

# PACNEWS

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SOL - DIPLOMACY: SOLOMON STAR

PACNEWS 3: Thu 19 Feb 2015

## **Australia reaffirms commitment to Solomon Islands**

HONIARA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (SOLOMON STAR) ---- Australia has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen its bilateral relationship with Solomon Islands.

In a meeting with Prime Minister Manaseh Sogavare on Wednesday, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment, Steven Ciobo reaffirms Australia's stand.

Ciobo said, the meeting he had with PM Sogavare certainly reflects how Australia values its relationship with Solomon Islands.

"We have viewed ourselves as neighbours and more than neighbours as friends," Ciobo said.

He said, the relationship and future of Solomon Islands and Australia has been intertwined.

Adding, what impacts on Australia also impacts Solomon Islands and vice versa.

"In that sense we want to make sure that we want to match our intentions and good deeds on the ground in Solomon Islands....," Ciobo said.

He stressed that with all the issues he and PM Sogavare had discussed, he is confident to strengthen both countries' relationship going forward despite the tough times the two countries have gone through.

Meanwhile, Sogavare thanked Australia for their cordial relationship that has started way back before independence.

Sogavare assured Australia that this is a new Sogavare and his DCC government is happy to move forward and continue to strengthen this relationship learning from the past.

He said, the government and people of Solomon islands is pleased to have Ciobo and to discuss issues of national interest that he hoped will impact positively not only to the country's economy but to the people of this country in various sectors.....PACNEWS

**UAE invited to PIDF leaders summit**

SUVA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (FIJI LIVE) --- Fiji has extended a Ministerial level invitation to the Government of the United Arab Emirates to participate at the third Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) Leaders Summit in Fiji in August.

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama extended the invite to His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during their meeting in Nadi Wednesday.

Bainimarama said they hope the United Arab Emirates will continue to provide financial support for the expansion of PIDF, especially at the early stages of developing a robust regional co-operation framework in the Pacific.

He said Fiji and the Pacific Islands owe a debt of gratitude to the UAE's generous contribution to our very unique Pacific Islands Development Forum, a catalyst for Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) and Territories to address sustainable development issues like climate change, clean renewable energy, and sustainable tourism among other sustainable development initiatives through a Green Economy approach.

"As the Pacific Islands falter in varying degrees on the achievement of their respective Millennium Development Goals the PIDF stands ready to provide the much needed impetus for development."

Bainimarama also offered Fiji's assistance in establishing a diplomatic presence of UAE in Suva.

"In light of our flourishing bilateral relations Fiji stands ready to assist the United Arab Emirates should it consider establishing a 'diplomatic presence in Suva, as the hub of the South Pacific, to serve the PSIDS region. This will not only further strengthen our bilateral relations but more so enhance UAE's strategic presence in the region," said Bainimarama....PACNEWS

PAC – FISHERIES: NIU GOVT

PACNEWS 3: Thurs 19 Feb 2015

**PLG partner with Pew Charitable Trust to address IUU fishing in Polynesia**

ALOFI, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (NIUE GOVERNMENT) ----- The Chair of the Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) and Premier of Niue, Toke Talagi today announced it is in discussion with The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Satellite Applications Catapult partnership, to take part in a pilot scheme which would enhance existing fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) tools currently being utilized in the Polynesian region.

Under the proposed pilot, Member States of the PLG Group, which includes American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu, will have information as to fisheries activities across the PLG region available to them, utilising advanced satellite data and analytics provided by the by the Pew/Catapult partnership under their Project Eyes on the Seas partnership.

In making the announcement, Premier Talagi said: "Our decision to take part in the Project Eyes on the Seas pilot for a six month period is a development which gives the PLG States the opportunity to assess leading edge innovative technology and analytics. This will assist in the management of the fisheries resource, and in particular to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries activity in our region.

"Niue as the current chair of the PLG was given the responsibility for developing this initiative and I thank PLG Member States, Pew and the Catapult for enabling this pilot to be put in place in such a short time frame, said Premier Talagi.

Stuart Martin, CEO of the Catapult said: "Project Eyes on the Seas is developing a data fusion platform that can help analyze fishing activity where it is needed. The platform can analyze different data sources which can be adapted to the needs of the user to supplement or strengthen existing monitoring, control and surveillance systems. It encourages information sharing so that illegal activity can be tracked and dealt with

efficiently by the most appropriate authority. We look forward to working with PLG and with other key stakeholders in this important region."

