



CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS PARLIAMENTS GROUP

HUMAN SECURITY IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

– NGIBTAL DECLARATION –

We, Presiding Officers and representatives of Pacific Islands Parliaments and Legislative Branches, meeting in Palau on 14 to 16 August 2024, to discuss “Human Development in Oceania: How can legislatures strengthen people-centered security for Pacific Islanders?”;

Having concluded our discussions,

- a. *Considering* that the safety and security of island nations and people throughout the Pacific Island region requires more than a state-centric approach to national security, it necessitates a human security approach that places ‘people’ not ‘states’ central to security analysis, that this approach opens up newfound ways to understand, mitigate, and prevent threats that stem from complex issues;
- b. *Recognizing* that placing ‘people’ as the reverent objects of security is not mutually exclusive to national security, rather, human security reinforces traditional security efforts by taking into account root causes of security issues and leads to better policy making decisions that are aimed at preventing or mitigating instability within our nations and the Pacific region;
- c. *Underscoring* that human security embodies a complex, multilayered, interdisciplinary approach that improves upon how we approach and address security, social, and economic development;
- d. *Recognizing* that being isolated, under existential threat from climate change, and at the crux of rising geopolitical pressures and threats of conflict, makes island nations and individuals extremely vulnerable to local, regional, and global, natural and man-made, destabilizing forces that threaten our social, economic, and governance systems;
- e. *Also recognizing* that human security encapsulates the notion that everyone deserves to live free from the threat of economic, physical, and psychological violence and harm, which requires addressing matters such as: gender-based violence, trafficking of illicit drugs, economic security, and cyber-safety;
- f. *Concerned* that climate change constitutes one of the greatest threats to Pacific Islands and that the culmination of the rise of ocean temperature, sea level rise, deoxygenation, coastal erosion, and

extreme weather events, and the damage that they naturally cause, is accelerated by other human-induced and climate-related pressures, including plastic pollution, threatening the integrity of our ocean, sovereignty, people, and regional security;

- g. *Acknowledging* that climate change, whether it is from manmade actions or natural disasters, serves as a threat multiplier to a number of current island nation vulnerabilities, such as: food insecurity, economic insecurity, outbound migration, and health insecurity;
- h. *Recognizing* that digitalization and artificial intelligence are transforming island nations, particularly that with the advent of the internet throughout the region, individuals, businesses, and governments have the capacity to work, travel, share, and collect information internally and outside of the region;
- i. *Further recognizing* that although new technologies present island nations and people with more opportunities to connect with others, the dependence on the internet also makes us vulnerable to cyber-attacks from antagonistic governments and criminals that can have devastating consequences like bankrupting governments, creating a conducive environment for the occurrence of espionage, and undermining the physical, psychological, and economic wellbeing of people;
- j. *Calling for* risk-informed, multilayered analysis of complex issues, the reduction of silos, and the strengthening of regional cooperation, with the goal preventing and mitigating issues that threaten the security of the Pacific;
- k. *Affirming the* United Nations findings in its 2 January 2024, Human Security Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/665), which provides an update on the advancements of human security since its last report that was released a decade-ago (A/68/685), and reaffirms the relevancy and critical importance of United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/290, which sets forth the global standards, reached by consensus, for identifying the key principles of human security and offers nation-states useful guidance on how to address complex issues;
- l. *Supporting* the Pacific regional framework for human security that was first initiated by the Pacific Islands Forum with the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration in 2007, followed by the Pacific Islands Forum human security framework that provided a common foundation and strategic guidance on how to operationalize human security policies on a local level with a regional outlook, and the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security that was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum leaders in Nauru and subsequently strengthened by leaders by adopting the Boe Declaration Action Plan in 2019;
- m. *Reaffirming* prior commitments to protect the Blue Pacific that have been made by the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group in the Taraho'i Declaration (September 2019) and Fangatapu Declaration (August 2023);
- n. *Reminding* members of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group that human security underpins their commitments made in the Fangatapu Declaration, in particular, commitments to persons and communities affected by climate change, which involves the protection, promotion, and realization of their human rights, diversity, access to water and sanitation, cultural identity, and dignity, including economic, social, and cultural rights;
- o. *Underscoring* the essential role played by parliaments through their legislative and budgetary functions, their role as representatives of their citizens, and their control of governmental actions, which are essential for meeting the complex and multisource regional issues of today;
- p. *Following up* on the commitment made by members in the Fangatapu declaration regarding the strengthening of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group, and the necessary further development of its partnerships with Pacific regional organizations and international parliamentary bodies;

At the end of our proceedings,

On matters of regional interest:

