

18 September 2024

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Personal details removed for proactive
release

Thank you for your email of 1 August 2024 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

"Please supply all formal briefings provided for, and all formal reports arising from, the 2024 Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting."

On 15 August 2024, you agreed to refine your request to be for:

"In relation to the 2024 Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting:

1. *Please supply from "Briefing Paper to the 2024 Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting":*
 - a. *the following agenda item briefs provided on the 2050 Strategy & Implementation Updates, and Pacific Resilience Facility;*
 - b. *the following information paper briefs on Pacific Regional Labour Mobility Principles, and the Review of Regional Architecture Update;*
 - c. *the following background briefs on New Zealand's Support to Pacific Economic Development, Pacific Islands Forum, Labour Mobility – Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, Pacific debt sustainability, and New Zealand position on seabed mining*
2. *A list of all formal briefings and list of contents following the meeting, by title and date, between 1-15 August 2024."*

On 10 September 2024, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 15 working days because responding to your request necessitated the review of a large quantity of information, and due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(a) and 15A(1)(b) of the OIA refers).

The information relevant to part 1 of your request is attached. Some information is withheld under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;

- 6(b)(ii): to protect the passing of information from an international organisation on a confidential basis;
- 7(b)(i) and (ii): to prejudice relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand and the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments;
- 9(2)(h): to maintain legal professional privilege; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

In scope of part 2 of your request is 1 email titled "FORMAL MESSAGE: PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM ECONOMIC MINISTERS 2024", dated 6 August 2024.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, we have identified no public interest in releasing the information that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

JULY/AUGUST 2024

Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting

Briefing Paper

31 July – 2 August 2024

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



AGENDA ITEM BRIEFS

The following section contains briefs for each of the agenda items that will be covered during the FEMM.

Each agenda item is based on a FEMM paper written by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (which sometimes comes with attachments), which you will find in the separate meeting papers binder. You will not be expected to have read the full suite of FEMM papers.

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Item 5: 2050 Strategy & Implementation Updates

(12:00pm – 12:20pm)

Refer to FEMM papers

- PIFS(24)FEMM.5a and PIFS(24)FEMM.5b – [binder ref: 05]

New Zealand's objectives for this agenda item

- Forum Economic Ministers have a key role in overseeing the implementation of the Resources and Economic Development pillar of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. It is important for New Zealand to be seen supporting this pillar, which aligns well with the economic development aspirations of fellow PIF Members.
- The 2050 Strategy aligns with New Zealand's support of a shared approach to regional challenges, enhanced coordination, and a coherent blueprint for engagement from partners.

Handling advice

- s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(b)(ii)

Suggested Talking Points

- New Zealand supports the 2050 Strategy as the shared vision for our region's future, and the articulation of priorities for collective action and partner engagement.

- The Prioritised Regional Collective Actions (RCAs), and the 2050 Baseline Report are important elements that will enable clear, results-focused reporting on progress to Leaders to facilitate good decision making.
 - For New Zealand, it is important that we take a holistic approach in implementing the 2050 Strategy. As Economic Ministers, we need to ensure our colleague Foreign Ministers and our Leaders include in their deliberations the importance of economic development for our region.
 - Meeting the economic development aspirations of our region underpins our security, our well-being, and our confidence in acting as a region. We need our partners to recognise the economic needs of our region, not only as individual countries but on global issues such as supply chains, banking, and access to finance.
 - And there is strength in working together on these issues. ^{s6(a)}
-
- We need to build on these initiatives as we work together towards a region of greater integration, greater prosperity, and a more secure future in line with the direction of our Leaders.

Background

1. The 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan is the region's map for achieving the goals and outcomes of the Strategy. It articulates Regional Collective Action (RCAs) that will help realise our collective vision for the future.

2. The Forum Economic Ministers Meeting is responsible for the Resource and Economic Development thematic area of the 2050 Strategy. This thematic area highlights the importance of improving social and economic wellbeing of all Pacific peoples through improving macroeconomic resilience and stability, strengthening financial system resilience, diversifying economies, supporting private sector growth in creating employment and entrepreneurial activity in the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and improving trade and sustainable labour mobility.

