



**PacREF(23)1**

## **1<sup>st</sup> Conference of Pacific Education Ministers**

Aotea Centre, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

20 – 22 March, 2023

*Theme: Empowering Education for Pacific People*

## **OUTCOMES DOCUMENT**

1. Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum member countries met for the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (1CPEM) on 20 – 22 March 2023, with the theme, ***“Empowering Education for Pacific People”***. In attendance were Ministers of Education from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and together with representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Caledonia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau. CROP agencies were represented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Education Quality Assessment Programme (SPC-EQAP), The University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). Development Partners included representatives from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Australia-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC). A full list of participants is attached as ***Annex 1***.

2. Members of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and student associations based in New Zealand and around the region participated at the inaugural CPEM illustrating the principle of inclusivity as a guiding driver of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF). Their participation was consultative, and members were given the opportunity to participate in the roundtable discussions and CSO Forum and reported to the Ministers on the outcomes of their Forum.

**MONDAY 20 MARCH 2023**

**POWHIRI – OFFICIAL WELCOME AND OPENING**

3. Participants were welcomed to Aotearoa New Zealand by Ngāti Whātua with a Powhiri at the Aotea Centre. Ministers and participants were accorded the welcome ceremony and official opening of the Conference.

## **PRE-CONFERENCE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS**

### **Roundtable Discussion Groups**

4. Participants were divided into four roundtable discussion groups based on the sub-themes of the overarching Conference theme. Each of the roundtable groups were introduced by a Minister as follows:

- |                                   |   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| (i) Quality and Relevance         | - | Niue            |
| (ii) Education Finance            | - | Fiji            |
| (iii) Building Resilience         | - | Kiribati        |
| (iv) Access, Inclusion and Equity | - | Solomon Islands |

### **Plenary**

5. The recommendations from each roundtable group were presented to a plenary session after the roundtable discussions so that all participants had an opportunity to provide inputs into the roundtable recommendations.

6. Refer to Day 2 outcomes for the full recommendations from the roundtable discussions. Attached as *Annex 3*.

## **SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING**

7. Senior officials met on Day 1 of the Conference to discuss various issues which included a revised PacREF Phase 1 Implementation Rolling Plan and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. A report from the senior officials meeting was presented to the Ministerial meeting on Day 2 of the Conference. Attach report as *Annex 4*.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS FORUM**

8. The Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) organised their Forum on Day 1 of the Conference. The CSOs included university students and their associations and teacher associations from across the region. The CSOs presented their recommendations to Ministers on Day 2 of the Conference and which are captured in the outcomes for Day 2 proceedings. Attach report as *Annex 5*.

## **DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FORUM**

9. The Development Partners (DPs) organised their own forum on Day 1 of the Conference which was attended by the following DPs; UNICEF, UNESCO, ADB, World Bank, USP (IOE), EQAP, APTC, MFAT, DFAT, Uniservices, COL. The outcomes of the DPs forum were presented to Ministers on Day 2 of the Conference and had further discussions with Ministers during the reporting back session. This is provided as *Annex 6*.

## **WELCOME AND OPENING BANQUET**

10. The welcome and opening banquet was hosted by the Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister for Education, New Zealand.

11. The Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, Hon. Carmel Sepuloni, delivered the keynote address highlighting New Zealand's on-going commitment to the Pacific region in the education sector and other development areas.

12. The USP Vice Chancellor and President (VCP) delivered an address on behalf of USP as the region's premier higher education institution. As co-facilitator for the CPEM, he assured USP's continued support towards PacREF and progressing education policies for the region. He reaffirmed USP's model of regionalism and collective collaboration.

13. The Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) delivered an address representing PIFS as the regional partner to the implementation of the PacREF programme. In his address he focused on ensuring education is key in achieving the vision of our Pacific Leaders as reflected in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

## **TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023**

### **OPENING SESSION**

#### **Karakia – Devotion**

14. The Vice Chancellor & President (VCP) of the University of the South Pacific, Professor Pal Ahluwalia called the meeting to order.

15. The Karakia was conducted by the Honourable Minister for Niue.

#### **Opening remarks**

16. The USP VCP warmly welcomed the Ministers and participants to the Inaugural Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM) 2023. He thanked the Ministers for availing themselves to participate in the Conference and reiterated USP's commitment towards the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) by hosting the PacREF Facilitating Unit (PFU). The VCP also expressed appreciation to New Zealand for hosting the Conference and USP was happy to be co-convener.

