



PACER Plus

PP.MIN.005/C

MINISTERIAL MEETING: 26 JULY 2023

COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the Ministerial representatives of the Parties to the *Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus*¹ met virtually on 26 July 2023. Our meeting was chaired by the Hon. Crossley Tatui, Minister for Infrastructure and Finance for Niue.

2. We noted the key achievements and progress made by the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and Labour Mobility Secretariat on the delivery of the annual work programme for FY2022-2023. We also noted the impact of these programmes on private sector businesses across the region and the importance of delivering tangible development support that can directly increase Pacific private sector capacity and their ability to participate in regional and international trade.

3. We reaffirm our commitment to working together to realise the benefits of PACER Plus. We further recall our conviction that PACER Plus and its development and economic cooperation programme must be underpinned by our principles, including inclusion, mutually agreed priorities, complementarity on existing regional activities, representing value for money and timely support to Parties' economic recovery.

PACER PLUS MEMBERSHIP AND PROSPECTIVE ACCESSIONS

4. We recognise the increased value of expanding the PACER Plus membership. Advancing regional economic integration will improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of supply chains, increase access to intra-regional and international markets, improve the region's ability to attract foreign investment and realise the development impacts of labour

¹ See Annex 1 for the List of Representatives

mobility. We also acknowledge that increasing the PACER Plus membership can attract higher quality Aid-for-Trade that can help to address development constraints relating to the limited capacities of the public and private sectors, and economic infrastructure and supply chain limitations.

5. We note the interest from Nauru, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Republic of Marshall Islands to ratify PACER Plus. We recognise that these countries are original negotiating parties and PACER Plus provides an expedited accession process following agreement with other Parties of PACER Plus. We task the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and Labour Mobility Secretariat to draft Rules of Procedure to guide the accession of future members, including original negotiating parties, for the consideration of the Group.

MEMBERS' INITIATIVES

6. We shared trade, investment and labour mobility issues and proposed initiatives at the national level, noting the value of exploring synergies across Parties that may be better addressed through streamlined regional activities. We recognise that the implementation of these initiatives and the realisation of the benefits of PACER Plus are highly restricted by constraints in human resources and the technical capacity of both public and private sectors to implement reforms, economic infrastructure to capitalise on opportunities, and the maturity and robustness of supply chains for trade.

LABOUR MOBILITY

7. We note the progress in the delivery of the labour mobility work programme for Financial Year 2022-2023 and endorse the labour mobility activity plan for Financial Year 2023-2024. We recognise that the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and Labour Mobility Secretariat work programme deliver on aspirations from the last PACER Plus Ministerial Meeting in 2022. Labour mobility initiatives to date have contributed directly to the development of a regional and holistic labour mobility policy setting, exploring new labour mobility opportunities including to Pacific labour receiving countries, and ensuring a balanced contribution to improving the lives of Pacific peoples and communities while supporting economic recovery and sustainable socio-economic development.

8. We recognise the value of the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) in facilitating effective regional cooperation and the determination of regional solutions to outstanding issues. We endorse the PLMAM 2022 Outcomes Document and recommit to supporting the implementation of agreed regional initiatives.

9. We acknowledge the role of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat in regional labour mobility and endorse the need for the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and Labour Mobility

Secretariat to work closely to ensure their labour mobility activities are complementary and not duplicated whilst preserving the value of the Arrangement of Labour Mobility for Signatory Parties. We therefore approve a labour mobility update paper to be socialised amongst Members before it is submitted to the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM) 2023 through the Chair of the PACER Plus Ministers Meeting, and for the paper to cover the interoperability between the Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) and the proposed Regional Labour Mobility Strategy developed by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

LOOKING FORWARD

10. We acknowledge the interest of the Government of the United Kingdom to become an informal Strategic Partner of the Agreement in order to provide Parties of PACER Plus technical expertise to support the implementation of the Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme. We note that this assistance does not entail any direct financial assistance to the Work Programme and look forward to discussing this further in the margins of the FTMM.

11. We commend the commitment by Parties to regional integration and to the implementation of the Agreement despite the challenges inherent to our geographical disadvantages and our vulnerability to exogenous economic and social pressures. We recommit to working closely with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit and Labour Mobility Secretariat to implement annual activities in Financial Year 2023-2024 and to better coordinate as a region to increase economies of scale and realise the benefits of increased economic integration.

12. We welcome the agreed process, and Terms of Reference for the General Review of PACER Plus which will provide insight into the progress of implementation of obligations under the Treaty.

13. We look forward to our next meeting in 2024 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 Mackenzi Wichman, Director for International and Trade, Cook Islands**
- (iii) Ms Angoango Fakaua, Trade Promotion Officer, Kiribati**
- (iv) Honourable Rino Tirikatene, Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, New Zealand**
- (v) Honourable Crossley Tatui, Minister of Infrastructure and Finance (Chair), Niue**
- (vi) Mr Henry Tunupopo, Assistant CEO for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa**
- (vii) Mr Barrett Salato, Trade Commissioner, Solomon Islands**
- (viii) Ms Distaquaine Tu'ihalama, CEO for Trade and Economic Development, Tonga**
- (ix) Mr Joe Pakoa Lui, Director of External Trade, Vanuatu**

PIFS Representatives

- (x) Mr Zarak Khan, Director of Programmes & Initiatives**
- (xi) Mr Noah Kouback, Programme Adviser – Trade**