3. The Regional Collective Actions (RCAs) that sit under this thematic area include:

- Development of regional fisheries Hubs and Spokes Initiative and establishment of a regional fisheries development fund.
- Considering greater regional integration initiatives, including through enhancing regional cooperation on labour mobility.
- Improving legal, regulatory, governance and monitoring arrangements to strengthen State Owned Enterprises' commercial mandate.
- Supporting the ratification and effective implementation of trade agreements.
- Creating a conducive environment for women and girls' economic empowerment.
- Develop regional approaches to address national debt burdens and for pooling of risk, correspondent banking, and innovative financing.

Item 10: Pacific Resilience Facility

(09:00am – 11:00am)

Refer to FEMM papers

- PIFS(24)FEMM.10 – [binder ref: 10]

New Zealand's objectives and interests for this agenda item

- New Zealand is supportive of the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF)
s6(a)
- s6(a)
- s6(a)
- We are interested in hearing more Pacific countries express their views on the PRF. While the PRF has been progressing through the various Forum processes, s6(a)

Handling advice

- s9(2)(g)(i)
- Suggested talking points are provided below. s6(a)
- As noted above, we are interested in hearing more Pacific countries express their views on the PRF. s6(a)

New Zealand’s views on the recommendations in the FEMM paper

The Forum Economic Ministers are invited to:	New Zealand’s view
<i>[Recommendations not available at time of finalising briefing pack]</i>	

Suggested Talking Points

- The design of the PRF has come a long way since it was endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2019. As a Pacific designed- and led- initiative, the PRF can play a key role in building resilience, through investments in strengthening preparedness for natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.
- We are pleased to have been involved in the PRF’s early development, as part of the Technical Working Group, alongside other Pacific partners. And, more recently, the PRF redesign work.
- On the PRF’s funding, we recognise that the involvement of a broad range of partners will be important if it is to deliver on its objectives. ^{s6(a)}

- ^{s6(a)}

- ^{s6(a)}

s6(a)

- While we commend the Secretariat for the work that has been undertaken to-date, we recognise that there is still a significant amount of establishment work to be done before the PRF is fully operational. New Zealand will continue to engage with the Secretariat to support this work.

Background

1. The proposal to establish the PRF was first endorsed at the 50th Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu in August 2019. However, due to uncertainties in the global financing environment as a result of COVID-19, the planned global pledging event to capitalise the facility was deferred.
2. Over 2023, the Forum Secretariat started work on a PRF re-design. At the 52nd Leaders meeting in the Cook Islands in 2023, Pacific Islands Forum Members endorsed the *Declaration on the Establishment of the Pacific Resilience Facility*.
3. The following key characteristics of the PRF have been endorsed by Pacific Leaders. The PRF will:
 - (i) Build systemic resilience to the impact of climate change at the national level by strengthening the collective financial resilience of Forum Member Countries: to receive and make climate and disaster grants for climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, nature-based solutions, and loss and damage projects; to support disaster rapid response; and to receive and make social and community grants for Sustainable

Development Goals and to support resilient and sustainable communities;

(ii) Provide financing for resilient development projects in the Pacific region, including by, or through national governments, private sector, civil society, and community organisations;

(iii) Strengthen strategic partnerships with key development partners and global-climate-change and disaster-risk funding sources to harness collective support for resilient development initiatives in the Pacific region;

(iv) Support capacity building and development in resilient-development planning and budgeting, through strengthened public financial management systems in the Pacific region; and

(v) Ensure that PRF is a compelling mechanism for climate change and disaster risk investors to contribute capital in support of climate and disaster resilience, and resilient and sustainable communities, in the Pacific region.

4. New Zealand's positioning has been as an open-minded partner on the PRF, aiming to be responsive to priority-setting as determined by Pacific governments. New Zealand has been engaged in the PRF design through membership of a technical working group, as well as more recently a legal drafting group. We have also consistently signalled our support (although not a dollar amount), including most recently at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting.

INFORMATION PAPER BRIEFS

In your FEMM papers pack, you will see a suite of ‘information papers’. These are to be ‘taken as read’, and typically provide updates on ongoing work or issues, rather than require decisions by Ministers.

While there is no scheduled agenda item to discuss these information papers, Ministers can make interventions or seek clarity on any issues covered by the papers, for example during the agenda item for ‘other matters’ during the FEMM.