17. The VCP also informed the Ministers that the PFU is now well established within USP and accessing facilities such as IT services, meeting/conference facilities, support from finance and human resources departments and utilities such as water and electricity free of charge.

## **Election of Chair**

18. The VCP conducted the election of the Chair. In accordance with FEdMM (the predecessor of CPEM) tradition, the VCP proposed the New Zealand Minister for Education Hon Jan Tinetti, as Chair of the CPEM23. Ministers unanimously endorsed the proposal and was cleared. Hon Jan Tinetti at this point assumed the position of Chair.

## **Adoption of Agenda**

19. Hon Tinetti in assuming the position of Chair of the CPEM23, then referred the meeting to the Programme and called for any amendments. There were no amendments from the floor and the Programme was adopted.

## **SESSION ONE: KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON JAN TINETTI**

20. Hon Tinetti delivered her keynote address focusing on the Conference Theme; “*Empowering Education for Pacific People*”. Honourable Minister highlighted New Zealand’s key policy initiatives on education, women, culture and preservation of the indigenous languages for all Pacifica peoples. Full text of the speech is appended as *Annex 2*.

21. Ministers were provided the opportunity to discuss and raise key points in response of Hon. Tinetti’s address. These points included:

### ***Indigenous language, culture and identity***

- Acknowledgement of shared cultural and historical links, our similarities in Pacific aspirations and challenges for Education and the need to address collectively.
- Highlighting the important influence Pacific languages, culture and identity have on the greater wellbeing of learners and the need to preserve this to improve outcomes for students.

### ***Teacher training and resources***

- Explore opportunities for connection between teachers and students across the region for mutually beneficial learning and development experiences.
- Prioritise responsive and evidence-based training programmes that prepare teachers to empower Pacific learners.

### ***Curriculum review and development***

- Curriculum refresh opportunities taking priority over assessment reforms.
- Prioritising Inclusive curricula – embedding indigenous knowledge, climate change and resilience that support the holistic development of the learner
- Increased commitment to provide TVET and skills development and higher education pathways, ensuring that all students have the opportunity for further training in line with their skills, aspirations and potential.

- Focus on “all life skills” for a richness of development – inclusion of non-cognitive skills and values-based education in school curriculum and integrated into teaching and learning programmes.
- Empowering women and girls to aspire to leadership positions across all sectors.

## SESSION TWO: REPORT UPDATES

### (i) Report of the PacREF Mid Term Review

22. The Mid Term Review of the PacREF programme was conducted by a Team contracted by ADB. The purpose of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) was to provide guidance to the Pacific Education Ministers, key stakeholders, and the region’s Development Partners (DPs) on the future directions of the PacREF Programme.

23. The MTR assessed:

- the Programme’s progress towards meeting its output and outcome objectives,
- how the intended Phase 1 Programme was progressing against Implementation Rolling Plan (IRP), and
- how well the Program was aligning with ongoing and emerging country education programs.

24. The review found the Programme to be **working better than expected**, given COVID and other constraints. The Programme provides an efficient model and processes for the development and delivery of regional goods and services across each of the PacREF policy areas. There was also consensus that the PacREF policy areas were a strength of the program and remain highly relevant to the needs of individual countries who were very positive about progress to date and optimistic about future gains.

25. In their discussions Ministers acknowledge and commended the work on PacREF and called on donor and development agencies for continued support to take forward and elevate PacREF.

26. Ministers acknowledged and commended the work by implementing agencies in mobilizing resources to support the implementation noting the delayed of Phase 1 activities and challenges due to COVID-19.

27. Ministers recognize the need to improved coordination of implementing partners recognizing human resource constraints at national level.

28. Ministers highlighted the importance of ensuring gender responsive policies for education under the PacREF.

29. Ministers endorsed the recommendations of the Mid Term Review and proposed way forward.

#### ***Decision:***

30. *Ministers:*
- considered*** the main recommendations of the review as highlighted; and
  - approved*** the proposed responses to the recommendations.

(ii) **Status of Pacific Education 2022**

31. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Education Quality Assessment Programme (SPC-EQAP) presented on the **Status of Pacific Education Report 2020** based on educational indicators categorized into the four policy areas of the PacREF. This is the second Status of Pacific Education Report being presented to FEdMM with the first at the 11<sup>th</sup> FEdMM, 2018.

