

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CHAIRPERSONS INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO ECONOMIC MINISTERS

Suva, Fiji

9th May 2019

1. Distinguished Finance and Economic Ministers, and senior officials, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of Pacific Civil Society, I wish to thank the Pacific Islands Forum and the Secretariat, in particular the Secretary General, and the Host Government, Fiji for this third FEMM dialogue with Civil Society.
2. The Regional Civil Society Forum convened by the PIFS in March 2019 was attended by Civil Society representatives from the Pacific Forum member Countries, who identified priority issues to bring to FEMM.
3. In the spirit of inclusivity, equity, equality and partnership embodied in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, **we urge that this CSO Dialogue be a permanent FEMM mechanism.**
4. In valuing our Partnership with FEMM, and demonstrating our commitment, we collaborated with PIFS and partners to progress the regional youth employment initiative, the sports economy initiative and finalized the Sports research findings which you endorsed at FEMM 2017 and 2018.
5. Upon your endorsement, the PIFS and ILO are cooperating with the Pacific Youth Council on youth employment. An Inter-Agency working group comprising of development partners and multilateral agencies is established, and is designing a project for youth entrepreneurship and social innovation to accelerate economic growth and decent work. **We table the proposed workplan for your consideration and endorsement.**
6. Again upon your endorsement, a Pacific Regional taskforce was established and met for the first time in Suva in April 2019 to develop a Pacific Sport, Physical Activities and Physical Education action plan which was informed by the sports research findings.
7. **We table the final research report on *Maximising the Contribution of Sport to Economic and Social Development of Pacific Island Countries – The Case of Fiji and Samoa* for your endorsement.**
8. To address the escalating realities of climate change, civil society is building empowered, sustainable and resilient communities but we lack access to climate finance.
9. The proposed Pacific Resilience Facility must: (i) respond to CSO representation in the governance, disbursement and monitoring of community grants; (ii) integrate a social accountability mechanism ensuring all funds accessed benefit communities; (iii) and ensure the design and implementation of the PRF is gender responsive including prevention of, and protection from all forms of violence

against women and girls, and provision and accessibility of essential services including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights and support services.

10. Pacific Leaders have made several commitments to building the resilience of women and girls in The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, the Boe Declaration, and the landmark Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration which call for ending violence against women and girls, and ensuring gender responsive policies and budget.
11. Honourable Ministers we would like to draw your attention to studies that show that violence against women and girls place significant burden on households and national economies. According to UN Women projections, the cost of violence against women could amount to around 2% of global gross domestic product which is equivalent to 1.5 trillion US dollars.
12. A Study conducted in New Zealand estimated the cost of 4.7 – 7 billion NZD and a ten year forecast amounting to 80 billion NZD if this violence is not addressed. In Australia the cost estimated for 2015 – 2016 was 22 million AUD. In Fiji it was 498 million FJD in 2011. The economic cost of violence against women and girls is further compounded during climate induced disasters and is critical to addressing resilience.
- 13. CSOs are proposing for your endorsement to undertake a study, in collaboration with partners, on the cost of violence against women and girls to the Pacific economy and report back to FEMM.**
14. Pacific Island Countries, their communities and people are threatened by the impacts of climate change and must work together to reverse the decline in ocean health. For us, the Ocean is our lifeblood and it must be sustainably managed, conserved and governed for our children and future generations.
15. In respect of the Blue Pacific narrative and the many national, regional and international policies and programmes that Forum Leaders have committed to on ocean management and governance, we applaud the collective effort of Pacific leaders to place Oceans onto the global agenda.
16. Honourable Ministers there is growing economic interest in our ocean resources. However, we wish to highlight the threats that should be addressed according to precautionary principles. One of these threats is that seabed minerals, once mined, will not regenerate in our lifetime nor within that of many generations to come.
17. The protection and sound management of our ocean resources such as tuna, a major revenue stream for Pacific Island Countries, is at stake including the food security and sustainable livelihood of our communities.
18. Independent impact studies on seabed mining is necessary to assess the full range and extent of the disturbances to the seabed floor and ocean eco-system within and beyond national jurisdictions, for sound decision making.

19. CSOs are proposing, for your endorsement, to undertake a study on the feasibility of a moratorium on seabed mining in collaboration with partners and report to FEMM in 2020. We propose that this moratorium be aligned to the United Nations Decade of Oceans Science for Sustainable Development (2021 – 2030).

20. In conclusion, we trust that having a permanent CSO Dialogue will add value to FEMM deliberations and decisions.