Information papers:

1	2023 FEMM Decision Progressive Updates	[binder ref: 12]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.1
2	Pacific Regional Statistics Priorities	[binder ref: 13]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.2
3	Improving Financial Inclusion in the Pacific: Update on the 2025 Money Pacific Goals	[binder ref: 14]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.3
4	Pacific Regional Private Sector Strategy	[binder ref: 15]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.4

5	Pacific Regional Labour Mobility Principles	[binder ref: 16]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.5
6	Review of Regional Architecture Update	[binder ref: 17]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.6
7	Update on Regional Disaster Risk Finance Efforts	[binder ref: 18]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.7
8	Economic Empowerment of Women	[binder ref: 19]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.8
9	Pacific Quality Infrastructure Principles	[binder ref: 20]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.9
10	Expenditure Tracking and Budget Analysis for Early Childhood Development in Seven PICs	[binder ref: 21]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.10
11	Climate and Disaster Risk Finance <i>Regional Climate Finance and Disaster Risk Finance Regional Efforts</i>	[binder ref: 22]	PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.11

5. Pacific Regional Labour Mobility Principles

Refer to FEMM paper

- PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.5 – [binder ref: 16]

Handling advice

- For information only, unless a Member proactively raises this topic during discussions.

Key points

- Labour mobility supports a stronger, more resilient Pacific, but a changed regional landscape has led to some negative impacts. A collective regional response is needed, including through the development of Regional Labour Mobility Principles (Principles).
- New Zealand's main interest is ensuring that the two key labour mobility initiatives underway - the update to the PACER Plus Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) and these Principles- are co-ordinated, complementary, non-duplicative and inclusive. A clear plan for how these processes will work together is needed.
- New Zealand does not support the addition of new architecture through these Principles, and we consider the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) to be an effective and inclusive mechanism for progressing the labour mobility agenda. An integrated approach will avoid duplication of effort, harness the momentum behind PLMAM and respond to the reality that everyone's bandwidth is limited.

Background

1. In 2023, Forum Leaders noted the proposal to develop these Principles, in collaboration with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU), to ensure synergies and avoid unnecessary duplication. The

Forum Secretariat is leading the development of the Principles given the role it plays in the overarching regional architecture.

2. Forum Leaders reaffirmed that the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM) retains oversight on this issue and acknowledged the complementary role of Forum Economic Ministers, particularly as it relates to the social and economic impacts of labour mobility. FTMM will not meet again until 2025 so the draft Principles will be considered by the Forum Trade Officials' Meeting in late 2024.

3. Forum Leaders also called for an inclusive approach that ensures both Parties and non-Parties to PACER Plus have an equal decision-making role on regional labour mobility issues. This was an important directive given parties to the Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) do not currently include all Forum Members and further validates the development of these Principles.

4. In responding to the Forum Secretariat's Concept Note, New Zealand has welcomed the Forum Secretariat's commitment to ensuring complementarity between the various regional labour mobility initiatives. We have provided substantive comments on the possible scope and content of the Principles, as we await a further information paper on how they will be developed and what they might involve.

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6. Review of Regional Architecture Update

Refer to FEMM paper

- PIFS(24)FEMM.Info.6 – [binder ref: 17]

Handling advice

- For information only, unless a Member proactively raises this topic during discussions.

Key points

- The Review of Regional Architecture (RRA) has been commissioned by Forum Leaders to ensure that Pacific regional processes and institutions are fit for purpose to deliver on the ambitions of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- RRA recommendations will be considered by Forum Foreign Ministers and then Forum Leaders on strengthening the effectiveness, coherence, and resilience of the regional framework.

Background

1. Officials have been fully engaged in the RRA process to date, which has been led by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and involved all the Pacific regional agencies (known as the CROP or Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific).^{s6(a)}
2. Emerging recommendations cover improvements to regional governance mechanisms; deeper coordination and collaboration between the Pacific regional agencies; and a more coherent and strategic approach to the Forum's interactions with international partners, civil society and private sector.

3. Leaders will decide in August whether a further phase of the RRA takes place in 2025, to assess regional architecture rationalisation or consolidation.

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BACKGROUND BRIEFS

These background briefs are for information only.

