



## Pacific Island leaders show global leadership on marine conservation

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Nadi, Fiji - Pacific Island leaders have renewed their commitment to invest in island conservation at this year's 37th Pacific Island Forum.

The leaders' commitment was made at the Global Island Partnership's event: Beyond the Micronesia Challenge, Sustainable Livelihoods for Pacific Communities. The event was hosted by H.E Joseph Urusemal, President of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM); H.E Kessai H. Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and H.E Tommy E. Remengesau Jr, President of the Republic of Palau.

Fiji opened the event describing their progress since the Government's bold commitment at the Mauritius International Meeting in January 2005 to conserve marine resources in 30% of Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters through the implementation of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) by 2020.

Fiji fully supported the Pacific Island Leaders' call to put conservation on the Forum agenda and identified it as crucial to ensuring the long term security of local, national and regional economies, culture and livelihoods. Along with Fiji, Palau, FSM, RMI, the US flag territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Kiribati are setting the pace for long-term conservation efforts in the region and have made major commitments to protected areas.

The Presidents of three Micronesian countries – FSM, RMI and Palau – all highlighted the importance of expanding regional and international financing support for conservation programmes. “All Forum island countries should be afforded the opportunity to clearly establish the value of conservation to development, the ongoing costs to ensure that the intrinsic cultural and biological

value is maintained and to be able to finance their conservation measures effectively,” said Palau President H.E Tommy E. Remengesau Jr. He called on the Forum to prioritise international financing for sustainable development, natural resource management and climate change in implementing the Pacific Plan.

H.E Joseph J. Urusemal, President of FSM, highlighted key areas for sustainable development including fisheries, agriculture and eco-tourism and emphasised that conservation and development are not opposing forces but rather complementary to each other.

It is a “time for islands” said President Anote Tong of the Republic of Kiribati and urged fellow leaders to work together and scale up national and regional conservation efforts to ensure sustainable livelihoods for Pacific island people. He emphasised the importance of making links and developing partnerships in the north with the Micronesia Challenge, in the south in Melanesia and Polynesia and across the region as a whole.

The leading examples of Kiribati and the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, the Government of Fiji and the implementation of a network of MPA’s by 2020 and Palau, FSM, RMI, Guam and CNMI announcing their collective commitment to the Micronesia Challenge, are all actions to “scale up efforts at national and regional levels to take care of the natural resource base that supports all our livelihoods,” he added.

Major donors pledged financial support for Pacific Island conservation activities. The European Union stressed the importance of stronger regional cooperation in capacity building and is increasing its regional cooperation funding for sustainable management of natural resources, vulnerability and governance from Euro29 million (F\$64 million) to Euro77 million (F\$170 million). The United Kingdom introduced a new programme being developed to support climate change work in the Pacific. The United States of America announced a total of US\$460,000 made up of US\$250,000 for the Micronesia Conservation Trust to assist FSM with early actions on the Micronesian Challenge; US\$160,000 to RMI for waste management and US\$50,000 for regional invasive species work.

Pacific Island nations are inspiring islands and countries with islands around the world to work together to effectively manage the marine and terrestrial resources that are the foundation for island development and prosperity and are the natural resource base on which the island way of life relies.

**For further information:**

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**Notes to Editor:**

1. At the Mauritius International Meeting in January 2005, the Government of Fiji announced a bold commitment to conserve its marine resources in 30% of Fiji's EEZ waters through the implementation of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) by 2020. This year at the Eighth Conference of the Parties (COP8) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the United States Territory of Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas announced their collective commitment to the Micronesia Challenge: to effectively conserve at least 30% of their marine and 20% of their forest environments by 2020. The Government of Kiribati also declared the Phoenix Islands a Marine Protected Area - now the third largest in the world.

2. Since its formation in 2005, the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) has engaged and supported more than 20 countries and 20 international, national and local organizations in high-level commitments and action for island conservation and sustainable use, including enabling more than US\$25 million is support. The Partnership is unique in the way it brings together political leadership, technical expertise, government, NGO's and donor support to action island priorities as identified by leaders of small and large, developing and developed island nations, island territories and nations with islands.



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