32. Ministers in discussing the report, noted the report and importance of data-based evidence that will inform work going forward and highlighted the need to ensure reporting of indicators are aligned to PacREF indicators.

33. Tasked the Secretariat to further investigate the data sets and results provided in the update, and how to work with education systems in designing of data collection tools.

**Decision:**

34. *Ministers:*

- a. **agreed** for the report to be published and data released on the Pacific Data Hub to inform regional development partners and international stakeholders.

(iii) **Monitoring, evaluation and learning**

35. The Education Quality Assessment Programme (EQAP) presented the monitoring, evaluation and learning report of the PacREF programme implementation. The report highlighted activities under the Phase 1 Implementing Rolling Plan (IRP) that are in progress under each of the Policy Areas. It also highlights some challenges faced and what lessons have been learned in the course of implementation.

36. In their discussions of the report, Ministers highlighted the need to support national plans to align with PacREF reviews and budget allocated accordingly.

37. Ministers also committed to ensuring that Early Childhood Education (ECE) at national level is prioritised and increased investments to lift achievement of primary and secondary results and further highlighted the need for strengthened policies that will inform Early Childhood Education frameworks and their full implementation ensure community and parental engagement in the process.

**Decisions:**

38. *Ministers:*

- a. *noted the challenges faced in implementing the Programme and support the embedding of PacREF into national education sector plans;*

- b. *discussed the research findings and requested implementing agencies to develop a strategy for regional collaboration based on research findings.*

(iv) **Inclusive Education Review Report**

39. UNICEF in presenting the report informed Ministers that at the 12<sup>th</sup> Forum Education Ministers Meeting in April 2021, Ministers decided to formalise the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Taskforce as part of the Pacific education architecture. Ministers also directed that country representation on the Taskforce be elevated to Ministerial level and that this representation should correspond to accepted sub-regional groupings. As an interim measure, those countries that were already members of the Taskforce through previous participation of senior officials took this role - Niue and the Federated States of Micronesia. The Melanesian sub-region did not gain representation this way, so the Solomon Islands as the Melanesian representative on the PHES Steering Committee took this place for the short term. This interim measure was to be in place until the inaugural CPEM meeting where Ministers are asked to confirm ministerial representation for a tenure that lasts to the next CPEM.

40. In their discussions Ministers supported the work by the Inclusive Education Taskforce and commended the progress to date and further committed to ensuring these are included in national policies.

**Decisions:**

41. *Ministers:*
- a. ***formalized the Ministerial sub-regional representation to the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Taskforce, as per the taskforce ToR, to provide oversight and leadership to this work through to the next CPEM;***
  - b. ***agreed to provide high-level oversight to national level responses to the findings and recommendations of the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Review and mandate their senior officials to take-action on this and provide regular progress reports with the support and coordination of the taskforce; and***
  - c. ***directed the taskforce and UNICEF, as its Secretariat, to finalize a regional 2-year workplan for the taskforce and submit this to the PHES Steering Committee at their next meeting.***

(v) **2022 Status Report on ECE Systems in Pacific Island Countries and Territories**

42. **The draft 2022 Status Report on ECE Systems in the PICTs** summarizes the current status of ECE systems across the five core functions<sup>1</sup> in 15 participating countries and territories. The 2022 Status Report builds upon the 2015 and 2017 versions; however, it adopts a more detailed and systematic review to better capture the status and progress achieved in ECE in the Pacific region. The Status Report focuses on strengthening the ECE sub-sector, as a critical foundation to the education sector and as part of multi-sectoral early childhood

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<sup>1</sup> Planning and Budget, Human Resources, Curriculum, Performance Monitoring & Evaluation, Family & Community Partnerships

development (ECD). The five core functions outlined in the Pacific Guidelines for Quality ECE identify specific components of effective, equitable and high quality ECE systems and were disaggregated into sub-functions to guide a detailed rating of systems in each country (UNICEF, 2020). UNICEF advised that the 15 country focal points would participate in validating findings and co-designing recommendations before finalization of the report.

