

**The Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8)**  
**Leaders' Declaration**  
**Iwaki, Fukushima, Japan**  
**18-19 May 2018**

**Overview**

1. Leaders and representatives of Japan and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Members including Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Fiji, French Polynesia, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (hereinafter referred to as the “Leaders”) met in Iwaki, Fukushima, Japan on 18 and 19 May 2018, for the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM8). The Leaders expressed their appreciation to the co-chairs, Prime Minister Abe of Japan and Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi of Samoa, current Chair of the PIF, for leading PALM8 to a success. The Leaders welcomed the first participation of French Polynesia and New Caledonia in the PALM as full Members of the PIF.
2. The Leaders also expressed their appreciation to Fukushima Prefecture and Iwaki-City for their warm hospitality. The Leaders welcomed and supported the steady progress on reconstruction of Fukushima Prefecture and Iwaki City from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.
3. The Leaders conveyed deepest condolences and sympathy to all the people who have been affected by the recent disasters in the Pacific, including the devastating earthquakes in Papua New Guinea, the volcanic eruptions in Vanuatu, and Tropical Cyclones Gita, Keni and Josie, which have affected Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji. Leaders expressed strong solidarity with all those who are confronting the far-reaching consequences of these extreme events.

**PALM Process and Strategic Vision for an Enduring Partnership**

4. The Leaders renewed their strong commitment to the robust partnership between Japan and the PIF Members, a partnership underpinned by historic bonds and mutual trust. The Leaders appreciated the significant role which the PALM process has played for over two decades in providing a platform upon which this partnership has been continuously strengthened. The Leaders reaffirmed their determination to strengthen their collective efforts to enhance this important partnership and the PALM process through dialogue and cooperation to better meet the evolving opportunities and challenges of the region. The Leaders welcomed Australia and New Zealand's acknowledgement of the centrality of the Forum Island Countries (FIC) to the PALM

dialogue with Japan.

5. The Leaders affirmed that long-term efforts to shape their partnership through the PALM process will be guided by the following shared vision:
  - *Maintaining stability through rules-based order* : commitment to the respect for sovereignty, rule of law, and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law;
  - *Pursuit of enduring prosperity*: self-sustained and sustainable economic development underpinned by open markets and facilitation of trade and investment, strengthened connectivity and enhanced resilience of societies;
  - *Strengthening the flow of and exchanges between peoples*: active people-to-people exchanges to enhance mutual understanding, assist development and invigorate economic activities; and,
  - *Supporting regional cooperation and integration*: advancement of robust regional institutions, with a view to greater regional cooperation and integration.
6. The Leaders emphasized the importance of the leadership and ownership of PIF Members in shaping the future of the Pacific Islands Forum region. Japan acknowledged the commitment of the PIF Members to regional cooperation and collective action, as articulated in the “Framework for Pacific Regionalism”, to realise the vision of the PIF Leaders for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity. Japan acknowledged the commitment of the PIF Leaders to their shared stewardship and collective approach as the ‘Blue Pacific’ to ensuring regional security, prosperity and the environmental integrity of the Pacific Ocean.
7. Prime Minister Abe expressed the unwavering determination of the Government of Japan to continue supporting the FICs in areas that best reflect their needs, utilizing means that leverage Japan’s strength. The FIC Leaders expressed appreciation for Japan’s long-standing record of consistent fulfillment of its commitments.
8. The Leaders recognised the importance of making continuous efforts to expand and deepen relations between Japan and the PIF Members, through enhanced dialogue and engagement, including through high-level mutual visits which serve to strengthen bilateral relationships. The PIF Leaders highly valued Japan’s enhanced diplomatic presence in the region over the past years.
9. Prime Minister Abe took note of the important role of sub-regional efforts in addressing common challenges of respective sub-regions and expressed his intention to pursue closer coordination with such efforts.

