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INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF PACIFIC EDUCATION MINISTERS

Theme: Empowering Education for Pacific People

Conference for Pacific Education Ministers Meeting

Auckland, New Zealand, March 20-22, 2023

Conference for Pacific Education Ministers met collectively over three days to discuss key educational issues facing the Pacific region.

Ministers acknowledged the hospitality and logistical support provided by the Government of New Zealand and the University of the South Pacific.

Ministers were particularly pleased to receive reports from key agencies relating to the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF). Diverse matters such as the PacREF Mid Term Review; monitoring and evaluation; inclusive education; early childhood education; the status of education report 2022; and linkages to the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent.

A variety of stakeholders including the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), UN agencies, development partners and donors, civil society organisations in the Pacific, youth representatives and other partners were part of the discussions.

The context for the Ministerial meeting was provided by a keynote address delivered by the New Zealand Minister of Education, Hon Jan Tinetti. The Ministers responded with relevant national statements and articulated key issues that required further attention.

The Ministers agreed that the Conference for Pacific Education Ministers 2023 consider significant concerns that will need to be addressed collectively and through their national systems with support from regional agencies and education partners.

The key issues identified and agreed are:

- ***Indigenous Knowledge, Culture and Language***: Ministers agreed that indigenous knowledge, culture and language should be embedded in curriculum development, teacher training programs and delivery.
- ***Teacher Quality***: Ministers committed to increasing support to programs that ensure quality of teachers in the region and providing the opportunity for sharing best practices through exchange program.
- ***Climate Change and Resilience***: Ministers agreed to strengthen climate literacy and resilience.
- ***Gender Responsive Education policies***: Ministers agreed to promote and empower women in leadership roles.

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- ***Early Childhood Education***: Ministers agreed to the centrality of early childhood learning and development.
- ***Data Integrity and Sovereignty***: Ministers endorsed the need and accessibility for quality data to support regional and national initiatives. They also expressed the need to promote cyber safety and ensure cyber security measures are in place. A sub-committee chaired by USP will further investigate and report at the next Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES) meeting.
- ***Effectiveness***: Ministers remained committed to the PacREF process and will continue to secure future funding for such an important regional initiative and ensuring that resources are directed accordingly with the view to maximizing returns and producing student-centered results.
- ***Student Inclusiveness***: Ministers committed to ensuring that education is available to all learners irrespective of their challenges.
- ***Labour Mobility***: Ministers continued to recognise the importance of labour mobility schemes, noting that brain-drain has exacerbated, resulting in the need to strengthen local training providers.
- ***National Education Financing***: Ministers recognised the importance of securing adequate funding from their national budget processes, and sought clarity on appropriate thresholds for their national context. Ministers referred this matter to PHES.
- ***Technical Vocational Education Training including Sports Development***: Ministers agreed to the importance of developing skills and student pathways to create opportunities that meet learner aspirations and abilities.
- ***2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent***: Ministers strongly endorsed the linkages between education and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Pacific Education Ministers **reaffirmed** their commitment to PacREF and implore development partners and implementing agencies to provide support in progressing this critical agenda.

Ministers **acknowledged** the immense support of the New Zealand Government and the important contributions of all stakeholders.

Finally, Ministers **accepted** the kind offer from the Papua New Guinea Minister, to host the next CPEM in 2025 in Port Moresby.

END