



SUVA + DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Ten years on: the Pacific after the World Court has spoken

**55th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting, 30 August – 4 September 2026,
Koror, Palau**

Preamble

We, the Pacific Elders' Voice (PEV)

Recalling the Suva Declaration on Climate Change of 4 September 2015, together with the sub-regional declarations it recited; the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change Action of 2015; the Boe Declaration of 2018, in which climate change was reaffirmed as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific; the Kainaki II Declaration of 2019, in which our Leaders stated that the science is non-negotiable; and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent;

Recalling in particular the Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones of 6 August 2021, the Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons of 9 November 2023, and the AOSIS Declaration on Sea-Level Rise and Statehood of 23 September 2024, in which our region settled its own law on the ocean and on survival; recalling that ours is a Blue Pacific Continent, ninety-eight per cent ocean, whose peoples depend on that ocean for food, revenue and identity, and the Communiqué of the Fifty-Fourth Pacific Islands Forum;

Recalling that in 2015 our Leaders were obliged to argue for what the world would not then concede: that two degrees was no longer safe for our survival; that loss and damage went beyond adaptation; that adaptation finance for Pacific small island developing States must be one hundred per cent grant-financed; and that decarbonisation required a moratorium on the development and expansion of fossil fuel extracting industries;

Concerned that the decade since has brought continued expansion of fossil fuel production and licensing, subsidies at an all-time high, adaptation finance still delivered in forms that deepen indebtedness, and a Fund for responding to Loss and Damage whose capitalisation bears no defensible relation to the harm it exists to answer; and recalling that the fault lines of this crisis follow the lines of colonial domination and racial inequality;

Noting the Advisory Opinions of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of 21 May 2024, of the International Court of Justice of 23 July 2025, delivered unanimously on a request made at the initiative of Vanuatu and of Pacific young people, and of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; General Assembly resolution 80/263 of 20 May 2026; and the final report of the International Law Commission's Study Group on sea-level rise;



Affirming that the peoples of the Pacific are not petitioners for charity but holders of rights; that compensation owed for harm wrongfully caused is not aid, and is not charity; and that our States are not objects of other States' strategic competition but sovereign equals whose collective voice is the condition of our security;

Imperatives

1. **Cessation.** We call on responsible States to cease the conduct that causes the harm: to cease subsidising fossil fuels; to cease policies supporting the expansion of fossil fuel production; and to cease the continuing under-regulation of emissions from public and private sources under their jurisdiction or control. Cessation is not fulfilled until a State actually ceases to cause further harm.

2. **A phase-out, and a treaty to carry it.** No new fossil fuel exploration or production licences and no expansion of existing production; an end to fossil fuel subsidies, public export finance and other public support for expansion, including through State-owned enterprises and public finance institutions; and the negotiation in good faith of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. This renews, in the form the law now permits, the call made at Suva in 2015.

3. **Contributions** that withstand legal scrutiny. Nationally determined contributions consistent with each Party's highest possible ambition assessed against the 1.5°C goal, with the largest historical emitters and those with the greatest capacity moving first and furthest; the assessment published; and the contribution made binding in domestic law so that it can be enforced.

4. **No false solutions.** The obligation of cessation cannot be discharged by removing greenhouse gases later, or by modifying solar radiation. Guarantees of non-repetition require legal safeguards against the development and deployment of geoengineering. The same precaution governs our own decisions about the deep sea.

5. **Finance as grant, not as debt.** We renew the 2015 demand that adaptation finance for Pacific small island developing States be one hundred per cent grant-financed, and reject the practice of meeting adaptation needs through loans that oblige the least responsible to borrow against the harm done to them. We support the call, made by the African Union before the Court, for debt cancellation or at least debt relief as a form of reparation.

6. **The Fund is not the discharge of the obligation.** Capitalisation of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage at a scale bearing a defensible relation to documented loss and damage; direct access; and recognition of non-economic loss — of land, of burial grounds, of language, of the reef, of the relationships that constitute a people — as compensable harm. Voluntary contributions to that Fund do not negate or replace the obligation of compensation arising from breaches of international law. Compensation is not aid. It is a legal duty owed.

7. **Redress, and the machinery to deliver it.** Cessation, assurances and guarantees of non-repetition, and full reparation. Restitution here is broad: recognition of our sovereignty, statehood, territory and maritime zones; support for adaptive capacity; non-monetary redress for climate-induced mobility; land reclamation where that is possible; and structural change in responsible States. For harms no payment can repair, reparation must also take the forms our own submissions to the Court identified: formal apology, truth-telling and reconciliation on the terms of those who were harmed. We call for an international register of climate-related loss and damage and an international mechanism to process reparation claims, for reparation to be approached as part of a process of historical redress, and for reform of the international economic and financial system.



