



## REGIONAL FISHERIES MINISTERS MEETING

*Virtual*  
**26 - 27 August 2020**

### ***Statement of Outcomes from the First Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM1)***

1. The Honourable Prime Minister of the Cooks Islands and Ministers representing Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Niue, Samoa and Solomon Islands held a virtual meeting on 26 and 27 August 2020 as the first annual Pacific Islands Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting (RFMM).
2. French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Vanuatu were represented at senior official level.
3. Ministers welcomed the participation and support of CROP partners FFA, PIFS, SPC, SPREP and USP as well as the PNA Office.

#### ***Ministerial Chair***

4. Ministers thanked FSM for its commitment to stay on as Chair of RFMM during 2020 and welcomed the FSM Secretary of Resources and Development, Honourable Marion Henry, as Chair of the RFMM.

#### ***High level considerations***

5. Ministers emphasised the timeliness of this inaugural Regional Fisheries Ministers Meeting given the critical importance of coastal fisheries and the health of ocean ecosystems to the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of Pacific peoples, especially during times of crisis.
6. Ministers further highlighted the importance of coastal fisheries to food security and nutrition, community resilience, economic growth and employment, poverty alleviation and women's empowerment, which cannot be understated. Coastal fisheries will be critical to recovery from COVID-19 impacts, which has highlighted the specific vulnerabilities of SIDS economies, and the need to diversify opportunities in marine resource management more broadly, to support economic growth and diversification. Ministers highlighted the threats and challenges from increasing levels of fishing, the ongoing adverse impacts of climate change, and damaging environmental impacts including marine pollution.

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7. Ministers expressed concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the sustainable management of coastal fisheries and ecosystems, particularly in relation to food and nutritional security and livelihoods. Ministers highlighted the need to be mindful of the longer-term consequences on future generations of decisions taken at this time.
8. Ministers emphasised the important role that regional cooperation will continue to play in addressing our immediate challenges in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as ongoing challenges such as IUU fishing, inclusive of coastal fisheries. In this regard, Ministers expressed appreciation for the support from the Government of Australia in relation to the aerial surveillance programme.
9. Ministers stressed the importance of data collection, analysis and validation for development of evidence based economic and social impact assessments of COVID-19 on national economies. Such analyses will be critical for informing management responses in relation to fisheries.

### ***Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture***

#### *Outcomes of the 12th SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting*

10. Ministers stressed the broad and deep impacts of COVID-19 on coastal fisheries and communities, and acknowledged the increased importance of sustainable community based fisheries management for long-term recovery. Ministers called for ongoing action and increased collaboration among CROP agencies to respond to COVID-19. Ministers supported the need for further understanding of the impacts of COVID-19 among members and resulting member needs, including resources and capabilities within PICTs to respond, and longer-term strategies for sustainable resource management and economic recovery.
11. Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 12th SPC Heads of Fisheries (HoF) meeting and supported the focus and actions taken in relation to the impacts of COVID-19.
12. Ministers highlighted the importance of aquatic biosecurity for the Pacific Islands region, in particular for aquaculture, as outlined in the policy brief, and, in the recovery from COVID-19. Ministers endorsed the Regional Framework on Aquatic Biosecurity developed by SPC and officials through the Regional Technical Meeting on Coastal Fisheries (RTMCF) and HoF.

#### *Coastal Fisheries Report Card*

13. Ministers recognised progress made towards the goals embedded in the Future of Fisheries Regional Roadmap as reported in the Coastal Fishery Report Card. Ministers reflected with deep concern on the results that signaled a decline in the status of key indicator invertebrate and finfish species, and reef and ecosystem

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health, which have direct impacts on livelihoods and food security, and called for the strengthening of coastal fisheries management.

14. Ministers supported the development of an interactive dashboard to explore national level data and facilitate national level reporting, and link to SDG indicators. Ministers identified data gaps and urged the need for further research to measure change over time for several outcomes.

### *Coastal Fisheries Working Group Review*

15. Ministers welcomed the completion of the review of the Coastal Fisheries Working Group and the proposed new mechanism for increasing the engagement of non-state actors, to give effect to the Leaders' 2016 decision on coastal fisheries, and as requested by the Special RFMM.
16. Ministers endorsed the proposal to hold a two-day community-based fisheries (CBF) session incorporated within the annual RTMCF to better engage non-state actors in coastal fisheries. Ministers also endorsed the proposal for the first CBF session within the RTMCF to be convened, as recommended by HoF12, with the final chairing and meeting arrangements to be agreed by participants at that first session and confirmed by HoF.

### ***Climate Change and Fisheries***

17. Ministers welcomed the regional update on climate change and fisheries presented by SPREP and commended the collaboration of CROP agencies.
18. Ministers emphasised that maritime boundaries were critical in establishing enduring sovereign management and use rights to ocean resources and encouraged all members to delimit and deposit all outstanding boundaries to secure and protect our Blue Pacific, and tasked PIFS, FFA and SPC to continue this support to Members.
19. Ministers called on FFA, PNAO, and SPC to work with Members and other relevant CROP organisations to develop an advocacy strategy relevant to the fisheries sector to enhance high level messaging at the UNFCCC and related meetings to advance measures to address the impacts of climate change on fisheries in the region.
20. Ministers tasked FFA, SPREP, SPC, PIFS, PNAO and USP to explore opportunities for partnerships and collaboration between fisheries and climate change focal points and to provide a platform for stakeholders to inform on progress with respect to planning and implementation of climate change adaptation in the region.
21. Ministers welcomed the development of the Climate Change Capacity Building Programme for the fisheries sector through the Pacific Climate Change Centre

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(PCCC) and available resources to facilitate mainstreaming in the fisheries sector of climate change and specific impacts such as ocean acidification.

22. Ministers encouraged engagement by the fisheries sector in the relevant processes at the national level such as the development of National Adaptation Plans, Green Climate Fund Country Programmes and their implementation.
23. Ministers supported in-country coordination and regional collaboration to develop shared strategies to exchange knowledge, research, training, technological advances, and good managerial practices in strengthening climate resilience and reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs) from the fisheries sectors at national and regional levels.

### ***Marine Pollution and Ecosystem issues of importance for Pacific Fisheries***

24. Ministers tasked FFA, PNA Office, SPC and SPREP to collaborate closely to advise Members in relation to the following WCPFC-related matters; (i) improved data collection and reporting of cetacean bycatch events; and, (ii) effective implementation of the Conservation and Management Measure CMM 2011-03 for the Protection of Cetaceans from Purse Seine Fishing Operations and Conservation and Management Measure 2017-04 on Marine Pollution.
25. Ministers supported improvements in Pacific port waste reception facilities to enable them to receive fishing vessel waste on shore.
26. Ministers tasked fishery agencies and CROP agencies to engage in cross-sectoral management and conservation of coral reefs through development and implementation of the Pacific Regional Coral Reef Action Plan.
27. Ministers expressed concern in relation to the beaching of FADs and the impact of abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, especially on coastal fisheries and coral reefs, and called for collaborative action to address this issue. Ministers supported the ongoing progress in collection of FAD tracking data by the PNA Office as an important step in this regard.
28. Ministers recognised the importance of addressing plastic pollution and called for regional action, in line with the Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025.

### ***2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent***

29. Ministers welcomed the progress on development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and strongly encouraged the continued support of Members in this work.