### **Maritime Order based on the Rule of Law, and Sustainability of Ocean**

#### **Resources**

10. The Leaders underscored the importance of a free, open, and sustainable maritime

order based on the rule of law in the Pacific and acknowledged that it will contribute to peace, stability, resilience and prosperity of the region. In this regard, the PIF Leaders welcomed Japan's active and constructive contribution to cooperation and development in the Pacific region, including through new initiatives such as its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," which consists of three pillars: (a) promotion and establishment of the rule of law and freedom of navigation; (b) pursuit of economic prosperity through strengthening connectivity; and (c) commitment to peace and stability such as cooperation in the fields of maritime safety and disaster risk reduction.

11. The Leaders reiterated the importance of all states respecting international law including freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the seas. They also emphasised the importance of states making and clarifying their territorial and maritime claims based on international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and exercising self-restraint and resolving disputes by peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force.
12. The Leaders reaffirmed their intention to closely coordinate in the area of maritime security and safety to ensure a maritime order based on the rule of law in the Pacific Ocean. The Leaders reiterated the importance of capacity building for the FICs in the areas of maritime safety and maritime law-enforcement, including border control and protection. In this context, Prime Minister Abe announced the launch of a capacity building program for the FICs on maritime law enforcement and on implementation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions regarding North Korea, which will be implemented in coordination with FICs and their established institutions and frameworks.
13. The Leaders emphasised that states have the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment and to take necessary measures to protect and preserve rare or fragile ecosystems as well as the habitats of depleted, threatened or endangered species and other forms of marine life.
14. The Leaders reiterated the critical importance of integrated approaches to sustainable development, management and conservation of the ocean and its resources, to promote sustainable economic development and ensure food security.
15. The Leaders recognised the importance of science-based management of fishery resources, taking account of relevant environmental and economic factors. Taking note of the latest scientific fisheries stock assessments by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Leaders reaffirmed their intention to continue cooperation in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to ensure sustainable use of highly migratory species, such as tuna, billfish and pelagic shark stocks,

including identifying possible opportunities for development of joint proposals on issues of key importance.

16. Building on the long-standing record of collaboration in the field of fisheries, the Leaders reaffirmed the importance of the enduring cooperative relationship that aims to develop fisheries including through mutually beneficial fishing arrangements, as appropriate, between Japan and the PIF Members that ensure the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Pacific. In this context, Japan noted the commitment of the PIF Leaders in implementing zone based management within their Exclusive Economic Zones in accordance with international law including UNCLOS to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries.
17. The Leaders expressed their commitment to deepening cooperation on monitoring control and vessel surveillance (MCS), taking into account existing MCS frameworks in the region, in order to eradicate and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which undermines a major source of revenue for the FICs and threatens the sustainability of fisheries stocks.
18. The Leaders emphasized the importance of developing an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) under UNCLOS which does not undermine relevant existing legal instruments and frameworks as well as relevant global, regional and sectoral bodies.
19. Prime Minister Abe announced Japan's intention to implement capacity building measures, implemented in collaboration with FICs and their established frameworks and institutions as appropriate, for 500 people for the next 3 years to assist the FICs to ensure free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, and sustainability of ocean resources in the region.

### **Strengthening the Basis for Resilient and Sustainable Development**

20. The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to continuing cooperation towards the universal implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway," the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. The Leaders acknowledged the efforts by the PIF Members and regional agencies to progress the region's implementation of these commitments through the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development.
21. The Leaders shared the view that efforts to achieve resilient and sustainable development will require addressing climate change with a sense of urgency. Given the existential threat and pressing contemporary security challenges that climate change

poses to the future of the region, especially for island countries, the Leaders:

- expressed their intention to strengthen their leadership role in international negotiations to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue the efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
- reiterated their firm commitment to finalising the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at COP 24 in 2018;
- committed to participating actively in the Talanoa Dialogue process, and to sharing knowledge for achieving the commitments of all Parties to the Paris Agreement;
- stressed the importance of continued efforts, including investments, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy efficiency and the effective use of renewable energy in the FICs to increase their energy ratios; and
- underscored the necessity to mobilise financial support for climate change action, that is commensurate with the needs of the FICs, from a wide variety of sources, including through simplified and improved access to climate finance and through mobilizing private sector investment.

