



## **FIFTH PACIFIC WOMEN'S MINISTERIAL MEETING**

**RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS, 24–25 OCTOBER 2013**

*Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World*

### **COMMUNIQUÉ**

#### **PREAMBLE**

1. The Fifth Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women was held on 25 October 2013, at the National Auditorium on Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Ministers and officials responsible for women's ministries and departments in 19 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) attended the meeting. Ministers, including the Honourable Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and nominated officials represented American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Representatives of regional, non-governmental, civil society and academic organisations; private sector partners; United Nations agencies; donors; and development partner organisations also attended.
2. The ministers expressed their deep appreciation to the government and people of Cook Islands for hosting the 2013 meeting, for the warm hospitality, for the generous manner in which all delegations to the meeting were welcomed, and for the arrangements made for the meetings. The ministers also expressed their appreciation to the Cook Islands Minister for Internal Affairs for chairing the meeting and to the Kiribati Minister for Education, the meeting's vice-chair.

3. The overall objective of the Fifth Pacific Women’s Ministerial Meeting was to consider the outcomes and recommendations from the 2013 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and to agree on ways to effectively integrate gender equality into national and regional development agenda. The conference reviewed the achievements made so far, as well as the challenges and obstacles encountered, in the efforts of PICTs to promote the advancement of women, protect their legal and human rights, eliminate violence against them, and increase their economic empowerment and access to services. The conference noted the conclusions of the *2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report*, as well as the significance of the *2012 Forum Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration* in renewing their commitment to protect women’s rights and achieve gender equality. The conference also endorsed the review of *The Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015*.
  
4. The theme of the 12th Triennial Conference – Celebrating our Progress, Shaping our World – invited critical reflection on recent progress made and the work still to be done before gender equality can be achieved in the Pacific Islands. The ministers acknowledged that achievements have been variable between and within countries and territories in the diverse areas of gender equity. The ministers called for coordinated and concerted efforts to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality.
  
5. The ministers reaffirmed that the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* was central to any long-term improvement in gender equality in the region.

6. The ministers recognised the need for Pacific Island ministers and parliamentarians to be made aware of gender issues using, for example, parliamentary select committees and advocacy committees.
7. The ministers noted the ongoing need for capacity building on gender at all levels, taking into account local knowledge and experience. They also noted the need for information on gender equality and women's rights to be made available to all women and men, including those in remote and rural areas.
8. The ministers discussed a range of issues that have differential and inter-generational impacts on men and women in the Pacific region, such as climate change, temporary labour migration, economic empowerment, education, NCDs, sexual and reproductive health and rights, health, human trafficking, sorcery-related violence, young women and girls, and extractive industries.

## KEY OUTCOMES

At the Fifth Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting, ministers:

- acknowledged the *2012 Forum Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration*, reflecting high-level political commitment, and welcomed the update on progress in reporting against the declaration.
- endorsed the proposal by the Secretariat to review the *2005 Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005–2015 (RPPA)*. Discussion focused on the purpose, process, and expected outcomes of the review. Ministers requested a results-oriented and outcomes-focused framework, and

recognised the need for a mapping exercise to give an accurate picture of progress on the implementation of the RPPA, which expires in 2015.

- recognised that climate change is one of the most serious threats to the lives of Pacific people, as it can have a devastating impact on people, their land, and their culture. Climate change affects women and men differently. Recognising this, the ministers called for a fundamental shift in policy approach to an approach that incorporates a gender perspective in climate change programmes and initiatives, as well as in regional and international negotiations to support the advancement of gender equality.
- recognised that there will be an opportunity at the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (to be held in Samoa) to further promote gender equality in the context of sustainable development.
- called for the post-2015 development agenda to adopt a transformative stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, as well as for gender to be mainstreamed across all areas of the post-2015 development agenda.
- recognising the current reviews of relevant regional and global instruments, called for accountability through strengthened reporting networking and information-sharing mechanisms among women's machineries, PICTs' parliaments, local governments and civil society in order to support national coordination and accountability to commitments for gender equality and women's empowerment.

- endorsed the need for harmonisation of reporting to minimise costs and reduce the administrative burden on PICTs. Ministers also called for CROP agencies and development partners to provide technical and financial support for PICTs reporting on international commitments, including CEDAW and the Universal Periodic Review. Ministers recommended that work in reporting harmonisation be a core part of the review of the RPPA. Ministers also noted the growing importance of data for national planning and policy development, and requested assistance with training and capacity building in data collection, especially filling data gaps, and analysis.
- noted the increased incidence and reporting of sorcery-related violence, including murder, against women in some PICTs. The ministers also recognised the need to establish measures to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including sorcery-related violence, and to address its causes, consequences and impacts in compliance with human rights frameworks.
- recognised the high prevalence rates of violence against women, young women and girls, including those with disabilities, and the impact of gambling, drug and substance abuse on increasing violence and on sexual reproductive health and rights, and called for urgent and increased investment in policies, programmes, research and legislative reforms that provide services and support, including access to rights and justice.
- acknowledged the importance of temporary labour migration to Pacific Island economies and its recent increase. Labour migration contributes to economic empowerment but the ministers recognised the need to explore both positive and negative impacts of temporary labour migration. Ministers also recognised the need

to review temporary labour migration schemes between countries to ensure they support the advancement of gender equality.

- called for the strengthening of national women's machineries, in particular considering their placement in national governments, institutional strengthening, and enhanced resourcing. Ministers also emphasised the need for renewed commitment by governments, CROP agencies and development partners to support national efforts to support gender equality.
- recognised the threat of human trafficking and urged regional cooperation between governments and relevant stakeholders to take immediate national action to eliminate it by developing and implementing legislation, protection mechanisms, and appropriate support services.
- recognised the importance of cultural industries to Pacific women and called for an enabling environment to support greater access to markets.

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

25 October 2013