

# FACT SHEET: Roadmap for a 21st-Century U.S.-Pacific Island Partnership

SEPTEMBER 29, 2022 • STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

*The Biden-Harris Administration announces U.S. commitments to implement the Declaration on U.S.-Pacific Partnership*

The first-ever United States-Pacific Island Country Summit marks a new milestone in U.S.-Pacific cooperation. It builds on a long history, forged in sacrifice in World War II and reinforced by strong people-to-people ties. As an outcome of the Summit, the President and Pacific leaders issued the Declaration on U.S.-Pacific Partnership, a forward-looking vision statement reflecting our shared commitment to expand and deepen our cooperation in the years ahead. The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to implementing this vision; to that end, President Biden announced a slate of ambitious initiatives to meet Pacific priorities.

**The United States has directly provided over \$1.5 billion to support the Pacific Islands over the past decade and today has announced over \$810 million in additional expanded programs.** These initiatives seek to improve the lives and wellbeing of all Pacific Islanders by expanding diplomatic engagement, including through the historic announcement that the United States will recognize Cook Islands and Niue, following appropriate consultations; combatting the climate crisis; launching a new Trade and Investment Dialogue; providing development assistance; enhancing maritime security; expanding educational opportunities; enhancing security, health, and digital capacity; and addressing painful legacies of war. These new initiatives include the 10-year \$600 million Economic Assistance Agreement request to Congress, which is associated with the South Pacific Tuna Treaty. Additionally, the Administration's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment aims to deliver game-changing projects in the region.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration we will:

## **I. STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT U.S.-PACIFIC ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP**

The foundation of the U.S. approach in the Pacific is strong and productive partnership with the Pacific Islands.

- ***First-ever National U.S. Strategy for the Pacific Islands:*** The Biden-Harris Administration has launched the first-ever U.S. Pacific Partnership Strategy for the Pacific Islands. This strategy is an addendum to the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States and will align with the Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.
- ***Recognition of Cook Islands and Niue:*** The United States will recognize the Cook Islands and Niue as sovereign states, following appropriate consultations.
- ***Executive Education for Rising Pacific Leaders:*** The United States will encourage and support opportunities for rising leaders in public service across the Pacific Islands. As an example, Johns Hopkins SAIS is establishing a first-of-its-kind executive-leadership program in Washington, D.C. for such leaders.
- ***Supporting the Tuna Treaty:*** The United States has pledged to request a ten-year, \$600 million Economic Assistance Agreement associated with the South-Pacific Tuna Treaty. This assistance will support fisheries economic development, collaboration on climate resilience, blue economy and maritime security. State Department has already committed \$10 million to support broader cooperation under the treaty.
- ***Resilience and Adaptation Fellowship Program for Rising Leaders:*** The Administration will work with Congress to commit \$5M to establish a fellowship program in partnership with the University of the South Pacific and premier universities in the United States, such as the University of Hawaii and University of California Santa Barbara. The program will offer rising leaders in the Pacific Islands the opportunity to gain expertise in natural resource economics and management, climate resilience, sustainable food systems, renewable energy development, water security and waste management.
- ***Compacts of Free Association:*** Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau have formed a bedrock of U.S.-Pacific cooperation for nearly four decades. In light of the critical nature of these complex negotiations, President Biden appointed Ambassador Joseph Yun as Special Presidential Envoy for Compact Negotiations in March. Since then, Yun has led an interagency team that includes senior officials from the Departments of State, Interior, Defense, Energy, and the White House in multiple rounds of negotiations. We expect the negotiations for all three Compact agreements to conclude by the end of this year; current agreements expire in September 2023 for the FSM and RMI, and one year later for Palau. At the Summit, leaders of FSM, RMI, and Palau expressed appreciation at the progress in the negotiations and expressed a strong desire to conclude the negotiations by the end of this year.