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New Zealand's Support to Pacific Economic Development

Key points

- New Zealand supports a range of programmes to promote economic development and diversify Pacific economies. Our development cooperation programme aims to promote economic development through policy and regulatory reform, infrastructure and market development, and access to finance and capacity building of both the public and private sector. Key priority areas for New Zealand support are described below.

Background

1. **Agriculture:** Our multi-million-dollar regional programme includes research, biosecurity and market access, value chain and export development, quality improvement and seed systems. Increasingly, our focus is on building resilience through climate smart agriculture, e.g., \$10 million investment in the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees.
2. **Tourism:** Our regional programme supports digital capability-building, research and monitoring, and indigenous tourism development. Our bilateral programmes deliver supply and demand interventions to assist sector development, as well as long-term resilience planning. Total active multi-year tourism support amounts to NZ\$32 million.
3. **Fisheries:** New Zealand spent over NZD80 million on regional Pacific oceans and fisheries over the last three years. This supported regional priorities such as reducing IUU fishing, sustainable and climate-resilient fisheries management, addressing climate change impacts on Pacific fisheries (e.g., tuna migration), improving the capability of national fisheries' administrations, and improving the economic returns, employment conditions and governance of fisheries.

4. **Digital Economy:** Our Digital Transformation Programme for the Pacific covers four strategic areas: connectivity, cybersecurity (NZ\$10 million), e-government services and the digital economy (NZ\$6 million for the Pacific Digital Economy Programme), and digital services for education and health. The programme consists of bilateral and regional activities valued at NZ\$91 million.
5. **Trade:** The PACER Plus Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme (AU\$25.5 million over five-years, our contribution NZ\$7 million) focuses on enabling successful implementation of the Agreement and supporting Pacific members' trade through activities such as modernising customs systems, increasing sanitary and phytosanitary compliance, and export product mapping.
6. **Private sector:** Our regional programme focuses on building the capability of Pacific small businesses and improving their access to finance. Business Link Pacific (NZ\$26.2 million) helps Pacific businesses to access local, quality advice and finance and InvestPacific (NZ\$17 million) will establish a NZ\$50.0 million New Zealand-based impact investment fund for the Pacific.

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Pacific Islands Forum

1. New Zealand's approach to Pacific engagement is to support long-term outcomes, in line with Pacific priorities, and with a high degree of Pacific ownership. We speak candidly with fellow Pacific countries, including on sensitive and challenging issues.
2. New Zealand works hard to promote strong, independent Pacific governance, human rights, democracy, and rule of law. We expect other international partners in the Pacific to respect these principles and to be transparent with their actions and intentions.
3. A central part of New Zealand's engagement with the Pacific is through membership of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the region's pre-eminent political entity.^{s6(a)}
4. The PIF brings together 18 Members to agree the policy direction of the region, laying the platform to advance regional priorities on the global stage. The principal political mechanism for convening the Membership is the annual meeting of Leaders, with this year's gathering due to be held in Nuku'alofa from 26-30 August, preceded by the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting (FFMM) on 9 August.
- 5.^{s6(a)}

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

6. ^{s6(a)}

Leaders agreed that the future of our region could not simply be left to chance, but required a carefully considered regional strategy, and most importantly the collective commitment to achieve it. The resulting *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* was launched in 2022, with Leaders endorsing the Strategy's implementation plan last year in Cook Islands.

7. The 2050 Strategy and Implementation Plan provides the region with a clear, ambitious and practical plan for a secure, stable, and prosperous Pacific. It also serves as a guide for external partners to follow, helping to ensure that engagement is in support of Pacific priorities. ^{s6(a)}

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Labour Mobility – Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme

Key points

- Labour mobility is a key driver of economic and social resilience in the Pacific. However, growth in demand for Pacific workers, primarily from Australia, is increasing pressure on the domestic workforces in some Pacific countries, with concerns around “brain drain” and criticism from the private sector driving some countries to assert their own approach to managing labour mobility flows.
- New Zealand is committed to working alongside Pacific countries to ensure sustainable worker flows and circular transfer of skills through the RSE scheme, continues to benefit Pacific partners. Recent announcements to new phases of New Zealand’s labour mobility development programmes will support partners to maximise the benefits and mitigate the negative impacts of labour mobility.
- New Zealand engages on regional labour mobility issues primarily through the Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) signed alongside PACER Plus. We are committed to supporting the full implementation of the Arrangement, including through its ongoing review.
- New Zealand’s key interest is in ensuring that the two key labour mobility initiatives currently under way – the update to the ALM and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat’s development of ‘Regional Labour Mobility Principles’ are coordinated, complementary and non-duplicative.