1. *Commit* to promote the development of policies related to human security in a manner that includes citizen engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and intra-governmental cooperation, as well as recognizes the importance of regional coordination priorities;
2. *Urge* governments to define ambitious and effective strategies, based on scientific data and the needs of island populations, supporting proactive people-centered efforts to address climate change, economic instability, cultural erosion, migrations, food insecurity, cyber threats, illicit drug trafficking, gender-based violence, and other measures of well-being;
3. *Continue* to safeguard the traditional knowledge and cultural values of the Pacific in the face of extreme globalization, and in a manner that promotes inclusivity, safety and equality;
4. *Request* executive branches to continue building long-term and sustainable partnerships with our Pacific neighbors to create a new regional architecture that supports peace and security and regional stability, insulated from undue geo-political pressure;
5. *Urge* partners from outside the Pacific, including from administering powers of Pacific territories, to refrain from exerting undue influence or control over political personnel and institutions within Pacific States and territories and respect freedom of speech;
6. *Reaffirm* the need for commitments to implementing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, including regarding its vision for stronger regionalism, reinforced governance and accountability mechanisms, and increased involvement of political leaderships, institutions, and groupings;
7. *Strongly reaffirm* the role parliaments have to play, not only at the national level but also at the regional Pacific level, to ensure that the needs and concerns of the Pacific people are embedded in all national and regional policies and strategies, and recall the role of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group as the main and largest pan-pacific parliamentary body in that regard;

On food security, commit to:

8. *Engage in* the development and implementation of legislative measures to decrease dependence on food imports, cultivate arable land, and support local agriculture and aquaculture;
9. *Promote* the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices and sustainable fishing practices to fortify food systems and bolster sustainable food production;
10. *Support* education initiatives and community outreach on diet, nutrition, and combatting non-communicable diseases;
11. *Participate* in international exchanges and regional collaboration initiatives to share resources and indigenous knowledge on sustainable agriculture and aquaculture techniques, as well as support collaboration between scientific communities and indigenous knowledge communities on food production and security;

On cyber security, commit to:

12. *Pursue* the development and implementation of legislative measures to strengthen cyber security, combat cybercrime, and improve cyber safety;
13. *Promote* the improvement of digital infrastructure, increase defenses from cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, and expand reliable internet access to remote islands;

14. *Request* executive branches to support economic growth and business development by addressing cyber threats to livelihoods and enabling forward-looking online services for businesses;
15. *Call on* governments to build technological capacity in the general population by providing training and education on digital literacy and online safety;
16. *Encourage* social policies that address online hate speech, cyber bullying, and the use of sensitive images for revenge or blackmail, and that foster an online environment of respect, inclusivity, and safety for internet users of all ages;
17. *Foster* regional cooperation and request institutional and private partners to provide the technical assistance and technology transfer necessary to meet these objectives;

On gender-based violence, commit to:

18. *Adhere* to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to eliminate discrimination against women in the exercise of their economic, social, and cultural rights, and of their civil and political rights;
19. *Aim at* supporting national women's machineries to increase awareness among law enforcement, legislatures, civil society actors, and regional organizations to address the widespread prevalence and devastating consequences of gender-based violence, including Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in the Pacific region;
20. *Aim at conducting* a thorough review of and either revising or enacting new local- and national-level legislation aimed at protecting victims of gender-based violence and punishing perpetrators of gender-based violence;
21. *Scrutinize* policies with a gender equity lens to ensure that women have fair and equal access to education, housing, social, financial, and health opportunities;
22. *Propose to commit* resources to address aggravating societal factors that can contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence, such as substance abuse (alcohol and drug), economic inequality, inadequate housing support, and limited educational opportunities;
23. *Establish* accountability mechanisms at national level to monitor the implementation of gender-based violence legislation;

On drug trafficking:

24. *Commit to pursue*, on a local level, the development and implementation of legislative measures that will support better inter-agency and regional cooperation to tackle transnational and local criminal networks and individuals involved in illicit drug trafficking;
25. *Call on* regional bodies to create information sharing mechanisms to develop a more robust regional understanding of the key factors that contribute to the Pacific being a drug highway, to identify the key factors that cause shifts in the ebb and flow of transnational and local drug trafficking networks, and to examine how societal issues, education, economic development, and health problems contribute to illicit drug trafficking;
26. *Commit to* devote resources towards the prevention of drug use and helping vulnerable populations by way of increasing access to mental health services, drug rehabilitation programs, and alternative therapy;

On the future of the cooperation of legislative branches in the Pacific and general matters:

27. *Recognize* the need for the cooperation of legislative branches to be institutionalized at the regional level and become a counterpart to inter-governmental structures;
28. *Create* a working group composed of 5 members of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group (French Polynesia, Tonga, Palau, Fiji, Solomon Islands) with the mandate to analyze the options proposed by the Secretariat; the working group will consult with and report back to all members for approval by the end of 2024, which will be formalized at the next conference in 2025;
29. *Use* the Ngibtal Declaration as a Pacific action plan at national, regional, and international levels, including during meetings of international parliamentary and legislative bodies, such as meetings of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), and the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF);
30. *Instruct* the Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group to transmit the Ngibtal Declaration to regional institutions, in particular the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), as well as to sub-regional, regional and international parliamentary bodies, such as the IPU, CPA, APF, and APIL, and other international agencies and partners.