## II. BUILD U.S. CAPACITY IN THE PACIFIC

The United States is investing in diplomacy across the Pacific by expanding the number of facilities, officers and programs active in the region. By expanding our own capacity, we will better meet the needs of our Pacific partners. In addition to the establishment of U.S. Embassies in Solomon Islands, Tonga and Kiribati, the United States is announcing:

- ***First-Ever Envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum:*** The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to Pacific regionalism, with the Pacific Islands Forum at the center, as a vital part of the Indo-Pacific regional architecture. To that end, President Biden designated former Ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Nauru, and Tonga Ambassador Frankie Reed as the first-ever U.S. Envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum. In this new capacity, the Ambassador will expand U.S. ties and coordination with the Pacific Islands Forum and its members.
- ***Elevate USAID Presence in the Pacific:*** Working with Congress, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will open a Pacific regional mission in Suva, Fiji by September 2023, and elevate its presence in Papua New Guinea through a country representative office.
- ***Return and Expansion of the Peace Corps:*** Peace Corps volunteers will return to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu to support communities on education, health, community economic development, and climate action. Additionally, the Peace Corps is finalizing its assessment of Solomon Islands and exploring options for returning to other Pacific countries.

## III. COORDINATE WITH ALLIES AND PARTNERS

The United States will amplify its efforts to support the Pacific in close partnership with its allies and partners, including through the new Partners in the Blue Pacific initiative.

**Partners in the Blue Pacific:** The Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP), launched in 2022, is a new effort from the United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom to make our partnership, individually and collectively, with the Pacific more efficient and effective. The Partners welcome the intent of Canada and Germany to join, as well as the engagement of France, the European Union, the Republic of Korea, and India; the PBP invites further cooperation with all those that share its values, objectives, and approach – principally that of consultation and partnership with the Pacific. The PBP will focus on six prospective lines of effort:

- *Climate Change Resilience, Adaptation, and Disasters*
- *Secure and Resilient Technology and Connectivity*
- *Protection of the Ocean and Environment*
- *People Centered Development*
- *Resources and Economic Development*
- *Political Leadership and Regionalism*

#### **IV. TAKE URGENT ACTION ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS, CLEAN ENERGY, AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

The United States will continue to play a leading role in accelerating global efforts to combat the climate crisis in this decisive decade, recognizing the existential threats this crisis presents to the Pacific Islands. The United States will address climate challenges in the Pacific with an investment of over \$130 million in substantial resourcing, support, and partnerships, and leverage an additional \$400 million in private financing.

- ***Support for Climate Forecasting and Research:*** The Biden-Harris Administration will provide new funding, subject to Congressional notification and domestic procedures, to help forecast climate and extreme weather events in the Pacific Islands. The Administration intends to:
  - Provide \$15 million to help Pacific Islands adapt and build resilience to climate change and extreme weather events by enhancing their ability to identify, anticipate, and prepare for climate impacts on public health and safety, food security, water resources, coastal and ecosystem management, and overall sustainable development.
  - Provide \$7 million to expand Pacific Island weather and ocean data collection that will provide more accurate and reliable information on ocean conditions that are critical to sea-state forecasts and formulating advisories and warnings to ensure public safety.
- ***Ocean Mapping Support:*** The United States is partnering with Palau and other Pacific Island countries to advance ocean mapping projects that will be used to make informed decisions about how to use ocean resources sustainably.
- ***Resilient Pacific Blue Economy Program:*** The Administration is working with Congress to provide \$4.8 million to establish a Resilient Blue Economies program. The program will help the Pacific Islands

climate-proof their “blue” economies. The program will strengthen the capacity of the Pacific Community to combine climate science, marine spatial planning, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture governance, and marine conservation to promote resilient Pacific economies across the region.

- ***Climate-Smart Infrastructure:*** Under its Global Partnership for Climate Smart Infrastructure, the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) will help mobilize more than \$400 million in financing for climate projects that advance Pacific Island countries’ net-zero goals. These activities will also facilitate the deployment of U.S. private-sector solutions in renewable energy and grid modernization to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga, while helping these countries meet their clean energy, energy security and decarbonization goals.
- ***Cooperation to Combat Wildlife Trafficking:*** The Biden-Harris Administration will provide \$3.25 million in capacity-building to Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu to combat wildlife trafficking and support implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- ***Sea-Level Rise:*** The United States is adopting a new policy on sea-level rise and maritime zones. This policy recognizes that new trends are developing in the practices and views of States on the need for stable maritime zones in the face of sea-level rise, is mindful of the Pacific Island Forum’s Declaration Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-Level Rise, commits to working with Pacific Island States and other countries toward the goal of lawfully establishing and maintaining baselines and maritime zone limits, and encourages other countries to do the same.
- ***Natural Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance:*** Together with its Partners in the Blue Pacific, the United States will provide \$5 million, pending Congressional notification and domestic procedures, to bolster the Pacific Islands’ ability to detect and respond to devastating natural disasters. In addition, in 2022, USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance is providing over \$14 million to Pacific Islands countries in both humanitarian response and early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience programming in the region.
- ***Pacific American Fund:*** In 2022, USAID awarded eight new sub-grants under the Pacific American Fund with a total value of \$4.9 million that benefit eight Pacific Island countries (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). Subject to availability of funds, USAID intends to award a new round of grants under the Pacific American Fund in 2023