Background

1. The RSE scheme began in 2007 with a cap of 5,000 for employers in the horticulture and viticulture industries to recruit seasonal workers primarily from Pacific countries, where no New Zealand workers were available. The cap was set at 19,500 for 2023/24, with Vanuatu, Samoa

and Tonga being the three largest participating countries. Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea have seen recent increases.

2. In response to Pacific priorities, New Zealand has reviewed its labour mobility development cooperation with Pacific countries. New Zealand has committed a total of NZ\$30.1 million over the next five years to enable countries to shape the outcomes they seek from participation in labour mobility schemes, and support workers to access skills training opportunities in New Zealand.

3. Worker well-being, including living conditions, remain a priority for New Zealand. We take concerns or complaints regarding the well-being of RSE workers seriously.

4. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is currently developing the Pacific Regional Labour Mobility Principles. New Zealand will continue to work with the Secretariat and Forum Members to ensure regional labour mobility initiatives are complementary

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Pacific debt sustainability

Key points

- Some Pacific Island countries have borrowed significant amounts to finance the response to the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.
- High levels of public debt can translate into high debt servicing costs, which reduce the availability of funding for core public services and investments.

Background

s6(a)

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5. s6(a)

6. s6(a)

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New Zealand position on seabed mining

Key points

- In **areas beyond national jurisdiction (the Area)**, New Zealand's position is that mining should not be carried out in the absence of a Mining Code that ensures effective protection of the marine environment, as required by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Within **areas of national jurisdiction** (i.e., the exclusive economic zone, territorial sea, and continental shelf), New Zealand respects the rights and responsibilities of states to manage their mineral resources, consistent with UNCLOS.
- s9(2)(h)
- Our position at the ISA does not impact any state's domestic mining aspirations. New Zealand has a domestic regime which allows applications for seabed mining within our jurisdiction to be considered.
- Seabed mining is a controversial ^{s6(a)} issue on which Pacific Island countries hold opposing views. New Zealand seeks to play a constructive and balanced role in the Pacific on this issue.
- s9(2)(h), s9(2)(f)(iv)

s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(h)

- s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

- s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Background

New Zealand's international position on deep sea mining

1. In July 2024 the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) approved a continuation of New Zealand's substantive position on seabed mining in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which is grounded in our UNCLOS obligations. New Zealand's position also reflects the decisions of the ISA Council, the views of almost all members of the ISA, and the need to balance various interests and Pacific equities. ^{s6(a), s9(2)(j)}

2. ^{s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(j)}

3. ^{s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(j)}

Differing views of Pacific countries

4. In the Pacific, Cook Islands, Nauru and Kiribati see seabed mining as an important economic opportunity. Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu all support some form of moratorium or precautionary pause. They have raised concerns about the environmental impacts of seabed mining, including the potential impacts on Pacific tuna stocks.

5. The 2023 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Communique endorsed holding a talanoa on seabed mining in 2024. ^{s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s6(b)(i)}

Engagement with the Cook Islands

6. The Cook Islands Government views seabed mining as key to its self-sufficiency, and as an avenue to support global transitions to green energy and diversify suppliers of critical mineral resources. To this end, they are seeking to establish a Regional Centre for Excellence on Deep-Ocean Science in Rarotonga. The Cook Islands' primary interest is in mining within their national jurisdiction, but they also have an exploratory licence for potential mining in the Area.

7. ^{s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s6(a)}

Domestically, the Seabed Minerals Authority (SMA) is currently undertaking public consultation on Draft Seabed Minerals (Minerals Harvesting and Other Mining) Regulations 2024, with consultation closing on 12 August. If enacted, the new regulations provide a framework on minerals harvesting activities to enable science-based decisions on whether or not to permit minerals harvesting.

8. ^{s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s6(a)}

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)

s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s9(2)(j)

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