

# ELEVENTH PACIFIC ISLANDS CONFERENCE OF LEADERS

Tuesday - 01 June 2021 | Wednesday - 02 June 2021



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## COMMUNIQUE

The Eleventh Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL) convened for the first time in its 41-year history through a virtual platform via Zoom 1-2 June 2021(HST). Eleven Island Leaders participated.

The following Leaders from Pacific Island governments attended the Conference: Honorable Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands; His Excellency President David W. Panuelo of the Federated States of Micronesia; Special Envoy: His Excellency Ambassador Ratu Inoke Kubuabola of the Republic of Fiji; His Excellency President Edouard Fritch of French Polynesia; Honorable Lourdes Aflague Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam; Honorable David Ige, Governor of the State of Hawai'i; His Excellency Gerald M. Zackios, Ambassador of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United States of America; Honorable Dalton Tagelagi, Premier of Niue; Honorable David Atalig, Secretary of the Department of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; His Excellency, President Surangel S. Whippis Jr. of the Republic of Palau; His Excellency Collin Beck, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Solomon Islands.

In addition to the above leaders, several delegates and observers attended the meetings (refer to Appendix A).

The meetings were convened virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel and gathering restrictions. Prior to 2016, PICL convened on a triannual basis meeting every three years, with annual meetings of the Standing Committee convening between PICL meetings. A five-year gap since the last convening in 2016 necessitated an agenda of this Eleventh PICL as one with the following objectives: 1) to reacquaint the Secretariat of PICL and all member countries; 2) to engage in dialogue with Pacific Leaders on regional issues and concerns; and 3) to determine governance arrangements for PICL and its Secretariat.

### **Proceedings:**

His Excellency President David W. Panuelo of the Federated States of Micronesia served as Interim Chair of the Eleventh PICL. Dr. Mary Therese Perez Hattori, Interim Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP) served as emcee.

On Day 1 of the meetings, a video presentation was offered as opening protocol (available at: <https://youtu.be/MochIIPz5S0>). The Interim Chair, FSM President David W. Panuelo, offered opening remarks followed by pre-recorded opening remarks by Antony J. Blinken, United States (U.S.) Secretary of State and Dr. Richard Vuylsteke, President of the East-West Center (EWC). Opening remarks were followed by agenda items.

The following summarizes the substance and outcomes of the agenda sessions of the PICL over the two-day schedule:

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## Day 1 (1 June)

### Session 1: Preliminary Conference Business

Members reviewed and adopted the agenda without revision. The Chair recognized each member, providing an opportunity for them to introduce themselves and their delegates.

### Session 2: Dialogue on Regional Priorities

The free-flowing discussion was limited to Pacific Leaders and/or their designated representatives with the intent of identifying priorities for their countries that would inform the work of PIDP. There was consensus among all delegates that climate, the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and its long-term impacts, and sustainable economic development and industry innovation were priorities shared universally across the region that are in need of attention and action. In addition, many leaders spoke to shared priorities specific to information and communication technologies, foreign aid and diplomacy, and the protection of ocean resources. National and regional security, health and food security, nuclear legacies, post-pandemic economic and other recovery, and disaster preparedness and management were also raised as priorities among many members.

There was a collective expression of the critical importance of the Pacific Islands Development Program in facilitating ongoing dialogue and action specific to the priorities discussed. Several members acknowledged that PIDP is an organization with vital abilities and obligations to better bridge the Pacific Islands with the United States and other international partners.

### Session 3: Governance Arrangements for the PICL and its Secretariat:

#### *PIDP status report:*

Dr. Hattori provided updates on the status, staffing, and preliminary goals of PIDP in its roles as Secretariat of PICL and as a Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agency. Dr. Hattori outlined immediate priorities as: solidifying PIDP's CROP membership (currently under review); increasing engagement with local, national, and regional partners; restoring consistency to the convening of PICL and its standing committee; and strengthening staffing. Two recently appointed members of the PIDP core senior staff were introduced: Ms. Tolua Samifua, Community Engagement and Development Officer and Dr. James Viernes, Regional Engagement and Development Officer. In addition to these appointments, PIDP has also secured dedicated personnel including a Program Officer, student research partners, four Pacific Islander student assistants, and one intern. There is search in progress for two Oceania Research Fellows (EWC Research Program). Dr. Hattori summarized key achievements of PIDP since December 2020 including increased outreach and partnerships at the local, national, regional, and international levels, greater student engagement, and key collaborations leveraging funding and other support for Pacific-based initiatives.

