



18th September, 2018 [TONGAN](#) The Prime Minister, Hon Samuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, today said that he was pleased with the outcomes of the 49th Pacific Islands Forum Meeting that was held in Nauru from the 3rd to the 6th of September.

The Hon Prime Minister said, “I am pleased with the Forum Communiqué which the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders had discussed during the Leaders’ Retreat. The discussions were lengthy, thorough, and at times difficult, but in the end the Leaders were satisfied with the Communiqué which was approved by consensus.”

The Hon Prime Minister said that the discussions regarding ‘Climate Change and Disaster Resilience’ was perhaps the most difficult with some Leaders wanting to include stronger language whilst others were opposed so what was agreed to in the end was a compromise. He also added, “Despite the differences the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders were united and unanimous in calling on the United States of America to return to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change”

The Hon Prime Minister also referred to the adoption by the Leaders of the Boe Declaration as another major achievement of the 49th PIF. He said, “Through the Boe Declaration the Leaders asserted the sovereign right of every PIF member country to conduct its national affairs free of external interference and coercion and reaffirmed the right of every PIF member government to individually and collectively address security issues and concerns”. The Leaders also affirmed an expanded concept of security, both traditional and non-traditional, with increasing emphasis on Human Security, Environment and Resource Security, Transnational Crime and Cybersecurity.

The Hon Prime Minister had made two presentations during the Leaders' Retreat. The first was on behalf of the Pacific Islands Sports Ministers Meeting which called on the Pacific Leaders to support the establishment of the Pacific Islands Sports Ministers Secretariat in Tonga; the review of the Pacific Games Charter and the Host Agreement with the Pacific Games Council and; the development of a new operational and funding model for the Pacific Games. The Leaders 'noted' the decisions of the Pacific Islands Sports Ministers in the Forum Communiqué.

His second presentation was on Tonga's offer to host the 2021 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting. Tonga had hosted the Pacific Islands Forum on three occasions – 1975, 1988 and 2007. Australia and Fiji had also offered to host PIF in 2021. The Hon Prime Minister had discussed Tonga's offer in his bilateral meeting with the head of Australia's delegation to Nauru, Hon. Marise Payne, (Minister for Foreign Affairs), prior to the Leader's Retreat, and Australia had indicated that it would withdraw its offer to host but it would be up to the Leaders to decide the final hosting country. Australia confirmed its withdrawal during the Retreat but in the end the Leaders did not make a decision on who will host in 2021. But they confirmed that Tuvalu will host in 2019 and Vanuatu in 2020.

Throughout the various meetings of the 49th Pacific Islands Forum and in his bilateral meetings with the delegations of other PIF member countries the Hon Prime Minister and the Tongan delegation also took the opportunity to lobby regarding Tonga's bid to have the PACER Plus Implementation Unit established in Nuku'alofa. A decision on that is yet to be made by Pacific Islands Forum member countries who are party to the PACER Plus Agreement.

The Hon Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance, Hon Pohiva Tui'onetoa and Minister for Commerce, Consumer, Trade, Innovation & Labour, Hon Dr. Tu'i Uata, also held bilateral meetings with the EU delegation, Norwegian delegation, German Delegation, Australian delegation and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General.

The bilateral meeting with the EU delegation included the signing and finalisation of the Financing Agreement on the assistance to Tonga's national work program of 11.99 million Euros to facilitate the cost of the Energy Sector Policy and Strategy, Public Financial Management, Macro-Economic Stability and Transparency and Good Governance Programmes.

The bilateral meeting with the Norwegian delegation included the confirmation of Norway's assistance of US\$2 million to Tonga for the establishment of the Pacific Centre for Renewable

Energy that had been set up in Tonga by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The bilateral meeting with the delegation from Germany, confirmed assistance to Tonga's Climate Change and Security programme as well as financial assistance to the Tonga Maritime Poly-Technical Institute.

In the bilateral meeting with Australia the Tongan delegation was, amongst other things assured of the on-going commitments from Canberra including the assurance that Tonga was in line for inclusion in the new Pacific Labour Scheme that will allow for semi-skilled workers from Tonga to work temporarily in Australia.

In the bilateral meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu reassured the Hon Prime Minister of the commitment of the UN agencies to continue and increase their various programmes of assistance to Tonga. The Hon Prime Minister thanked Fekitamoeloa for all her good work at the United Nations as the Under-Secretary General for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. He said that the Tongan Government was very proud of her work.

The Hon Prime Minister and delegation were also hosted for dinner by the Tongan community in Nauru on the evening of 4 September. The Tongan community in Nauru is led by Dr. Sililo Tomiki, former Chief Dental Officer with our Ministry of Health, and assisted by Vili Malupo, who ran Rainbow Bakery in Nuku'alofa as well as Semisi Ma'u, an ex-student from Tupou College who had been taken to Nauru by Rev Feke Kamitoni to teach music to Nauru's church choirs and brass bands. The gathering was most enjoyable and the Hon Minister for Finance on behalf of the Prime Minister and delegation thanked Dr. Sililo Tomiki and the Tongan community for their hospitality.

**ENDS**

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