8. **Mobility with dignity, and never by default.** Pathways of movement that are chosen rather than forced; full respect of non-refoulement; climate mobility agreements and humanitarian pathways that protect those who move and those who remain; measures preventing loss of nationality and statelessness; recognition that migration arrangements are not a substitute for mitigation; and support for the expanded definitions of the refugee in the Cartagena Declaration and the OAU Convention as an evolving norm. No bilateral mobility arrangement should be permitted to function as a settlement of claims that have not been settled.

9. **Statehood and maritime zones affirmed in practice.** Our statehood, sovereignty and membership of international organisations continue, and cannot be challenged under any circumstances of climate change-related sea-level rise. Our maritime zones, once established and notified, shall continue to apply without reduction. We call on all States to give effect to this in their own legislation and practice; on Forum Members to enshrine the 2021 Declaration in national law and conclude outstanding delimitations; on the General Assembly and the States Parties to the Convention to adopt an interpretative statement or subsequent agreement and resolutions affirming continuity of statehood; and on all States to recognise no loss of territory or maritime zones arising from climate change. For several of our States access fees for tuna are the largest single source of public revenue, and restitution has no content unless it secures the continued enjoyment of our established zones.

10. **Accountability** that reaches the companies and the gravest harm. States must regulate the fossil fuel and financial actors within their jurisdiction and control, hold them accountable for the harm they cause at home and abroad, and remove the obstacles that keep affected communities out of their courts. We support the proposal made by Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa to add a crime of ecocide to the Rome Statute.

11. **Participation as equals.** The full, meaningful and equal participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations in every decision that bears on climate, including through intergenerational and inclusive committees in which young people and women take an equal and active part. Where the continuity of statehood is in question, no people may be deprived of it without their free and informed consent.

Pathways

12. **Regional unity** is the first pathway, and the one most under pressure. The strength of the Pacific has never been its size. It has been that we arrive with one position, arrived at collectively and defended without exception. That strength is being tested by an expanding architecture of bilateral arrangements, and by the plain fact that a partner who cannot move the region can still move a capital. We therefore call on our own governments to accept a simple discipline: no bilateral arrangement should commit a Pacific State to less than the region has agreed collectively, and none should be concluded without prior disclosure to the regional body concerned.

13. **The 2026 calendar.** The Forum meets in Palau in early September; the General Assembly's high-level meeting on sea-level rise falls within the general debate of its eighty-first session; the pre-COP is hosted by Fiji from 5 to 8 October with a leaders' event in Tuvalu; COP31 sits in Antalya from 9 to 20 November, with Australia holding the Presidency of Negotiations. Australia is a party to the 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones and to the Falepili Union. A Presidency of Negotiations that has claimed to speak for our region can be held, in public and in detail, to what our region has actually said.

14. **The United Nations follow-up.** The Secretary-General is to report to the General Assembly's eighty-second session on ways to advance compliance, and a follow-up item stands for the eighty-third. We call on Pacific States and the region's institutions to make a coordinated submission

drawn from the demands above, and to treat the report as a compliance instrument rather than a stocktake.

Closing

A decade ago, in Suva our Leaders described what was coming and were told it was premature. The World Court has now said, unanimously, much of what they said then, and the General Assembly has said the rest. The Paris Agreement and the numerous declarations from the Pacific have reinforced the key commitments and issues. We do not present this Declaration as a request to be considered. We present it as a statement of law that binds, of harm that is documented, and of a region that intends to hold both together. We provide this also as a **reminder** for the benefit of not only the current Leaders but our future leaders, the youths, who carry the hopes and aspirations of future generations.

Members, Pacific Elders' Voice



Aote Tong, Chair & Former President, Republic of Kiribati



Thomas "Tommy" Remengesau Jr, Former President, Republic of Palau



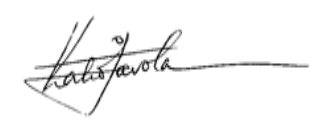
Hon Enele Sopoaga, Former Prime Minister, Tuvalu



Dame Meg Taylor, Former Secretary-General, Pacific Islands Forum



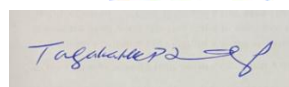
Professor Robert Underwood, Former Member of U.S. Congress & President, University of Guam



Ambassador Kaliopate Tavola, Former Minister and Ambassador, Republic of Fiji



Dr Vijay Naidu, Consultant Professor



Tagaloatele Dr Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Professor Emeritus

The Pacific Elders' Voice is an independent group of Pacific people who have been leaders in the region. Our purpose is to provide guidance and advice that will strengthen Pacific resilience to current and future environmental, security, and human rights threats. We provide constructive policy inputs for current and future challenges and opportunities facing the Pacific.

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