22. The Leaders reaffirmed the importance of strengthening efforts to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction considerations into resilient development, and acknowledged the initiative of the PIF in endorsing the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.
23. The Leaders shared views that climate change is one of the most pressing contemporary security challenges especially for island countries as stated in the Majuro Declaration, and that the UN system, including the UNSC, should address these challenges. In this regard, the PIF Leaders welcomed Japan's initiative as the President of the UNSC in December 2017 to host an open debate on "the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Addressing Complex Contemporary Challenges to International Peace and Security".
24. The Leaders welcomed the accreditation of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board, and the accreditation of Secretariat of the Pacific Environmental Programme (SPREP) as a Regional Implementing Entity for the GCF and the Adaptation Fund. The PIF Leaders welcomed Japan's commitment to continuing comprehensive support in tackling the challenges posed by climate change, and encouraged continued contributions to the GCF.
25. Prime Minister Abe expressed Japan's intention to support the FICs' efforts to achieve low carbon development such as through continued implementation of the "Hybrid

Island Programme.”

26. The PIF Leaders welcomed continued assistance by Japan towards the construction of the Pacific Climate Change Center (PCCC), and the development of capacity building programs to be offered through the PCCC.
27. The Leaders shared the views on the vulnerability of the Pacific region to natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, floods and typhoons/ cyclones, and stressed the necessity of enhancing cooperation on disaster risk reduction, especially for building resilience. The Leaders reiterated the importance of sharing lessons learned from past experiences in disasters, and the need for continued collaboration, welcoming initiatives such as the gender-based training on Women in Disaster Management.
28. Prime Minister Abe committed to continue extending humanitarian assistance/disaster relief in times of crisis triggered by natural hazards in the region. The PIF Leaders welcomed this assistance from Japan, including to the countries recently affected by disaster events. The Leaders also welcomed various initiatives under “World Tsunami Awareness Day” on 5 November.
29. In reaffirming the importance of sustainable development, management and conservation of environment, the Leaders:
  - expressed their commitment to comprehensive and integrated efforts to address environmental issues, including promotion of environmentally sound waste management and 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) policies, conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development of natural resources;
  - stressed the need for all Pacific Rim countries to take active steps to conserve the marine environment including through prevention and reduction of marine litter, in particular plastics, in the Pacific Ocean; and
  - recognised the importance of addressing the increasingly serious problems associated with shipwrecks and particularly those in the PIF Members affected by shipwrecks and unexploded ordnance from World War II.
30. The Leaders noted the value of the Japanese Technical Cooperation Project for Promotion of Regional Initiative on Solid Waste Management in Pacific Island Countries (J-PRISM) in sustainably managing waste on the islands and reducing land-based sources of pollution to the marine environment. The Leaders also acknowledged the outcome of the recommendation and capacity building on sustainable management of coral reefs and coastal ecosystems in Palau through Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS) and its potential to be adopted by other FICs.
31. The Leaders shared the view that efforts to achieve resilient and sustainable development will also require enhanced cooperation in the fields of: health, including

areas of infectious and non-communicable diseases; education; gender; information communication technology (ICT) ; trade and investment; and tourism. In this regard:

- The Leaders stressed the importance of cooperation to elevate the quality of medical services and the welfare of the people of the FICs and to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage through access to better diagnostics, better screening, essential medicines and medical equipment, and human resource development;

- The FIC Leaders welcomed Japan's assistance in the area of ICT through the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and looked forward to further cooperation in this area;

- The Leaders expressed their intention to redouble their efforts to promote trade and investment, including those by Small and Medium Enterprises, and welcomed the efforts by the Pacific Islands Centre (PIC), the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and all trade and investment related bodies of the FICs;

- The FIC Leaders welcomed Japan's effort to dispatch business missions to the region and Japan's hosting of the Japan-PIC Economic Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> May in Tokyo. The FIC Leaders further reiterated their resolve to continue efforts to improve the business environment; and

- The FIC Leaders welcomed Japan's effort in convening the Japan-Pacific Island Countries Tourism Ministers meeting, and its commitment to cooperate on specific and practical activities, including with the South Pacific Tourism Organisation, to benefit the tourism sector.