with a value of up to \$6 million. These grants seek to bolster communities' resilience to disasters and climate risks; enhance livelihoods; improve food security, access to water, health and education; support governance; and encourage sustainable natural resources management and biodiversity conservation.

- ***Climate Adaptation and Other Foreign Assistance:*** The State Department and USAID intend to support \$27 million in programs and technical assistance with the Pacific Islands that invest in adaptation and energy resilience and advance good governance. For example, these programs may support the region's transition to low emission development by promoting sustainable forest management and improving the sustainability of clean energy investments.
- ***Addressing Pacific Regional Challenges:*** The FY 2023 President's Budget includes \$51 million for the State Department and USAID Pacific Islands Regional programming. Programming will address transnational challenges including transborder natural resource issues and biodiversity, regional connectivity and energy security, climate change, and health security.

## **V. FORGE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

The United States will target more than \$50 million in direct support for Pacific Island recovery to enable strong growth for years to come.

- ***Trade and Investment Dialogue:*** The United States will establish a Trade and Investment Dialogue with the Pacific Islands to promote trade and address market access barriers. We will work with Pacific partners to establish this dialogue by the end of 2022, to credibly target economic, investment, and market-access needs in 2023.
- ***Memorandum of Commercial Cooperation with Pacific Island countries:*** The United States will develop a tailored Memorandum of Commercial Cooperation to facilitate U.S. private-sector engagement in Pacific Island countries on priority projects in infrastructure, climate and energy security, digital connectivity, gender equality and equity, and health and health security.
- ***Support for Infrastructure in the Pacific Islands:*** The Biden-Harris Administration will invest in infrastructure across the Pacific, including climate-smart infrastructure. It will:
  - Deploy, through the Pacific Island Strategic Infrastructure Initiative, \$3 million in technical assistance from USTDA to support feasibility

studies, environmental-impact studies, and other project preparation assistance required to help unlock financing for public infrastructure projects, pending Congressional notification and domestic procedures.

- ***Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST)***: The United States is committing \$500,000 to expanding GIST into the Pacific to help island countries increase environmental and economic resilience by kick-starting businesses that focus on technology solutions to resiliency challenges, pending Congressional notification and domestic procedures.
- ***Transportation Partnership with the Pacific Islands***: The Administration will provide \$7 million in new funding through USTDA and the Department of Transportation, pending Congressional notification and domestic procedures, to support technical assistance on sustainable transportation infrastructure and accelerate decarbonization of the transportation sector. The Partnership will promote the implementation and integration of emerging technologies to make transportation systems in the region safer, cleaner, smarter and more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- ***Expanding Electrification Partnership***: The Biden-Harris Administration announced an additional \$18 million, subject to Congressional notification and domestic procedures, to expand USAID's Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership (PEP) throughout the Pacific Islands. USAID's PEP activity supports a multilateral partnership with Australia, Japan, and New Zealand that seeks to expand energy access in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and provide a framework for expanding this partnership throughout the Pacific Islands. Through an investment of \$18 million, USAID intends to increase the region's access to affordable and clean energy, improve the performance of energy utilities, promote transparent private sector investments in the energy sector, and expand off-grid clean energy systems in the region.
- ***Port and Aviation Connectivity***: USTDA will deploy over \$1 million in partnership-building activities that will connect the Pacific Islands with U.S. private sector solutions that can meet their transportation infrastructure needs. USTDA will support an Airport Checkpoint Design Reverse Trade Mission that will bring aviation security representatives from Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa to the United States.
- ***Indo-Pacific Opportunities Program***: USAID will invest \$1 million to strengthen Pacific Islands' abilities to manage domestic financial resources to respond to economic shocks, improving capacity to better plan for, finance, implement, and manage infrastructure investments.