43. Ministers in their discussions raised the need to increase investments in early childhood education and to consider the role of family and community in all stages and areas of development. Ministers highlighted the importance of ensuring women and girls are empowered through early childhood development and are well represented in the decision-making processes

#### **Decisions:**

44. *Ministers:*

- a. ***accepted the report in principle and agree for their senior officials to support its finalization of the analysis and recommendations through their ECE focal point; and***
- b. ***agreed to identify and design relevant nationally led interventions in response to the recommendations.***

(vi) **Report from Day 1**

(a) **Report from the Senior Officials Meeting**

45. Senior Officials at their meeting agreed to conduct four key research items as recommended by the Joint Oversight Mission (JOM) to be supported by ADB. A comment was made during the presentation to Ministers if further consultations could be held with the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Community – Education Quality Assessment Programme (SPC-EQAP) to ensure regional context is brought into the researches.

46. Senior Officials also agreed to the Funding Strategy to progress Phase 2 of the PacREF Implementation. (*See Annex3 for full report*)

(b) **Report from Civil Society Organisations' Forum**

47. CSO's addressed the importance of inclusiveness in education, the invaluable contribution of young people in education leadership ensuring greater and more relevant links between education outcomes and livelihoods. CSOs also called for the need for greater investment om strategic cultural, spiritual, and political 'spaces for engagement'. Recommendations are provided as *Annex 4*.

(c) **Presentation on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Ocean**



48. **Recognised** the critical role education will play in realising the 2050 Strategy Vision set by Leaders, and called for vernacular languages and tradition and culture to be accentuated in the first implementation and Monitoring Plan; and

49. **Discussed** the linkages between the PacREF and the 2050 Strategy and directed the PacREF Secretariat, Senior Officials, and Implementing Agencies to work together to ensure policy coherence between the two moving forward.

### **SESSION THREE: CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATION FROM PARTNERS**

#### **(i) Recommendations from the Multi-Stakeholder Roundtables**

50. The main recommendations from the four Roundtable groups Ministers addressed key issues and endorsed proposed way forward is provided as *Annex 5*.

#### **(ii) Recommendations from the Development Partners**

51. Development Partners reaffirmed their commitment to strong coordination for engagement and investment in the education sector across the Pacific and regular dialogue with national education systems.

52. Development Partners welcome the opportunity to engage in the review of Pacific architecture, including for education and PacREF, and work with the review to ensure that coordination structures are fit for purpose. (*See Annex 6*)

### **WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2023**

#### **Field visits**

53. Ministers and senior officials went on a field visits to selected schools on the morning of the third day of the Conference.

### **MINISTERIAL RETREAT REPORT**

54. The Ministerial Retreat was held on the afternoon of Wednesday 22 March 2023 at the Hyundai Sports Centre, Te Kawau Room, Auckland. The Ministerial Retreat usually does not have a formal agenda as it is meant for Ministers to dialogue and exchange views on issues of importance to education in their own countries and the region. The full report of issues discussed is annexed as *Annex 7*.

55. At the end of the Retreat, Ministers requested the drafting committed to provide a summary of main decisions made during the Conference which could be taken as the *Commitment to Action*. This Commitment to Action was then approved by Ministers as key decisions taken at the Conference for consideration by the PacREF programme, and all partner agencies.

**(i) Release of Conference Paper**

56. Ministers agreed to the release of the following Conference papers:

- a. PacREF(23) CPEM.03 Mid Term Review of the PacREF programme*
- b. PacREF(23) CPEM.04 Status of Pacific Education 2022*
- c. PacREF(23) CPEM.05 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Report*
- d. PacREF(23) CPEM.06 Inclusive Education Review Report*
- e. PacREF(23) CPEM.07 2022 Status Report on ECE Systems in Pacific Island Countries and Territories*

**(ii) Venue of next Conference of Pacific Education Ministers**

57. The Minister for Education, Papua New Guinea, offered to host the next Conference of Pacific Education Ministers in 2025 to which Ministers unanimously gave their approval.

**CLOSING CEREMONY**

58. The Conference participants joined Ministers at the retreat venue for the closing ceremony. This was in the form of a cocktail and refreshments where the Papua New Guinea Minister announced that the next CPEM will be hosted by Papua New Guinea in 2025.

