



State of the Pacific Ocean Convening

June 8 - 11 2026 | Suva, Fiji

OUTCOME STATEMENT

The Ocean has long been the home of Pacific peoples, and key to our survival and wellbeing. It is the foundation of our identity, our spirituality and worldview, as well as the source of our sustenance, cultures, economies, food systems, histories, relationships and futures. It is the pathway that connects our islands and communities. The ocean defines us - We are the ocean; the ocean is within us. Our relationship with the ocean cannot be defined by the resources it provides. Instead, it is our responsibility as guardians to ensure the health and life of the ocean, the lungs of our planet, which is our connection. The health of the ocean and the health of Pacific communities are inseparable.

Today, the Pacific region stands at a pivotal moment. Our lands, oceans, skies, territories, and communities face increasing pressures that threaten sovereignty, self-determination, and ability to determine our own futures. The challenges confronting our region are many and varied, but they affect all who call the Pacific home. Climate change, rising sea levels, coastal inundation, biodiversity loss, the destruction of marine habitats and coral reefs and declining ocean health; hyper-militarisation and nuclearisation; and new forms of economic extraction, such as deep-sea mining, are reshaping and threatening the Pacific in profound ways. There is a human cost. Threats to the environment's health displaces and fragments communities, and diminish traditional knowledge and social cohesion. Collectively, these factors not only threaten our ecosystems and livelihoods but also pose an existential threat to our cultures, identities, and way of life as Pacific peoples.

The legacy of Pacific Civil Society movements shows a long and sustained history of Pacific peoples defending our ocean home. Reflecting on past struggles, particularly the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP)¹ movement, serves as a powerful antidote to the simmering apathy of today. By recounting these historic mobilisations, communities reclaim the memory of their hard-won victories against formidable global powers and broader historical processes that threatened their very existence. This historical consciousness transforms past lessons into active, contemporary resilience. Ultimately, honouring the past ensures that current generations do not view justice as an impossibility, but as Pacific people's shared heritage; we are tasked with claiming.

The State of the Pacific Ocean Convening 2026 is a strategic regional CSO-led dialogue centred around governance to address the mounting environmental, economic, and geopolitical pressures threatening the sovereignty and resources of the Pacific region. Held in Suva, Fiji, and anchored

¹ The Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement is a prominent, regional grassroots but as a tradition they are tasked with continuing initiative formed in the mid-1970s that directly linked the fight against nuclear testing with the struggle for indigenous self-determination and decolonisation

in the spirit of World Oceans Day, the gathering provides a platform to address external threats such as climate change, blue economy, pollution, and hyper-militarisation.

The Convening's primary purpose is to move beyond mere awareness towards strategic, collective action by interrogating the state of ocean governance through the lens of Pacific indigenous heritage and lived experiences of our peoples. To foster this collective strategy and enhance the safeguarding of our region, the convening invited a diverse range of regional stakeholders, including Indigenous and traditional leaders, government representatives, civil society and faith-based organisations (CSOs), including International NGOs, and academics.

Climate change is placing the Pacific Ocean under extreme stress. The global response to climate change has failed abjectly to meet the scale and urgency of the climate crisis. The promises and commitments made by the major emitters remain insufficient to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and an overshoot of global temperatures risks triggering more tipping points.

The climate-ocean nexus is not only an environmental challenge but a question of jurisprudence, justice, governance, and self-determination. Recent international legal instruments, together with regional instruments such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the Boe Declaration, the Treaty of Rarotonga, and the emerging Ocean of Peace Declaration, provides significant opportunities to hold polluters, corporations and governments who are in denial of the climate crisis accountable, prevent future harm, and strengthen Pacific leadership in ocean governance.

The Pacific has long been treated as a strategic theatre, a nuclear playground, subjected to experimentation of new forms of weapons, a site for the storage of radioactive waste, a military frontier and a zone of geopolitical competition. The legacies of greed, World War conflicts, military occupation, nuclear 'testing', and colonial domination continue to shape the region today. Between 1946 and 1996, over 300 nuclear explosions were conducted across the Pacific and Australia. The impacts of this history continue to be felt across generations.

At present, contemporary forms of militarisation are re-emerging in the Pacific through security alliances such as AUKUS², technological weapons advances, strategic partnerships, defence binding treaties³, and the acceleration of military infrastructure and exercises throughout the region. The militarisation of development can now be seen through the attachment of security priorities to development assistance, economic cooperation, infrastructure development and climate mobility. The hyper militarisation of the Pacific is driven as an 'island chain' logic by foreign powers to secure resources and to offer up island zones of sacrifice in the event of a third world war.

