



PACER Plus

PP.MIN.006/C

MINISTERIAL MEETING: 15 NOVEMBER 2024

COMMUNIQUÉ

1. We, the Ministers and Ministerial representatives of the Parties to the *Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus*¹ met in Brisbane, Australia on 15 November 2024. Our meeting was chaired by the Hon. Leota Laki Lamositele, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Labour of Samoa.
2. PACER Plus entered into force in 2020 during unprecedented global health and economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, enforcing international border closures and the transition to virtual work life. We were therefore delighted to meet and talanoa in person for the first time since the Agreement entered into force in December 2020.
3. Ministers and Ministerial representatives recalled the first meeting in February 2020, where the unique and close historical, political, developmental, economic, geographic and cultural links that bind us together was recognised. Ministers and Ministerial representatives further recalled the importance that was ascribed to PACER Plus in strengthening economic partnership, supporting sustainable economic development and serving as an important building block towards regional economic integration. Ministers and Ministerial representatives affirmed the continued importance and relevance of these points in 2024.

¹ See Annex 1 for the List of Representatives

4. Ministers and Ministerial representatives acknowledged Parties' commitment to enhancing existing partnerships in trade and investment, tailored to the unique needs and capacities of participating Parties and considering the varying levels of development across the region and realising the full benefits of PACER Plus over time.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION

5. Ministers and Ministerial representatives noted the progress of the work of the Joint Committee and its subsidiary bodies in the implementation of PACER Plus. We encouraged Parties to continue their work to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the Agreement.
6. Ministers and Ministerial representatives recognised the need for continual improvement to the implementing arrangements for the Development and Economic Cooperation Programme to ensure recipients' priorities are met. We await the outcomes and recommendations from the Corporate Review into the PACER Plus Implementation Unit.
7. Ministers and Ministerial representatives acknowledged the importance of the Development and Economic Cooperation (DEC) Work Programme under the Agreement and were pleased with the high levels of support and engagement by PACER Plus Parties, who individually and collectively, had taken advantage of the Programme in order to improve their trading capacity, promote regional cooperation, and improve the enabling environment. We noted the importance of stakeholders, particularly the private sector, as the main user of PACER Plus.
8. Ministers and Ministerial representatives appreciated the work done thus far by the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU) and encouraged the Unit to accelerate the implementation of the work programme, taking into account unique national circumstances of participating Parties.

GENERAL REVIEW OF PACER PLUS

9. Ministers and Ministerial representatives welcomed the outcome and recommendations of the PACER Plus General Review Report completed in 2024, in accordance with Article 1, Chapter 12 to assess implementation of the Agreement to date. We tasked the Joint Committee to commence implementation of the recommendations in the Report.

10. Ministers and Ministerial representatives expressed our satisfaction with the contributions made by PACER Plus as a long-term trade and development agreement, which had enhanced trade readiness among Parties and supported the enabling environment to grow and take advantage of enhanced trade access.

LABOUR MOBILITY

11. Ministers and Ministerial representatives recognised labour mobility as a socio-economic development priority. The significant achievements and efforts to address challenges were noted. Ministers and Ministerial representatives welcomed the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) as the regional forum for labour mobility discussions.
12. Ministers and Ministerial representatives commended the Australian Government for hosting the 2024 PLMAM and noted the offer by Solomon Islands to host the 2025 PLMAM.
13. Ministers and Ministerial representatives noted the recommendations from the Arrangement on Labour Mobility Review Report and tasked the Labour Mobility Working Group to facilitate implementation in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, International Labour Organization for Migration and other relevant stakeholders.

ENHANCING PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

14. Ministers and Ministerial representatives strongly emphasised the need for targeted assistance through the DEC Work Programme to strengthen private sector capacity to export and to benefit from market access provided under PACER Plus.
15. Ministers and Ministerial representatives tasked the Joint Committee to work with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit to refine its approach to private sector engagement in a transparent, effective, and equitable manner, and ensure its inclusion in the next DEC Work Programme. Ministers and Ministerial representatives encouraged complementarity with the Pacific Regional Private Sector Strategy, under the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan.

PACIFIC REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND PACER PLUS BEYOND 2025

16. Ministers and Ministerial representatives reaffirmed our aspirations for PACER Plus, to increase trade in goods, services, investment and economic opportunities

for inclusive economic development by participating Parties private sectors, to enhance trade opportunities in the region.

17. Ministers and Ministerial Representatives recognised the value of digital trade in unlocking the full potential of our economies and acting as a catalyst for the economic empowerment of women-owned businesses and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in both formal and informal sectors.
18. Ministers and Ministerial representatives expressed our in-principle support for the renewal of the Implementing Arrangement for Development and Economic Cooperation under PACER Plus for a further five years beyond December 2025 accompanied by appropriate reforms, as highlighted in the General Review Report.
19. Ministers and Ministerial representatives tasked the Joint Committee to consider separate resourcing for the Labour Mobility Work Programme beyond the current phase of support.