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## *Secretariat of PICL/Leadership of PIDP:*

Following the presentation of PIDP updates, Dr. Hattori excused herself from the Zoom session temporarily while EWC President Vuylsteke presented a proposal relative to her Interim Director appointment. President Vuylsteke proposed that PICL endorse Dr. Hattori's Interim Director status until the 2025 PICL convening. The period would provide PIDP with stable, capable, and consistent leadership to address its existing challenges and to solidify and begin execution of its strategic plan.

With approval of the proposal, EWC would commit to completing a competitive process to select a permanent Director of PIDP. That process would include consultation with PICL as outlined in the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the EWC and PICL. PICL would be given the opportunity at its 2025 convening to consider candidates for the position of permanent Director of PIDP resulting from search efforts, and to make a decision on possible PICL endorsement of a candidate.

Governor Leon Guerrero of Guam inquired as to whether PICL could make an endorsement of Dr. Hattori as permanent Director of PIDP now, rather than at the end of the proposed period. President Vuylsteke noted that the process and proposed timeframe are designed to provide adequate time and transparency to honor the process outlined in the existing MOU relative to selection and PICL confirmation of the PIDP Director.

**Action:** In a roll call vote, a majority of members voted in favor of the proposal, endorsing Dr. Hattori as Interim Director of PIDP through the 2025 PICL convening. The vote was as follows: Yes – 9; No – 0; Abstain – 2. Honorable Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and His Excellency, President Surangel S. Whipps Jr. of the Republic of Palau were pulled away to other business during the vote. Prime Minister Brown's representative submitted a vote of abstention. His Excellency President Whipps later verbalized regret that he could not submit his vote in favor of the proposal at the appropriate time leading to his vote of abstention.

## *Election of the PICL Chair:*

The Interim Chair opened the floor to nominations for a PICL Chair. Governor Leon Guerrero of Guam nominated His Excellency President David W. Panuelo of the Federated States of Micronesia. Ambassador Kubuabola of Fiji seconded the nomination. Ambassador Zackios of the Marshall Islands moved to close nominations.

**Action:** In a roll call vote, members voted unanimously to elect His Excellency President David W. Panuelo of the Federated States of Micronesia to continue as PICL Chair. The vote was as follows: Yes – 11; No – 0; Abstain – 0.

## *Composition of the PICL Standing Committee:*

The Interim Chair proposed the following:

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1. That all members present be appointed to the Standing Committee.
2. That the Interim Director of PIDP in her capacity as Secretariat of PICL will contact those members not present to seek their permission to be added to the Standing Committee. Upon receiving permission, the Secretariat would add those members to the Standing Committee.
3. That the Secretariat convene the Standing Committee in six months' time to plan the next PICL.
4. That members endorse the offer of the Secretariat, with the support of East-West Center, to host a full PICL convening in Honolulu, Hawai'i in 2022.

**Action:** With no objections to the four actions listed above, the Interim Chair's proposal passed unanimously.

## **Closing Remarks:**

The Interim Chair notified members that a draft communique summarizing the day's discussions and actions would be circulated within a few hours of adjournment. He asked members to read the document closely. The draft communique would be updated following meetings on Day 2, and members would deliberate on its adoption before adjourning.

French Polynesia extended a message of congratulations to the newly elected PICL Chairperson and noted that His Excellency President Edouard Fritch of French Polynesia would attend Day 2 sessions.

## **Day 2 (2 June)**

### **Session 4: Dialogue on regional priorities – focus on climate with Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry**

Dr. Satu Limaye, East-West Center Vice President, moderated the session featuring John Kerry, United States Presidential Envoy for Climate who addressed questions that Pacific leaders submitted in advance of the session. Secretary Kerry acknowledged the previous U.S. administration's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. He discussed several initiatives to rejoin efforts to address the climate crisis that have been developed and executed since the first day of the current administration. Secretary Kerry noted that the U.S. remains committed to investing funding and support into adaptation, mitigation, resilience, and sustainability efforts in the Pacific and globally. He noted that the top six banks in the U.S. have pledged to invest \$4.16 trillion on a commercial basis over the next 10 years to support efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. There are ongoing efforts to work with development banks, philanthropists, and others to increase funding. Secretary Kerry spoke to integrated critical infrastructure, acknowledging the challenges in reducing emissions in airline and shipping industries upon which Pacific economies are heavily reliant. Secretary Kerry addressed questions related to building more climate resistant economies in the Pacific, as well as questions related to increasing production locally and regionally. He emphasized the need for the U.S. to look to its Pacific Islands companions as critical partners whose participation and contributions to addressing the climate crisis are essential.