Once the six month trial is completed Pew Charitable Trusts and the Catapult will provide a detailed report to enable PLG Leaders to assess the initiative and make a decision as to its potential future use, application and possible integration with existing MCS frameworks, such as those developed and implemented to support members of the Forum Fisheries Agency..... PACNEWS:

A/SAMOA - FISHING INDUSTRY: SAMOA NEWS

PACNEWS 3: Thu 19 Feb 2015

### **Tautai Fishing Association asks for disaster relief for longliners in American Samoa**

PAGOPAGO, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (SAMOA NEWS) --- The Tautai o Samoa Longline & Fishing Association has called on the federal government to declare an economic disaster for the U.S. longline fishing fleet in American Samoa and to authorize an emergency measure which would allow the association's fleet to fish in the currently restricted Large Vessel Prohibited Area (LVPA) waters of the territory.

The association's request was made early this month by its president, Christina Lutu-Sanchez to Michael Tossatto, the regional administrator for the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office in Honolulu.

Lutu-Sanchez, on behalf of Tautai Association, asked Tossatto for support in allowing the locally based U.S. longline fishing fleet limited entry permits to access all U.S. federal waters in American Samoa — i.e. seaward from three nautical miles — including within the LVPA.

The Honolulu-based Western Pacific Fishery Management Council will consider at its meeting next month a one-year temporary lift of LVPA for longline fleets.

Lutu-Sanchez identified in her letter 20 U.S. longline vessels that the association represents, which she says include most, if not all, of the longliners that have been active in this fishery.

She pointed out that the Council held public hearings and meetings recently in the territory about the proposed temporary lifting of the LVPA and noted that data the Council presented — which relies on information collected by NMFS — shows that the LVPA area "is underutilized, and further... there is no catch competition or gear conflicts in the LVPA as there are no more small longline vessels fishing in the area..)

Moreover, the American Samoa longline fleet, which targets albacore for sale at the local canneries is on "the verge of economic collapse due to low catch rates, low ex-vessel prices and high operating costs," she explained, adding that at present, most of the vessels are tied up in Pago Pago Harbor.

Further, the local catch rates and low ex-vessel prices are attributed to the substantial increase in catch and efforts of subsidized Chinese longline fishing vessels operating in the region.

She then requested NMFS to support the following:

- authorization of an emergency measure to allow the local longline vessels access to the LPVA. This will provide for immediate relief, allowing vessels to "follow the fish" and promote more efficient operations. "Our situation is desperate, and thus our second request";
- declare an economic disaster for the U.S. long line fishery operating in American Samoa to enable financial assistance.

She said the National Oceania and Atmospheric Administration's fisheries has sufficient information "to justify our request and we ask that you pay close attention to this important issue."....PACNEWS

**Tongan PM questions integrity of acting Attorney General**

NUKU'ALOFA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (RADIO & TV TONGA) --- Tonga's Prime Minister, Akilisi Pohiva has questioned the integrity of the acting Attorney General, Aminiasi Kefu in a letter dated 13 February, according to *Radio & TV Tonga News*.

In the letter, PM Pohiva said his concern was also raised in the last Parliamentary session of 2014 because of public concern over lack of transparency and accountability with the decision to keep deferring the cases of Lord Tu'ilakepa and Lord Tu'iha'ateiho.

The Prime Minister said he found Kefu's involvement as Solicitor General at the time, and now acting Attorney General in Lord Tu'ilakepa's criminal case to be very disturbing. He claimed that Kefu ignored public empathy, impartiality, independence and fairness to the people in pleading a lesser severe sentence for the defendant.

He also questioned whether it is normal for a Crown Barrister to be directly involved in seeking a lesser severe penalty for the defendant with the presiding judge of a case.

"This may have been the norm with past administrations but this practice has no place in his government, said PM Pohiva.

The Prime Minister also queried whether a similar plea was made for Lord Lasike's case.

"These cases were similar in most aspects yet "Lasike's case" was rushed through to be heard first. It is no coincidence that the rushed hearing coincided with the "Vote of No confidence" in the last government, said the Prime Minister.

*Radio Tonga News* contacted the Acting Attorney General, who was in Washington DC., He said the PM's concerns were based on a misunderstanding of judicial proceedings and the role of the Attorney General.

Kefu will provide his response when he returns to Tonga next week.... PACNEWS

## PACNEWS BIZ

**Fiji Airways explores opportunity for codeshare with Air India**

SUVA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (EXPRESS TRAVEL WORLD) --- Fiji Airways, the national carrier of Fiji is exploring opportunities to have codeshare with Air India.