***MFAT/USP***  
***22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023***

## **ANNEX 1**

### **List of participants for CPEM23**

#### **AUSTRALIA**

Ms. Edwina Betts  
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Ms. Sophie Fisher  
Department of Education

Ms. Belynda McNaughton  
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#### **COOK ISLANDS**

Ms. Danielle Cochrane  
Secretary  
Ministry of Education

#### **FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA**

Mr. Wayne Mendiola Jr.  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Education

#### **FIJI**

Hon. Aseri Radrodro  
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Ministry for Education, Heritage and Arts

Mr. Timoci Bure  
Acting Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

Mr. Maika Moroqa  
Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

#### **KIRIBATI**

Hon. Alexander Teabo  
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Ms. Roreti Eritai  
Secretary  
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#### **NAURU**

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Minister for Education & Training

Ms Darrina Kun  
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**NEW CALEDONIA**

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Ms. Cécilia Madeleine  
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Alfred Shuster  
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#### **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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Hon. Robert Naguri  
Member of Parliament  
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Dr Uke Kombra  
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Mr Andrew Boli  
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Ms Maureen Yali  
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Ms. Angellah Kingmele-Anisi  
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Mr. Paul Beumelburg  
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

**TONGA**

Hon. Siaosi 'Ofa-ki-vahafolau Sovaleni  
Prime Minister & Minister  
Prime Minister's Office & Ministry of Education and Training

Mr Isikeli Oko  
Director - Secondary Schools & SEE  
Ministry of Education and Training

**TUVALU**

Hon. Timi Melei  
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Dr. Tufoua Panapa  
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**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

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Ms Elaine Lameta  
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**Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP)**

**University of the South Pacific (USP)**

Professor Pal Ahluwalia  
Vice-Chancellor & President

Mr Walter Fraser  
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Mr. Filipe Jitoko  
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Dr Seu'ula Johansson-Fua  
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Ms. Ana Veikune  
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Dr Rosiana Lagi  
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Dr. Fiona Willans  
Senior Lecturer



## Discipline of Education

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Mr. Nilesh Kumar  
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### **Pacific Community (SPC)**

Dr. Paula Vivili  
Deputy Director-General

Dr. Michelle Belisle  
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Educational Quality and Assessment Programme

Mr Gregory Keeble  
Education Statistician

Mr Seci Waqabaca  
PacREF Implementation Adviser

### **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)**

Mr. Henry Puna  
Secretary General

Ms. Manaini Rokovunisei  
Social Policy Adviser

Mr. Joel Nilon  
Pacific Regionalism Adviser

## **DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

### **Asia Development Bank (ADB)**

Ms. Emma Margaret Veve  
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PacREF Facilitating Unit

Mr. Barry Peddle

Consultant  
PacREF MTR

**Australian-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)**

Ms Nicki Baird  
Interim Executive Director

**Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Secretariat**

Mr. Kanazawa Daisuke  
Senior Education Specialist

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

Ms. Aya Aoki  
Education Programme Specialist

**United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

Ms Anna Smeby  
Chief Education Division  
UNICEF Pacific

Ms Gail Townsend  
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UNICEF Pacific

Ms. Victoria Fray  
WASH Advisor  
UNICEF Aotearoa New Zealand

**Annex 2:**

**Conference of Pacific Education Ministers - Keynote Address**



**HON JAN TINETTI**

Education

*E nga mana, e nga iwi, e nga reo, e nga hau e wha, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou kātoa.*

Warm Pacific greetings to all. It is an honour to host the inaugural Conference of Pacific Education Ministers here in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Aotearoa is delighted to be hosting you all. This is a significant moment in our history, for us to gather and meet face-to-face - or in te reo Māori, hui kanoahi ki te kanoahi – to learn from each other and reinforce our shared social, cultural, and historical links.

Although this is the first conference, I am aware that this group has a deep-rooted history, dating back to the first Forum Education Ministers Meeting in May 2001 – again right here in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Since then, I understand you have met 12 times; the last being a virtual meet in April 2021.

Before I go further, I want to pay special tribute to the University of the South Pacific for their leadership for this conference and for the implementation and progress on the Pacific Regional Education Framework.

I know that, standing here before you, in my first international engagement as Aotearoa Minister of Education that I have a lot of work to do. But I will do it alongside all of you here today.

Before I continue, I would like to share a bit about myself and my journey to where I am today.

Prior to entering Parliament, I spent over 20 years as a primary school principal. My last position was as a principal at Merivale School, one of Tauranga’s most financially disadvantaged schools. That school is about a two-and-a-half-hour drive from where we are.