- ***Tourism in Solomon Islands:*** The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) will launch a new partnership with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Culture and Tourism aiming to spur tourism investments and jobs in the Solomon Islands. The United States and Solomon Islands signed a \$20 million threshold program grant agreement to reduce poverty by addressing constraints to economic growth in the tourism and forestry sectors.

## **VI. BOLSTER SECURITY COOPERATION AND MARITIME PROTECTION**

Geography links the United States' security to the Pacific Islands. In addition to its existing capacities in the region, the United States will focus on investing in the Pacific Islands security capacity, including coast guards, law enforcement, and disaster response.

- ***Maritime Security and Marine Protection:*** The State Department is partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard to provide over \$3 million to enhance U.S. Coast Guard training and capacity-building in the Pacific Islands for maritime security and marine protection.
- ***Law-Enforcement Training:*** The State Department is partnering with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to provide \$2.8 million for FBI-led law enforcement training to Pacific Island countries. Launched to enhance the capacity of the law-enforcement community in the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Palau, this program will expand in 2022 to include Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands.
- ***Bilateral Security Negotiations:*** The United States is currently engaged in bilateral security negotiations with Fiji for a new Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and will soon begin negotiations with Papua New Guinea on a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). The United States will pursue other opportunities to negotiate agreements that support Pacific objectives to respond to humanitarian disasters and protect their maritime domains.
- ***Global Defense Reform Program:*** The State Department will deliver \$2 million in new assistance to improve security-sector governance and institutional capacity of select U.S. partners through advisory support efforts.

## **VII. IMPROVE DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND CYBER SECURITY**

The United States will invest in work with the Pacific Islands to improve the region's connectivity, bandwidth, and cybersecurity.

- ***Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership:*** The Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Program will support up to \$3.5 million over five years to support the digital transformation of Pacific Islands countries. It aims to foster an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure digital ecosystem in the Pacific Islands. Its priorities are to improve broadband access, strengthen digital policy and regulations, advance digital platforms and solutions for the delivery of public services, and enhance digital skills and literacy.
- ***Capacity to Fight Cybercrime:*** The State Department will provide \$1.6 million for capacity-building in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu to detect, disrupt, and successfully prosecute cybercrimes.

## **VIII. COMBAT COVID-19 AND SUPPORT HEALTH SECURITY**

COVID-19 has wrought devastation on the world, including in the Pacific; the United States will provide further assistance to the Pacific, including additional vaccines and economic assistance.

- ***COVID-19 Vaccines:*** To date, the US has provided over 1 million life-saving doses of Pfizer vaccine to countries in the Pacific Island countries and continues important efforts to get “shots in arms”. We are proud to have delivered over 620 million doses to over 116 countries. We continue to stand ready to offer vaccine doses to countries who need them through our partnership with COVAX to AMC eligible countries in the Pacific rim region and around the world.
- ***Global Health Security Expansion to Pacific:*** Building on the \$57 million in COVID assistance USAID has provided to the region since 2020, USAID plans to invest \$5 million in Global Health Security (GHS) funds, to strengthen prevention, detection, and response capacities in PICs to minimize threats posed by emerging infectious diseases.
- ***Diminishing Dengue with Climate Services:*** The State Department intends to provide an additional \$500,000 to develop dengue early warning and response systems in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau, to advance regional health security and climate resilience.

## **IX. ADDRESS WAR LEGACIES**

The United States is committed to addressing the scars of war across the Pacific region.

- ***Addressing Unexploded Ordnance:*** Throughout the Pacific, the United States directly assists nations to expand safe land use for agriculture, infrastructure, development, and tourism projects through remediating unexploded ordnance (UXO). In Palau, the United States just provided \$1.1 million to continue its support to a sustainable national UXO clearance program through the National UXO Safety Office. In the Solomon Islands, the United States is initiating a \$1 million project to assist the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to survey and remove UXO. The United States is also exploring UXO assistance options for Kiribati and the Marshall Islands in late 2022 and maintains a Quick Reaction Force to support UXO engagements across the Pacific at the request of host nation partners.

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