Speaking exclusively with Express TravelWorld, Faiyaz Koya, minister for industry, tourism and trade, Government of Fiji said, "Currently, the traffic from India to Fiji is comparatively very small. As of now we do not see a possibility for a direct flight from Fiji to India. But we have had several talks with the Government of India for a codeshare between Fiji Airways and Air India. We want to increase the connectivity between India and Fiji. Singapore Airlines is also one option we are looking at to have a codeshare."

In 2014, Fiji witnessed an increase of eight per cent in the number of Indian travellers visiting the island nation.

Koya said, "We have hit the 3000 mark in 2014 which shows a steady increase of eight per cent compared to 2013. In this year we will like to double the figure as India is an important source market for us. In 2015 we expect a growth rate anywhere between 15 to 20 per cent."

Recently, Tourism Fiji launched an exclusive brochure for 2015 with Kuoni-SOTC for the Indian travellers. The brochure was unveiled in the presence of the Fijian delegation which included Faiyaz Koya, minister for industry, tourism and trade and Lorna Eden, assistant minister for industry, tourism and trade as well as Rajeev Wagle, managing director, Kuoni India; Vishal Suri, CEO- tour operating, Kuoni India and Amod Thatte, head- product and innovation- tour operating, Kuoni India.

From white sand beaches to pristine natural environment, Kuoni- SOTC has included holiday experiences that are designed to explore and discover the best of Fiji. Kuoni- SOTC also offers customised and escorted group holiday options to Fiji starting Summer 2015, which allows travellers to choose from affordable accommodation or exclusive five star resorts.

Suri said, "It is indeed a pleasure to partner with Fiji Tourism who continues to deliver a world-leading destination and helps us understand the wonder of Fiji. With the growing interest seen in Fiji as a holiday destination, Kuoni- SOTC brings to Indian travellers the exclusive experiences in Fiji designed to indulge them in the islands of Fiji."....PACNEWS

SAMOA- SEASONAL WORKERS: SAMOA OBSERVER

PACNEWS BIZ: Thu 19 Feb 2015

### **PM Tuilaepa warns Samoa's seasonal workers**

APIA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (SAMOA OBSERVER) ---- Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi said the seasonal workers that went on strike in Australia were not mistreated, "they are lazy."

Speaking to the media, Tuilaepa assured the country that the workers have been warned.

"We have a list of their names and the villages they are from," he said.

"If anything happens again, the Village Councils will be notified so they can make a decision on those who have wasted the opportunity given by government ... causing embarrassment to the country...people might think Samoans are lazy.

According to Tuilaepa once he received the news of the workers going on strike, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of the Prime Minister, Vaosa Epa left Samoa to resolve the problem.

However, the report he received from Vaosa, was that the workers weren't mistreated or discriminated against, they were simply being lazy.

"They were angry because the Tongans picked 40 boxes of grapes and they only filled 20 boxes," said the Prime Minister.

"They should understand that if you get 60 boxes you get more money for your work but they wanted to stop when they had 20 boxes but they are very muscular.

"She (Vaosa) arrived there and the Tongans were working while our workers were sitting under the trees laughing. So they have been warned if this happens again, they will not get that chance anymore."

Tuilaepa also made a comparison to the seasonal workers in New Zealand who worked twice as hard. He pointed out that while the Australian seasonal workers pick grapes, the ones in New Zealand have to climb ladders to pick apples.

"Samoans are popular for the work of picking apples in New Zealand because of their hard work and at the end of the week, one man got more than \$1,000 for his work," he said....PACNEWS

**Vava'u airport gets ready for regional flights**

VAVAU, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (TONGA DAILY NEWS) ---- Tonga's Lupepau'u Airport in Vava'u should be ready to serve regional flights soon with the current upgrading that is being funded by the World Bank.

The recent installation of a Security X-Ray machine at the airport marks Tonga Airports Limited's (TAL) efforts to advance preparations for regional connectivity through direct air links to Vava'u.

A statement from TAL said the security equipment, manufactured in Germany specifically for the Vava'u Terminal by Smiths Detection, is valued at TOP\$130,000 (US\$62,000). The X-Ray unit will be used for screening of passengers and hand-held luggage on departing international flights, as required by international aviation security standards.