Merivale was having some issues when I started there. Some teachers were worried and unable to help their learners participate in their learning. Together we knew we had to get our community engaged so, as principal, I hosted a series of community meetings in the homes of parents and whānau.

I said at those meetings I am the learner here and I want them to tell me what it is they want for their school. And it is through these conversations with the learners and their parents, our iwi and hapū, and the wider community, we were able to identify the issues and work together to address them.

And over time, whānau and family engagement began increasing, which then helped turned things around for the better.

This is very much my approach to this meeting. With my ‘learner hat’ on, I am looking forward to a constructive dialogue guided by the principles of collaboration, reciprocity and respectful exchange of perspectives and ideas on education issues and challenges we all face, as well as look to the opportunities.

I think we can agree that we all want the same things; to improve learner outcomes and wellbeing, strengthen our institutions, and maximise our shared resources.

I’d like to take this opportunity to share some of Aotearoa New Zealand’s experiences in how we are addressing some of our challenges.

Prior to the pandemic, our education system was undergoing a transformation to deliver equitable outcomes for all learners.

Our journey began with Kōrero Mātauranga in 2018. This was a nationwide conversation with educators, learners, parents and whānau, Māori and Pacific communities, disabled people, business groups, and many others on what the pressing issues were in the education system that prevent our children and young people from succeeding.

They told us that to support learner success, we must transform towards an equitable and inclusive education system that recognises the language, culture, and identity of every learner, and one that fosters powerful connections with families and communities in supporting learning of our children and young people.

To enable this, we needed to address these issues from different system levels – from policy, engagement, and implementation, down to the cultural capabilities of every individual involved in supporting all learners in our education system.

We began by reframing our legislative and policy settings.

In 2020 we passed the new Education and Training Act, which provides a legislative framework to support the transformational changes we intend to make to enable an education system that supports learner health, safety, and wellbeing, assures the quality of the education, and enacts Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

To support this act, we developed the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities and updated the Tertiary Education Strategy, which direct government, early learning, schooling, and tertiary sector activities towards the actions that will make the biggest difference for all learners.

These priorities also guide the government’s wider education work programme to reshape our education system, which includes the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030.

Action Plan for Pacific Education Aotearoa has a growing, diverse Pacific population. It is predicted that the proportion of Pacific children and young people will reach nearly 20 percent of the learner population by 2030.

With this comes many opportunities for the cultural and social growth of Aotearoa in the future.

Education is key to realising the benefits from these opportunities. It provides strong foundations for life-long learning and enables our young people to contribute strongly to society.

Currently, we have around 70 Pacific bilingual and immersion early learning services and around 35 schools offering Pacific bilingual and immersion education. And while our education system has come

a long way, with Māori and Pacific learners showing the greatest achievement gains over the last decade, they are still experiencing significant disparities in the education.

The Action Plan for Pacific Education maps the Government's commitment to transforming outcomes for Pacific learners and families and signals how early learning services, schools and tertiary providers can achieve change for Pacific learners and their families.

It sets a vision for Pacific education and five key system shifts to achieve this vision and includes Government actions to achieve them.

Collaboration and partnership are built in the various streams of work underway as part of the Plan, with feedback from schools, education leaders, Pacific families, churches, and community groups being a key part of its implementation.

Tapping into collective knowledge and building on what is working well for Pacific communities is key to ensuring that our system is delivering for all Pacific learners.

I am humbled to have the responsibility to oversee the Action Plan's progress under this Government. I intend to refresh the Action Plan this year to include the next set of Government actions to work towards the key shifts in the Action Plan and to further signal our commitment to Pacific languages in education.

As the world of work continues to evolve and digital technologies more ingrained in our ways of living, it is critical for our education system to be able to keep up with the pace of change so all learners are equipped with the right skills to succeed in their chosen endeavours.

We know that learners learn best when their languages, cultural capital, cultural intelligence, and identity are respected, supported, and celebrated in our education system.

And so, as part of our education work programme, we are refreshing the New Zealand Curriculum and redesigning Te Marautanga o Aotearoa for Māori medium education to ensure all learners, experience rich and responsive learning.

First off for our curriculum work was Te Takanga o Te Wā and Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories curriculum content, which is being implemented across all schools and kura from this year. In Aotearoa, our schools and kura have the autonomy to design their own local curriculum, guided by the national curriculum, which meets the needs of their learners and reflects the histories of their community.

This allows the community, including the holders of Pacific knowledge, to share their stories with schools.