His Excellency President Panuelo offered closing remarks as Chair of PICL. He thanked Secretary Kerry for his time. The Chair spoke to the importance of democracy and democratic processes in addressing the climate crisis. He urged the U.S., PIDP, and the East-West Center to consider this importance in all of its efforts and activities related to the Pacific Islands.

### **Session 5: Discussion and Adoption of the Communiqué**

PICL members were provided a draft of the communiqué summarizing the discussions and outcomes of all meetings. Requests for revisions and corrections were offered as follows:

His Excellency Ambassador Zackios noted a correction to Session 3: Governance Arrangements for the PICL and its Secretariat, *PIDP Status Report* (page 3, line 7): “personal” should be corrected to “personnel.”

His Excellency President Fritch requested a revision to Session 4: Dialogue on regional priorities – focus on climate with Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry (page 5, line 4): Revise “to mitigate temperature increase” to “to limit temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”

PIDP staff will conduct a final review to identify and correct minor typos or spelling errors.

Dr. Hattori assured the membership that all suggestions for revisions and corrections received in Session 5 and in email messages received before the close of business would be addressed. Delegation lists provided in Appendix A will also be confirmed and finalized. A final communiqué will be distributed shortly after all revisions, corrections, and updates are complete. Dr. Hattori further noted that more copious notes had been taken during proceedings, and a fuller summary of the meetings to supplement the communiqué is forthcoming.

The Chair and several leaders thanked PIDP for its swift work in producing an accurate and well-written summary capturing the substance of activities and sessions.

With no further discussion or objections, the communiqué was adopted as revised.

### **Closing Remarks:**

His Excellency President Panuelo addressed leaders noting the challenging times ahead. He spoke to the importance of PIDP and PICL in remaining united to face changes ahead. He extended his deep appreciation for being given the honor of serving as Interim Chair for the 11<sup>th</sup> PICL, and his ongoing gratitude for the confidence of the leaders in electing him Chair moving forward. As Chair, he thanked all leaders for the frank and free-flowing exchange of ideas during the Dialogue on Regional Priorities.

The PICL Chair offered substantive comments on the importance of regionalism, encouraging the body to embrace the “Pacific Way” as one in which Pacific governments and peoples come together as one

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Pacific family. He encouraged PICL to unite in its support and prayers for a peaceful and orderly transition of power in the Independent State of Samoa as they navigate their current constitutional and political conflicts. He noted that the Pacific Way must be applied to PICL organizing and activities as the conference embodies regionalism and constitutes one of the largest and most inclusive in the region through which both sovereign nations and territories can cooperate and mutually support each other.

On behalf of PICL, the Chair thanked PIDP and East-West Center President Richard Vuylsteke for their efforts to revitalize PICL, noting the success and very productive nature of the proceedings. Congratulations were offered to Governor Ige whose home state of Hawai‘i will host the 2022 PICL.

Following the closing remarks, several leaders expressed their thanks to His Excellency President Panuelo for his leadership in successfully chairing the 11<sup>th</sup> PICL, and extended their congratulations to him as the PICL Chair-elect.

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## APPENDIX A: LIST OF DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS

### **Cook Islands**

Honourable Mark Brown  
Prime Minister

Mr. Tingika Elikana, M.P.  
Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Ms. Tapaeru Herrmann  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Dr. Jim Gosselin  
Director, Pacific and Regional Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Ms. Mackenzi Wichman  
Foreign Affairs Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

### **Federated States of Micronesia**

His Excellency David W. Panuelo  
President

Mr. Kandhi Elieisar  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Joses Gallen  
Secretary of Justice

Mr. Andrew Yatilman  
Secretary of Department of Environment, Climate Change & Emergency Management

Mr. Carlson K. Apis  
Secretary of Transportation Communication & Infrastructure

Mr. Eugene Amor  
Secretary of Finance & Administration

Mr. Akillino Susaia  
FSM Ambassador to the United States

Mr. Eugene Pangelinan  
National Oceanic Resource Management Administration



**Federated States of Micronesia, continued**

Leo A. Falcam, Jr.  
Chief of Staff/ Negotiator

Mr. Marcus Samo  
Acting Secretary of Health and Social Affairs

Mr. Wayne Mendiola  
Acting Secretary of Education

Ms. Elina Akinaga  
Acting Secretary of Resources & Development

Mr. Joe Enlet  
Consul General in Portland

Ms. Teresa Filepin  
Consul General in Guam

Henry Shrew  
Acting Consul General in Honolulu

Mr. Lorin S. Robert  
Special Advisor to President/Foreign Affairs

Mr. Richard Clark  
Special Assistant to President/Public Information Officer

Mr. James Naich  
Consultant

**Fiji**

Ambassador Ratu Inoke Kubuabola  
Special Envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum

