planning,

19. Call on the remaining non-Parties to ratify or accede to regional ocean-related multilateral agreements (the *Noumea Convention,* the *Waigani Convention,* and the *Rarotonga Treaty* and its Protocols), and to join State Parties in achieving their timely and effective implementation across the Blue Pacific Continent,

Fisheries

20. Commit to strengthening the sustainable management and resilience of Pacific fisheries through the *Vakamanu Regional Pacific Fisheries Strategy 2026 – 2035,* while recognising the special circumstances and sovereign rights of SIDS, and calling for the elimination of harmful subsidies, stronger action against IUU fishing activities, and sustained investment in fisheries science and management,

Maritime Transport

21. Commit to advancing a safe, secure, resilient, inclusive, affordable, connected and environmentally sustainable maritime sector through the implementation of the *Pacific One-Maritime Framework 2026–2050,* while recognising the special circumstances and connectivity needs of Pacific SIDS and calling for coordinated and sustained investment in maritime safety and security, resilient infrastructure and services, clean and green shipping, digital transformation, capacity development and equitable maritime connectivity across the Blue Pacific Continent,

Marine Pollution

22. Commit to ambitious action to prevent and eliminate marine pollution, while calling for the timely conclusion and effective implementation of an ambitious, comprehensive, and legally binding global instrument on plastic pollution that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including existing plastic pollution in the marine environment, alongside sustained international support to address legacy wastes and environmental hazards, including marine debris, abandoned or lost drifting Fish Aggregating Devices, unexploded ordnance, shipwrecks and relics of war, and the Runit Dome in the Marshall Islands, consistent with the 2050 Strategy,



Maritime Boundaries

23. Commit to urgently conclude all remaining maritime boundary and extended continental shelf work across the Blue Pacific Continent, and reaffirm that maritime zones, once established in accordance with UNCLOS, shall continue to apply and not be reduced notwithstanding climate change related sea-level rise, thereby securing and protecting our sovereignty, jurisdiction, rights and entitlements for present and future generations,

Deep Sea

24. Commit to member-led regional approaches to deep-sea minerals to strengthen understanding of the deep sea in adherence with UNCLOS, and enhance regional dialogue guided by Pacific values of consensus and respect for national sovereignty, to be informed by ongoing regional consultative processes,

Science, Knowledge, Technology, Innovation and Capacity Building

25. Commit to ensuring our collective understanding of the ocean is based on the best available science and knowledge for informed decision making by strengthening and sustaining long term capacities in relation to science, technology, knowledge, policy and finance, to implement our ambitions for the Blue Pacific Continent,

26. Urge partners to invest in programmes, including the Weather Ready Pacific Programme, that build Pacific capacity and capability in ocean and climate science, drawing on traditional knowledge,

Ocean Finance and 2050 Strategy Means of Implementation

27. Urge that ocean finance in our region be Pacific-led, additional, predictable, long term, flexible, accessible, fit for purpose, equitable, and explicitly reflect the Special Circumstances of SIDS, including direct access modalities, simplified procedures, and financing approaches that uphold national sovereignty and community benefit,

28. Call on international partners to meet their development finance commitments and support Pacific-led financing mechanisms, including

the Pacific Resilience Facility, the Unlocking Blue PacificProsperity initiative, and the East New Britain Initiative's Regional Fisheries Development Fund under development,

29. Commit to piloting ocean conservation and ecosystem service financing instruments that recognise the value of healthy ocean ecosystems for biodiversity, climate resilience, food security, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and economic prosperity, are aligned to our 2021 commitment to sustainable management of 100 per cent of the Blue Pacific ocean both within and beyond national jurisdiction, and designed in ways that ensure Pacific Island countries and communities are clear beneficiaries and that their development aspirations and sovereign rights are supported rather than undermined,

30. Call for sustained investment in sustainable blue economy activities such as fisheries, ocean renewable energy, maritime connectivity, aquaculture and tourism, to reduce emissions and accelerate the clean energy transition, mitigate against losses due to climate change, reduce harmful extraction, provide alternative livelihoods, and support economic development, and

31. Call for greater partnership and coordination through the 2050 Strategy Ocean and Environment Thematic Advisory Group (TAG) and the Pacific Ocean Finance Group under the Pacific Ocean Alliance to strengthen national ocean finance capacities and track ocean investments towards implementation of the 2050 Strategy.

