



ENGAGING WITH INTER-GOVERNMENTAL MECHANISMS ON THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Fact Sheet 4 The Pacific Islands Forum

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is the principal political grouping in the region. Established in 1971, the PIF brings together 18 members to collaborate “for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy and productive lives”.

The PIF member States include:

- Australia
- Cook Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- French Polynesia
- Kiribati
- Nauru
- New Caledonia
- New Zealand
- Niue
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Republic of Marshall Islands
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu

All decisions are made by consensus among Pacific Leaders, guided by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

Among PIF members, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have been established in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa and Tuvalu. Other Pacific nations have also expressed strong support for the establishment of an NHRI.

A growing focus on human rights

From the late 1980s, the PIF has gradually incorporated a focus on human rights into its work. This includes support for the ratification of international human rights treaties and establishment of NHRIs in Pacific countries.

1989: A **draft Pacific Charter of Human Rights**, modelled on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, is adopted. However, the initiative is not pursued.

2000: The **Biketawa Declaration** sets out guiding principles on good governance, human rights and common approaches for responding to crises in the region.

2003: The **Auckland Declaration** includes a recommendation to “encourage the development of national human rights machinery”.

2007: The **Pacific Plan** sets out concrete human rights goals, including ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties and standards, and the establishment of a regional ombudsman and human rights mechanisms.

2010: A **Human Rights Advisor** is appointed to encourage human rights treaty ratification, support engagement with UN bodies and mechanisms, and promote the establishment of NHRIs in the Pacific.

2011: The Annual Leaders' **Communiqué** recognises the successful participation of all PIF members in the Universal Periodic Review as a major regional achievement.

2012: Under the **Gender Equality Declaration**, Pacific leaders commit to implement programs that advance gender equality in decision making, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, health and education.

“We value and depend upon the integrity of our vast ocean and our island resources ... We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies. We support full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific.”

Framework for Pacific Regionalism (2014)

How does the PIF work?

The PIF's **Annual Leaders' Retreat** is the peak regional political meeting for political discussions on deeper regional cooperation and integration. Decisions are reached by consensus and outlined in a **Forum Communiqué**, from which policies are developed and a work programme is prepared.

The PIF also convenes other **high-level ministerial meetings**, including meetings of Foreign Ministers, Economic Ministers, Pacific Women Leaders and Forum Trade Ministers.

Based in Suva, the **PIF Secretariat** provides policy advice, coordination and implementation of the PIF Leaders' decisions.

Other inter-governmental regional organisations include the:

- **Pacific Community (SPC)**, which provides policy advice, coordination and ensures the effective implementation of the PIF Leaders' decisions.
- **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)** which is responsible for protecting and managing the environment and natural resources of the Pacific.

Within the SPC, the **Human Rights and Social Development Division** is responsible for preparing policy advice and providing technical support to Pacific governments on a range of themes, including human rights and gender equality.

PIF is leading the development of the [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#), which will complement and strengthen the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. The 2050 Strategy is expected to be presented to Pacific Leaders at the 2022 Leaders Meeting.

Responding to the challenges of climate change

“The Pacific Ocean is at the heart of our Blue Pacific narrative and critical for our future. As Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, custodians of the world’s largest ocean and carbon sink, and representatives of our Pacific peoples, we call for immediate action and not just discussion of ambition.”

Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now

Responding and adapting to climate change has been an urgent priority for PIF Leaders, especially over the past decade. Rising seas, warming oceans and the growing frequency of extreme weather events, such as cyclones, continue to threaten the health, safety and livelihoods of communities across the Pacific. The impacts of a rapidly changing climate also undermine many fundamental human rights.

2012: Leaders support a regional approach to climate change and disaster risk management, which leads to the development of the [Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific](#) (2017-2030).

2018: The [Boe Declaration](#) reaffirms that climate change is the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. Leaders commit to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

2019: The [Kainaki II Declaration](#) calls for the UN to urgently appoint a Special Adviser on climate change and security and a Special Rapporteur to report on the global, regional and national security threats caused by climate change.

2020: The [PIF Foreign Ministers Meeting](#) reaffirmed calls for ambitious climate action, including stronger bilateral, regional and international climate engagements. The Ministers also endorsed the Republic of the Marshall Islands’ proposal for the establishment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change. The PIF Secretariat was tasked with coordinating advocacy at the Human Rights Council.

2021: In October, following sustained advocacy by Pacific governments and others, the [Human Rights Council adopted a resolution](#), establishing a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM
ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR REGION

Established in 1996, the Asia Pacific Forum is a coalition of 25 NHRIs from all corners of the region. We support the establishment and strengthening of independent NHRIs, recognising the powerful role they play to promote and protect human rights across the Asia Pacific.



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