32. The PIF Leaders welcomed Prime Minister Abe's commitment to enhancing regional connectivity through resilient quality infrastructure development and provisions of means of transport in order to fully tap the economic potential of the region. The Leaders underscored the importance of developing quality infrastructure including sea ports and airports in an open, transparent, non-exclusive and sustainable manner, in accordance with international standards, which also respect sovereignty and peaceful use of such infrastructure.

### **Connecting Pacific Citizens**

33. The Leaders underscored the importance of strong personal bonds developed through active people-to-people and cultural exchanges, in particular among the youth, to deepen mutual understanding and trust, and in turn establish an enduring relationship between the people of Japan and the PIF Members.
34. The Leaders discussed efforts to encourage two-way movement of people between Japan and the FICs. In this regard, the Leaders welcomed the re-launch of direct flights between Japan and Fiji, and expressed support for a third flight service to Narita via Federated States of Micronesia by Papua New Guinea. The Leaders also

- welcomed the important work of the local governments of Japan to build networks with the FICs and supported direct engagement with their Pacific counterparts.
35. The FIC Leaders welcomed the decision by Japan to introduce multiple entry visas in relation to all the FICs.
  36. Prime Minister Abe expressed his deep appreciation for the intention of the FIC Leaders to continue cooperation to address issues related to their shared past including repatriation of the remains of the war dead from World War II, clearance of unexploded ordnance, and maintenance of government-built monuments for the war dead as appropriate. The Leaders shared the view that jointly addressing these issues will help consolidate the foundation upon which Japan and the FICs continue to build future-oriented relations.
  37. The Leaders reaffirmed their intention to strengthen people-to-people exchanges and cooperation in the field of sports in light of Japan's hosting of the Rugby World Cup 2019 and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this regard, the FIC Leaders appreciated Japan's efforts through its initiative called "Sport for Tomorrow." In addition, the Leaders shared the view that they would consider holding a ministerial meeting on sports cooperation in such field as para-sports.
  38. The Leaders emphasised the importance of Japanese language education in the FICs and Prime Minister Abe expressed his willingness to continue to provide support in the area, including towards launching of a Japanese language course in the University of South Pacific. The FIC Leaders welcomed such efforts by Japan.
  39. Prime Minister Abe reiterated Japan's commitment to providing human resource development to the FICs, which draws upon Japan's unique strengths, in order to provide effective and enduring means to assist their resilient, sustainable and self-sufficient development. In this context, the FIC Leaders appreciated the vital roles played by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and Senior Volunteers. Prime Minister Abe also expressed Japan's intention to continue "Pacific-LEADS".
  40. The Leaders decided to pursue the possibility of strengthening human resource development of the FICs through on-the-job trainings in Japan under existing scheme. The Leaders discussed the value of promoting skills enhancement and labour opportunities for the FICs, and Japan committed to sharing information on any schemes it currently has in place and details on which countries are eligible, what the conditions are for participation and what types of jobs are covered.
  41. The Leaders welcomed youth exchanges between Japan and Pacific island countries in science and technology fields through the Sakura Science Plan since 2016.