We want learners to understand that people have different experiences and perspectives, and that recognising and drawing on this diversity helps them thrive as community members and citizens.

We are also reviewing our secondary schooling qualifications to make them more inclusive and to incorporate indigenous knowledge, contexts, and worldviews into the design of teaching and learning materials.

For Pacific learners, two new Pacific language subjects have been introduced at senior secondary level – Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau, which will be available alongside Gagana Sāmoa, Lea Faka-Tonga and Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani.

The introduction of these new high school subjects aligns to the Ministry of Pacific Peoples' Pacific Languages Strategy.

This identifies Vagahau Niue, and Gagana Tokelau as endangered languages.

So, it is important that they are revitalised for Pacific learners in Aotearoa and in Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

We are also developing Pacific Studies as a social science subject to provide further opportunities for learners to directly engage with and study Pacific contexts and knowledges.

These new subjects will be developed, piloted, and implemented over the next three years.

As mentioned, one of our key priorities is to ensure that places of learning are inclusive and free from discrimination and racism.

We are addressing this by building cultural capability within the teaching workforce – supporting them to gain more knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultures and experiences of our learners, their families, and the communities they're part of. For our Pacific learners, one of the initiatives we have is Tapasā.

This is a teaching framework to help non-Pacific teachers and leaders in early learning services and schools to be more confident when engaging with their Pacific learners and supporting their learning.

We are delivering the Tapasā professional development programme to up to 1,000 teachers and leaders across Aotearoa between 2022-2024.

Along with Tapasā is Tautai o le Moana, a leadership PLD for principals of Pacific learners that aims to strengthen their leadership capabilities, to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of Pacific learners, and to contribute to culturally sustainable practices across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Feedback from the conversations we have had across Aotearoa highlighted the importance of partnering with the families to support their children's learning.

We know that Pacific and Māori learners do not only carry their own hopes and dreams. They also represent their families and whānau, their ancestors, and the communities they are part of.

For our Pacific parents, we are collaborating with schools, community providers and churches to deliver Talanoa Ako sessions to help them gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to champion their children's education.

Insights and learnings from these talanoa sessions have helped refine how we work with and support Pacific learners, their parents, and communities. The "Talanoa Ako: Pacific talk about Education and Learning" resources, which complement Tapasā, help educators reflect on their engagement practices and understand what 'culturally safe spaces' look and feel like for Pacific communities.

We have also begun trialling a programme called Tu'u Malohi. This is a Pacific community-led approach to strengthening Pacific wellbeing for young people and their families. It provides opportunities through talanoa to unpack their identity, values, language, and a safe space for participants to have courageous conversations around racism and find ways to safely navigate that.

Teachers can hear the lived experiences of the participants and are invited and supported to engage in a critical reflection of their practice and design of their learning spaces and curriculum material.

Other anti-racism initiatives Following the positive feedback we received for Tu'u Malohi, we are piloting a programme called Fakailoga Tino – Our living room. This programme supports educators to develop and deepen their knowledge of racism, as experienced by Pacific people.

One of its key outcomes is for educators to have the ability to identify, address and respond to racism within their school and community.

In my role as Minister of Child Poverty Reduction, I oversee the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy which includes a priority to address racism, discrimination, and stigma.

The Ministry of Justice is implementing this through the development of a National Action Plan Against Racism, with an emphasis on the education system in the first instance.

The Ministry of Education is also leading several initiatives to promote social cohesion and address racism, discrimination, and stigma.

This includes the curriculum refresh to better reflect the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand, PLD to strengthen teacher cultural capability, the Bullying Free NZ programme and Positive Behaviour for Learning School Wide, and the ongoing response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch.

Throughout this conference I have paid tribute to Honourable Aupito William Sio.

Many of you will know that, growing up in Aotearoa in the 1970s, his family were targeted in what we know as the Dawn Raids.

These Raids were one of the most shameful and discriminatory episodes in Aotearoa's late 20th century history.

They involved the systematic and brutal racist profiling of Pacific peoples, and Māori as well, as supposed overstayers.

I know that one of Hon Aupito Sio's proudest moments as a politician was when he stood with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, in August 2021, when she delivered a formal apology to all Pacific communities impacted by these raids.