An upgrade of the Vava'u Terminal was also recently completed with the renovation work providing new bathroom and toilet facilities, new signage throughout the terminal and an upgrade to the check-in counter area. The renovation work also valued at TOP\$130,000 was completed last week.

The Chief Executive of Tonga Airports Limited, Viliami Ma'ake said they are now negotiating with Fiji Airways for direct flights from Nadi to Vava'u.

"We are currently in discussions with Fiji Airways to explore opportunities for direct flights from Nadi to Vava'u and also connecting Vava'u directly to Australia, Samoa, New Zealand and the United States of America," he said.

"It is important that the support facilities at Lupepau'u Airport (Vava'u) are strategically planned to facilitate the proposed regional and international flight links."

Ma'ake said the new development would help boost the local economy in Vava'u.

"The economic value that these new routes will bring to the Vava'u economy will be significant as more jobs will be created. Opportunities to boost tourism development in Vava'u will be major with increased flights and new markets," Mr Ma'ake said.

"TAL is grateful to the World Bank for their ongoing support in developing safe and secure air transport operations and environmentally sustainable airports in the region.

"In addition to the new security system and the recent terminal upgrade, Lupepau'u Airport will also receive new Navigational Aids and a new runway, all financed by the Tonga Aviation Investment Project. Their support towards sustainable development of the aviation sector in Tonga is greatly appreciated by TAL."

Construction of the Vava'u Airport Runway by McConnell Dowell will commence early next month with an expected completion by the end of June this year.

Installation of the Navigational Aids is expected to commence later in July.

The Tonga Aviation Investment Project is a component of the Pacific Aviation Investment Program financed by the World Bank supporting aviation sector expansion in Samoa, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tonga....PACNEWS



# PACNEWS DIGEST

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## **Place people at the core of development - Dr Jiko Luveni, UNFPA Pacific High-Level Champion**

SUVA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (UNFPA PACIFIC) ---- From being the first woman to graduate as a dentist from the Fiji School of Medicine in 1967 to being the first woman Speaker of Fiji's House of Representatives in 2014, Dr Jiko Luveni remains modest in her attribution to local communities as her most invaluable and critical learning spaces.

"It is so crucial that people who want to serve the nation, must serve people first and foremost, they must understand the psyche of the people that comprise their citizenry," Dr Jiko said in her office yesterday, the day after the official announcement of her as the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Pacific High-Level Champion.

"The UNFPA mandate area of population is or should be at the centre of all development programs, whatever it is, it is for the people. It has to be understood in the perspective of people's age group, geographical location, their financial situation, gender - all these has an impact on the needs of a population.

"This is the only way that we can then accurately and realistically address the needs of people or how exactly to make a difference in their own lives. You make a difference in people's lives, you are making a difference at national level and this is why in whatever I do, it is always with population considerations."

In a candid interview, Dr Luveni described how in her younger days, accessibility to contraceptives to unmarried individuals was unheard of, and nurses followed a strict policy of issuing contraceptives only to married couples.

Dr Luveni spent 15 years (from 1988) at the UNFPA Pacific staff member where her medical training which by now had included a University of Sydney Public Health Dentistry qualification (1982) was complemented by a better understanding of the dynamics of population and development.

Dr Luveni discussed the importance of recognizing the inextricable link between decisions as private as the number of children one wanted and the spacing between them, and the national capacity to ably provide for its populace.

"We must continue our efforts towards the empowerment of women; they have a lot of influence on their children and husbands as well, they run households so that the livelihood and quality of lives of each family member is really up to them," she said.

"And now in Parliament as the first woman Speaker of the House, I represent women and I must perform to the best of my ability so that other leaders including men are convinced that we are as capable in leadership roles.

"There has been and continues to be a global and national effort to improve the status of women and I believe in Fiji, the women, we are doing our part and getting there and we are slowly improving our status to achieve our target according to Beijing where 30 per cent of women must be in leadership roles including Parliament."

During the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, some 180 world leaders endorsed a 20-year programme of action; the conference defined sexual and reproductive health and rights as: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system, its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a safe and satisfying sex life, that couple have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Governments are encouraged to ensure that policies and services are conducive for people to be able to enjoy reproductive rights; specifically, comprehensive and correct information and a full range of health-care services, including family planning, which are accessible, affordable, acceptable and convenient to all users.

Discussions of achieving gender equality indicators like reaching the 30 per cent participation threshold or empowering young women to make choices for themselves are all related to sexual and reproductive health; if girls and young woman do not have autonomy over their own bodies then decision-making processes for other aspects of their lives are already curtailed.