### **Cooperation in the International Arena**

42. The Leaders expressed shared appreciation for continued cooperation between Japan and the PIF Members on initiatives and efforts in international fora as well as multilateral institutions.
43. Prime Minister Abe expressed support for the FICs' increasing presence in the international arena, including through the hosting and chairing of international conferences such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting to be hosted by Papua New Guinea in 2018, Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting to be hosted by Fiji in 2019 and Our Ocean Conference to be hosted by Palau in 2020.
44. The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the UN Secretary-General's agenda to reform the UN to make it more efficient, transparent and accountable. The Leaders expressed their shared interest in maintaining an appropriate presence of the UN in the Pacific region.
45. The Leaders reaffirmed the need to further enhance the legitimacy, effectiveness and representativeness of the UNSC to better reflect the realities of the international community in the twenty first century. They expressed their determination to engage constructively in the work of the intergovernmental negotiations towards an early realisation of the reform, including through expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent categories of its membership, and emphasised the need to launch text-based negotiations during the seventy second session of the UN General Assembly. The PIF Leaders reiterated their support for Japan's bid for permanent membership in the UNSC.
46. The Leaders underlined their commitment to seeking further cooperation to address transnational security challenges, including nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and counter-proliferation, illicit trade in conventional weapons, terrorism and other transnational organised crime, violent extremism and cyber security. The Leaders expressed their intention to pursue the possibility of greater defence and security exchanges and cooperation.
47. The Leaders appreciated all the efforts to date by the international community towards the current developments surrounding North Korea. The Leaders welcomed "Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula" issued at the Inter-Korean Summit in late April 2018, which confirmed their common goal of the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and expressed hope that the planned US-North Korea Summit in June would deliver North Korea's concrete actions for such goal. The Leaders strongly called on North Korea to immediately take concrete actions in accordance with UNSC resolutions. The Leaders

expressed their commitment to exerting continued pressure on North Korea, including by fully implementing and enforcing the UNSC resolutions. In particular, the Leaders expressed deep concerns about North Korea's sanctions evading tactics including "ship-to-ship transfers" and emphasised the need to accelerate their own efforts in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions, including by deregistering North Korean trading or fishing vessels currently flagged on their shipping registers, with development partners supporting FICs in their efforts. The Leaders stressed the importance of seeking a peaceful and diplomatic resolution towards complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including biological and chemical weapons, and ballistic missiles as well as related facilities of North Korea. The Leaders also expected that the announcement by North Korea to discontinue nuclear tests and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) test fires and dismantle its nuclear testing facility would soon lead to its concrete actions in this regard. The Leaders emphasised the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

48. The Leaders acknowledged the call for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Leaders also expressed their intention to seek ways to cooperate on detection of nuclear tests and possibly on sharing data of nuclear radiation in the Pacific Ocean.

### **Cooperation Activity during PALM 8 period**

49. Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan has fulfilled its pledge at PALM7 by providing more than 55 billion yen, and implementing human resource development and people-to-people exchanges of 4,000 people with the FICs over the past three years.
50. Prime Minister Abe announced Japan's commitment to continuing implementation of robust development assistance as before, in keeping with the achievement mentioned above. Prime Minister Abe pledged to implement high-quality assistance that draws its unique strength to bring direct benefits to the people and the society of the FICs both in soft and hard components by taking into account important factors such as sustainability and economic viability. Prime Minister Abe also pledged Japan's intention to implement human resource development and people-to-people exchanges of more than 5,000 people from the FICs over the next three years, based on the recognition that investment to human capital is the most effective, efficient and enduring mode of support for the bright future of the FICs.

### **Way Forward**

51. Building on the strength and resilience of the partnership, which has steadily developed under the PALM process for more than two decades, the Leaders renewed

their determination to strengthen collaboration and engagement through policy dialogue and working on the areas specified in this Declaration in order to ensure the success of the shared future in the decades ahead.

52. The Leaders stressed the importance of continuing to seek effective ways to monitor and follow up the progress under the PALM process. They decided to hold the fourth Ministerial Interim Meeting before the PALM9 in order to follow-up and evaluate the implementation of the key PALM8 outcomes and to progress preparation for the PALM9. The PIF Leaders offered to host the fourth Ministerial Interim Meeting. The Leaders welcomed Japan's proposal to host PALM9 in Japan in 2021. Prime Minister Abe expressed the intention to propose the timing and venue for PALM9 at the fourth Ministerial Interim Meeting.