Mr. Esala Nayasi  
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Jonetani Tagivetaua  
Director Oceania and Americas Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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## **French Polynesia**

Mr Edouard Fritch  
President

Mr. Yvonnick Raffin  
Ministry of Finance

Mr. Manuel Terai  
Permanent Secretary for International, European, & Pacific Affairs

Mr. Engel Raygadas  
Deputy Permanent Secretary for International, European & Pacific Affairs

Mr. Maurice Lau Poui Cheung  
Pacific Division Director

Mrs. Mareva Lechat-Kitalong  
Pacific Division

## **Guam**

The Honorable Lourdes Aflague Leon Guerrero  
Governor

Carlotta A. Leon-Guerrero  
Chief Advisor on Military & Regional Affairs for Governor Leon Guerrero

## **Hawai'i**

Mr. David Y. Ige  
Governor

Ms. Dawn Amano-Ige  
First Lady

Ms. Suzanne Case  
Director Department of Land and Natural Resources

Mr. Scott Glenn  
State Energy Officer

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## **Marshall Islands**

His Excellency Gerald M. Zackios  
Ambassador to the United States

Viola Milne-Zackios  
Minister Counselor

## **Niue**

Honorable Dalton Tagelagi  
Premier of Niue

Ms. Peleni Talagi  
Secretary of Government

Ms. Kalavatagaloa Morrissey  
Executive Assistant and Advisor to the Premier

## **Northern Mariana Islands**

Mr. Ralph DLG. Torres  
Governor

Mr. Arnold I. Palacios  
Lt. Governor

Mr. Anthony T. Benavente  
Secretary, Department of Lands and Natural Resources

BJ Nicholas  
Chief of Staff for Lt. Governor Arnold Palacios

Mr. Eli Cabrera  
Secretary, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality

Mr. David Atalig  
Secretary, Department of Finance

Mr. Edward M. Deleon Guerrero  
Secretary, Department of Commerce



**Northern Mariana Islands, continued**

Mr. Robert H. Hunter  
Senior Policy Adviser – Office of the Governor

Ms. Janina Maratita  
Policy Analyst – Office of the Governor

**Republic of Palau**

His Excellency Surangel S. Whipps Jr.  
President

Ms. Landisang Kotaro  
Chief of Staff, Office of the President

**Solomon Islands**

Mr. Collin Beck  
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

Mrs Janice Mose Kemakeza  
Assistant Secretary, Pacific and Regional Organisations Branch, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and External Trade

Ms Madolyn Yalu  
Senior Desk Officer (Ag), Pacific and Regional Organisations Branch, Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs and External Trade

**OBSERVERS:**

**Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat**

Mr. Henry Puna  
Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum

Mr. Sione Tekiteki,  
Director Governance and Engagement

Mr. Alifeleti Soakai  
Political Issues Adviser

Ms. Beth Sargent  
Regional & International Partnerships Adviser

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## **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, continued**

Mr. Exsley Taloiburi  
Team Leader – Resilience

Ms. Nikola Komailevuka  
Executive Coordination Officer

## **U.S. Department of State**

Dr. Patrick Kelly  
Acting Pacific Regional Unit Chief, Office of Australia, New Zealand, & Pacific Island Affairs (ANP),  
Bureau of East Asian & Pacific Affairs (EAP)

Jillian Bonnardeaux  
East-West Center Diplomat In Residence

## **East-West Center**

Dr. Richard Vuylsteke  
President

## **Pacific Islands Development Program**

Dr. Mary Therese Hattori  
Interim Director

Dr. James Perez Viernes  
Regional Engagement & Development Officer

Tolua Samifua  
Community Engagement & Development Officer

Lori Ann Concepcion  
Program Officer

## **Communications & External Relations**

Jake Hamstra  
Chief Communications Officer

Jill Hamasaki  
Marketing & Events Director



**Communications & External Relations, continued**

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Events Manager

Diliaur Tellei  
Digital Communications Developer

Janelle Kalawe-Ching  
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