

Remarks at Pacific Island Forum

09 September 2016

Micronesia

Prime Minister

E&OE

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you to the hard working secretariat in putting together and preparing for this forum. I am here today with my Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and other officials and as Prime Minister I was determined to make this Pacific Island Forum – my first Forum, gathering, since taking office – a priority for four reasons;

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- To underline Australia's long-term commitment as a major and reliable partner on strategic, security, economic and development issues in the Pacific region.
- To reinforce the PIF's role in strengthening resilience and capability to meet the significant challenges facing the region.
- To outline new, substantial commitments by Australia to help to meet those challenges including on support for climate change and improving disaster management and risk reduction - Prime Minister O'Neil has just touched on some of those issues in his intervention.
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- And to listen to your views and exchange ideas on the ways we can intensify and sharpen regional approaches in support of our core and common interests in security, stability and sustainable growth.

My Government recognises that Australia's interests in the region and the complexity of the challenges we face demands more engagement at every level, more integrated policy and fresh ideas. We are committed to a step-change in our engagement, to be guided by a new Pacific strategy to be considered by Ministers later this year and a new foreign policy strategy in a White Paper next year. These initiatives will not only provide longer term policy direction and coherence, but also longer term actions and investment that will support continued stability and resilience in the region. Australia views the Pacific Island Forum as an important partner in our step-change.

We welcome the efforts under the leadership of Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor, to bring greater focus to the PIF's work. We support the framework for Pacific regionalism and progress by the PIF to take forward regional cooperation on key priorities, particularly in relation to climate change and disaster risk management. We see further scope to strengthen the PIF's value-add in generating political support for regional action, and providing practical support to help ensure that action is coordinated and effective.

For Australia there is no more pressing need for regional action than on climate change and resilient development. I was very pleased to represent Australia at the Climate Conference, that's COP21 in Paris and very proud that Australia played a substantial role in securing that historic agreement. Paris set the global framework and we must now work together to implement those commitments in line with our national priorities to important initiatives on

the PIF agenda that will help us as a region deliver on our commitments. Australia supports the new proposed framework for resilient development in the Pacific, the FRDP, which will crucially link work on climate change with disaster risk management. We'll also support the early establishment of the Pacific Resilience Partnership as the mechanism for implementing and coordinating action on the FRDP. Australia has initiated a proposed leaders statement of principles to accelerate action and enhance coordination of climate finance for the region. Again we've had some very constructive submissions from the two banks represented here today on this matter. I want to thank the hard work of PIF members as today we have before us the draft Pohnpei statement of strengthening Pacific action on climate change and disaster risk management. That statement will assert that Pacific national priorities are the basis for action and underline the primacy of the FRDP. We encourage all leaders to adopt the statement.

I also want to briefly outline a major package of new Australian support to manage climate change and improve resilience in the Pacific. Over the next four years we'll provide \$300 million to Pacific Island countries including \$75 million for disaster preparedness. This is an additional \$80 million on the current levels. These investments will be based on Pacific National priorities. We'll engage closely with you on what is most critical now to your countries and will be supported by our overall ODA programs that are increasingly climate-smart. We will also continue to work to secure a substantial share of Green Climate Fund resources for the Pacific, Australia as you know has committed \$200 million to the Green Climate Fund over four years and co-chairs the Green Climate Fund board in 2016. Australia will commence the ratification process for the Paris Agreement shortly and we will ratify it as soon as Parliamentary processes allow. The ratification is not controversial and it will occur if not this year very shortly thereafter. But I am anticipating we will complete it before the end of the year.

We look forward to further discussion on Australia's PIF climate change initiative and on our many other substantial interests in the PIF Agenda, especially during the leaders retreat. Thank you very much Mr Chairman.