Pacific Security is equally about justice, human rights, sovereignty, self-determination, a healthy environment and the ability of communities to live in peace. It is not about foreign military insecurities. At a time of a triple planetary crisis, unresolved nuclear legacies, and increasing

² AUKUS is the agreement between Australia, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom which includes an agreement about the provision of nuclear powered submarines to Australia, and greater military sharing and integration. The text of the agreement can be found at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Tabled_Documents/6967

³ The Pukpuk Treaty (PNG, 2025) and Vuvale Union (Fiji, 2026) are two distinct but related landmark security and partnership treaties signed between Australia and Pacific Island nations to enhance regional stability and bilateral cooperation.

extractive pressures, Pacific peoples must not be reduced to strategic outposts or pawns for competing powers.

Economically, the region is faced with significant challenges. Pacific Island governments continue to face financing constraints, revenue shortfalls, and exposure to global economic shocks⁴ beyond their control. Many of our Pacific states now see past colonial interests return as investors to secure the same extractive outcomes from our islands and futures. The economic models imposed on the region prioritised liberalisation, unfair trade arrangements, and development frameworks that do not allow regional governments to determine their own economic futures. International institutions and powerful foreign states have played a significant role in defining the rules governing trade, finance, and development in the region, frequently in ways that privilege external interests.

The push to engage in exploratory and dangerous resource extraction, such as deep-sea mining, is fracturing the region's unity and diverting energy from regional economic responses. This voracious thirst for and pursuit of critical minerals and strategic resources risks repeating longstanding patterns in which Pacific lands, waters, and peoples bear the costs while external actors reap the benefits. There is a need to align national economies with domestic priorities, utilising state policies and resources to ensure that investment, infrastructure, and emerging sectors contribute to a development plan that is people- and sustainability-centred. Pacific communities are consistently resilient, enduring various crises through *kastom* approaches to land and resource management, community solidarity, and economic models that are centred on communal wellbeing and extended beyond purely cash-based models.

Overall, these sustained onslaughts on the Pacific Ocean and our peoples are vast and interconnected. Climate change, ocean degradation, rising levels, coastal inundation, militarisation, and economic extraction do not exist in isolation from one another. Together, they represent overlapping pressures on Pacific sovereignty, wellbeing, ecosystems, cultures, and futures, and pose deep and real threats to Pacific peoples and cultures. They also reinforce the importance and urgency of collective action. By strengthening Pacific solidarity, centring Pacific knowledge and values, and advancing Pacific-led responses, we can better confront these challenges and safeguard the ocean that sustains us all.

In acknowledging the current state of the Pacific Ocean, we therefore:

- call for the recognition of Pacific peoples as custodians of a living ocean, and that Pacific Indigenous spiritualities, epistemologies and methodologies, customary stewardship and cultural relationships with the ocean must be seen as the foundation for all decision-making related to the ocean.
- call on all Pacific cultural and political leaders and governments, development partners, research and technical institutions, faith-based organisations, and civil society organisations to reject false solutions such as deep-sea mining that threaten the health and sovereignty of oceans, and that perpetuate neocolonisation and recolonisation under the guise of security cooperation, climate action and economic development.

⁴ This was further demonstrated during the global pandemic of 2020 and the recent United States-Israeli war against Iran.

- recognise the interconnectedness of Pacific peoples and the issues facing them and call for greater solidarity and coordinated action, rooted in Pacific values and practices, in confronting the challenges posed by climate change, militarisation, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation and deep-sea mining.
- call for the strengthening of Pacific-led research, advocacy, storytelling, arts, media, movements and grassroots mobilisation so that Pacific narratives, voices, and solutions remain at the centre of global conversations on the future of the ocean.
- affirm the value and importance of Indigenous science, practices, and governance in ocean guardianship, also affirming the need to engage the Pacific caucus in regional and international policy spaces and dialogue.
- call for a Pacific future built on peace and demilitarisation, ensuring the region is genuinely nuclear-free and rejects the doctrines of nuclear deterrence, strategic ambiguity, and commit to safeguarding measures that addresses contemporary challenge of aggressive military build-up in the region.
- affirm that the struggle for ocean justice must be inclusive and intersectional, and call for meaningful participation of women, SOGIESC communities, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups at all levels of ocean governance, recognising that their knowledge, leadership, and lived experiences are essential to the protection of our ocean and the realisation of Pacific self-determination.
- affirm the expansion of the Pacific Parliamentarians Alliance on Deep Sea Mining (PPADSM) to the Pacific Ocean Leaders Alliance (POLA), as a broader platform and unified voice for Pacific parliamentarians and leaders to engage on ocean issues and to provide greater opportunities for the involvement of other leaders.
- agreed that the State of the Pacific Ocean Convening must be maintained by Pacific civil society, and continue to meet biennially. Vanuatu will host in 2028.