"To champion or advocate for a particular issue, one would have to sincerely believe in the cause. To champion an issue is to believe in the potential change for the better," Dr Laurent Zessler, the UNFPA Pacific Director and Representative said during the official announcement of Dr Jiko's new role as the UNFA Pacific High-Level Champion.

"It is to our advantage that she had not lost her personal interest and commitment to the various mandate areas of the UNFPA - from reproductive health issues to those surrounding violence against women," She said...PACNEWS

# PACNEWS DIGEST

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## Organic farmers of the Pacific to support Year of Soils

SUVA, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (SPC) --- Recognising that soil is one of the essential elements for life, along with water, air and sunlight, organic farmers across the Pacific region will be actively supporting the 2015 United Nations International Year of Soils.

Through the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), organic farmers and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) will be raising the awareness of civil society and decision-makers about the fundamental role of soils for human life.

"Soil isn't something people think about a lot, but it's the basis for our lives on this planet, from food to housing to clean water," the POETCom coordinator, Karen Mapusua said.

"It takes around 2000 years for just 10 centimetres of soil to be made through the earth's natural processes, but according to the University of New Mexico through poor management we are losing about 6.4 billion tonnes of soil globally each year"

"If we're going to be able to feed ourselves in the future we have to save our soils. There are over 5000 certified organic farmers in the Pacific and many more using traditional organic practices that improve soil health and even build soil- these farmers play an important role in protecting our soils and ensuring food security," Mapusua said.

The campaign will include regular articles, info-graphics and YouTube clips available through the POETCom webpage [www.organicpasifika.com](http://www.organicpasifika.com), which will aim to promote effective policies and actions for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources, as well as to provide everyone with simple things that we can all do to contribute to 'soil saving' and 'soil building'.

"You can join the campaign by sharing through your networks the resources and information we will be developing throughout the year, and which will be available on our Facebook page Organic Pasifika," Mapusua said.



POETCom is a network of organic farmers and supporters across the Pacific islands region. POETCom works in partnership with European Union and the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the secretariat is supported by SPC.

For more, please visit: [www.organicpasifika.com](http://www.organicpasifika.com) or Facebook/Organic Pasifika

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# PACNEWS DIGEST

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## Powerful women speak out on violence

PORT MORESBY, 19 FEBRUARY 2015 (AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION) ---- Australian High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, Deborah Stokes, and First Lady Lynda Babao-O'Neill have launched a book – Powerful Voices – and film -Harim Mi - featuring women speaking out on violence against women and girls in Papua New Guinea.

Produced by FHI 360 with Australia's support, the book and film contain stories of 49 women from 10 communities in Western Highlands and Sandaun provinces.

FHI360, in collaboration with other community based organisations, provided cameras and trained women to use digital photography to document their lives and speak out. Ms Stokes said the book and film present different community and services perspectives on stopping violence.

"They show how community action to end violence against women and girls can be taken when men and women stand together. They also illustrate the need for community actions to reduce violence against women and girls to be supported by effective action by the police and courts, as well as by the delivery of education and health services," Ms Stokes said at the launch on Wednesday 18 February.

Babao-O'Neill said the film and book demonstrate the confidence and self-worth of empowered women.

"I am delighted to see the level of confidence and the courageous step these women have taken to share their stories and of the communities that are supporting and embracing this change. In Papua New Guinea, and indeed in many countries in the world, it is often difficult for a woman to talk about personal struggles and challenges. It is my hope that women across our country will gain strength and courage from the Powerful Voices in this book and the film. I thank the Australian Government, FHI360 and all those who have made this possible," Babao-O'Neill said.

The book and film are part of the Komuniti Lukautim Ol Meri initiative, involving 200,000 people in Sandaun and Western Highlands, which works to prevent and respond to violence through mobilizing communities, education, improving access to services and empowering women and girls. Australia has provided AU\$2.8 million to this program through the Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen program.

Stokes announced Australia would provide a further AU\$2.5 million over three years for FHI360 to continue this work.

"Gender equality and women's empowerment is a key priority in Australia's engagement with Papua New Guinea. We recognise that one of the best ways to achieve stronger communities, societies and economies is to empower women and girls," Stokes said.

Australia will spend up to AU\$55 million in PNG, through the Pacific Women Program, to enhance women's voice in decision making and leadership; increase their economic opportunities; reduce family and sexual

violence, and increase access to support services to women and girls and families can be strengthened...PACNEWS