PACER PLUS MEMBERSHIP

20. Ministers and Ministerial representatives reaffirmed their view that PACER Plus was a framework that would achieve economic integration and that its utility would only increase inclusive membership across other Pacific economies. Noting the cooperative and inclusive principles of PACER Plus and our commitment to the Blue Pacific Continent we encouraged other Forum Island Countries to accede to PACER Plus.
21. Ministers and Ministerial representatives reaffirmed their commitment to advocating and promoting PACER Plus in our region as the mechanism for realising socio-economic development benefits through trade in a manner that recognised our collective strengths and our unique individual contributions to the Blue Pacific Continent.
22. Ministers and Ministerial representatives noted the statement from the 2024 PLMAM which called for a more sustainable funding approach to ensure sufficient resourcing of the PPIU to progress the impact of the Arrangement on Labour Mobility.
23. Ministers and Ministerial representatives extended our appreciation to the Government of Australia for hosting this meeting and looked forward to

convening in 2025 to continue dialogue on implementation and future direction for PACER Plus.

ANNEX 1

List of Representatives

Party Representatives

Australia

1. Honourable Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Trade, Australia
2. Mr Andrew Cumpston, Assistant Secretary, Pacific Economic Branch, Office of the Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
3. Mr Ben Power, Director, Pacific Regional Trade Integration & Private Sector Growth Section, Office of the Pacific, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
4. Ms Caroline Kempeneer, A/g Assistant Director, Multilateral Economic Cooperation Section, Trade and Investment Group

Cook Islands

1. Honourable Tingika Elikana, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
2. Ms Mackenzi Wichman, Director, International Trade Affairs Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Kiribati

1. H.E. Tukabu Tauati, High Commissioner of Kiribati to Fiji
2. Ms Angoango Fakaua, Senior Trade Officer, Ministry of Tourism, Commerce, Industry and Cooperatives

New Zealand

1. Honourable Nicola Grigg, Minister of State for Trade
2. Ms Melanie Roberts, Unit Manager FTA Implementation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
3. Ms Ruth Pehbu-Hubscher, Deputy Senior Official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
4. Mr Adam Griffin, Ministerial Adviser, New Zealand Parliament
5. Mr Poutasi Watson, Policy Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Niue

1. Honourable Crossley Tatui, Minister of Infrastructure and Finance
2. Mr Frank Sioneholo, Head of Economic Planning and Trade, Ministry of Finance and Infrastructure

Samoa

1. Honourable Leota Laki Lamositele, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Labour (Chair)
2. Honourable Lautimuia Uelese Vaai, Minister of Finance
3. H.E. Aiono Hinauri Petana, Samoa High Commissioner to Australia
4. Mr Va'atu'itu'i Apete Meredith, Samoa Trade Commissioner, New Zealand
5. Mr Tupai Peter Peilua, Chief Executive Officer, Samoa Qualifications Authority
6. Mr Henry Tunupopo, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
7. Mr William Pamata, Principal Planning Programming Officer, Economic, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Finance
8. Ms Keity Fereita Siniva Tuiloma, Principal Seasonal Employment Officer, Labour and Employment, Export Program, Ministry of Finance

Solomon Islands

1. Honourable Peter Shanel Agovaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands
2. Ms Natalia Patternot, Director, Department of External Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
3. H.E. Robert Sisilo, Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Australia
4. Mr Trevor Ramoni, Deputy High Commissioner to Australia
5. Mr George Tuti, Consul General, Solomon Islands Consulate General Office, Brisbane

Tonga

1. Honourable Dr. Viliami Uasike Latu, Minister of Trade and Economic Development
2. Mrs Distaquaine Tu'ihalamaka, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Trade and Economic Development
3. Mr 'Ikinasio Tautakitaki, Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Trade and Economic Development
4. Ms Kolotia Fotu, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Trade and Economic Development

Tuvalu

1. Honourable Paulson Panapa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Trade, Tuvalu
2. Mr Falaoa Sione, Acting Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Trade

3. Mr Paul Elisala, Acting Labour Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Trade
4. Ms Simamao Malua, Pacific Desk Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Trade

Vanuatu

1. Mr Noah Kouback, Special Envoy of the Republic of Vanuatu
2. Mr Joe Pakoa Lui, Director of External Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Cooperation and External Trade
3. H.E. Samson Vilvil Fare, High Commissioner of Vanuatu to Australia
4. Mr Michael Ligo, PACER Plus National Coordinator, Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Cooperation and External Trade

Observer Representatives

Nauru

1. Honourable Russ Joseph Kun, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

1. Ms Desna Solofa, Deputy Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
2. Ms Sapai Moana Matariki, Acting Team Leader (Trade)
3. Ms Manisha Mudliar, Programme Officer, Private Sector