As part of that apology then- Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Minister Sio were able to announce:

- \$2.1 million in academic and vocational scholarships for Pacific communities, known as the Tuli Takes Flight scholarships
- \$2.1 million in Manaaki New Zealand Short Term Trading Scholarship Training Courses for delegates from Sāmoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Fiji and,
- Resources to schools and kura to teach about the Dawn Raids, as part of our new Aotearoa/New Zealand Histories Curriculum, including the histories of these directly affected.

This history will keep the memory of these Raids alive as an example that the impacts of racism and discrimination can have on peoples. But also, as an example of how Pacific peoples fought back, often at considerable cost but with great dignity, to build a more inclusive and tolerant Aotearoa in which they have a proud and rightful place.

Recently, thousands of Pacific peoples, as well as Māori and Pākehā, gathered for the hugely successful Polyfest here in Tāmaki Makaurau. We have a way to go to end racism and discrimination in Aotearoa.

But that gathering, along with the inclusion of the Dawn Raids in our curriculum, are welcome signs of how far we have come since those bleak times.

Supporting Pacific learners during COVID 19 We are also supporting communities as they recover from the impact of the pandemic.

COVID has affected learning and wellbeing of our children and part of our priorities is to reengage and support them as they catch-up to their learning.

For Pacific learners, the Government has set up the Pacific Education and Innovation Funds. These enable early learning services, schools, tertiary providers, community organisations and Pacific providers to support new ways to encourage Pacific learners and their families to stay engaged in education.

We have several local-led practices and initiatives that are successful and working well for Pacific communities.

These funds recognise the important work already happening in our regions and what this will do is provide them additional resourcing to continue their work, or even scale up to assist more learners and their families.

So far, the Ministry of Education have awarded funding to a total of 340 contracts across Aotearoa. Initiatives supported include:

- The Tongan Bilingual Early Years project that ran in three primary schools – Sutton Park, Otahuhu and Favona. The Lea Faka Tonga project aimed to improve the learning experience of Tongan year 1 and 2 learners and to support them on their journey to becoming bilingual and biliterate. It also provided professional development for Tongan bilingual teachers and opportunities to network and support each other.

- The New Zealand Kiribati National Council’s “Attendance and Wellbeing Project”, which supported 60 learners and their families in South Auckland to stay engaged with their education.

- The Pacific Support project at Palmerston North Boys High School, which involved a dedicated Pacific mentor and increased support from the teachers to build trusting relationships with Pacific learners through a cultural perspective. They worked with the learners and their families to discuss plans for success and work with them to achieve this. This includes supporting them to get involved in co-curricular activities and work opportunities.

This year, along with funding for new projects, this programme will also focus on expanding current projects to address gaps where needed.

In September 2022, we also announced a range of supports to help learners in Years 7 to 13 and, in particular Pacific and Māori learners, to catch up on learning disrupted by COVID-19.

This included more support for Pacific and Māori secondary learners. It also provided additional teaching and tutoring support to help ākonga whose learning has been disrupted by COVID-19.

A critical factor determining the success of our education system is whether all New Zealanders are set up with the skills, knowledge, and pathways to succeed in their chosen careers.

Right now, we have more than half a million learners engaged in tertiary education and training. This is why our education programmes are focused on enabling more streamlined pathways from early learning through schooling and on to tertiary and lifelong learning, recognising that learners change and grow as they move through their education.

This means our systems need to be adaptable, so learners have the supports and opportunities available, whatever their age or stage of learning.

Part of this work is to strengthen schooling pathways to further education and employment. This includes improving career guidance and support for learners and their parents and making stronger connections with tertiary providers and employers to open work experiences opportunities.

We are also reforming our vocational education system to better align schooling and tertiary qualifications and pathways with the skill needs of employers.



This includes the introduction of the Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award in 2019 to help elevate the status of vocational careers and provide learners with some financial support to help with their training after school. Cook Islands and Niue have been included in this from 2022.

To support all our tertiary learners with their study or training, there are several initiatives currently available.

One of them is Fees Free for first-time tertiary learners. It covers one year's study or two years' training, paid directly to the learner's tertiary education organisation.

Additionally, for Pacific learners, who make up about 10% of our tertiary learner population, the government announced the annual Tuli Takes Flight Scholarships in 2021 as part of the reconciliation to accompany the Government's apology to Pacific families and communities impacted by the Dawn Raids. Up to 15 scholarships are awarded annually to Pacific learners who are taking up further study or training towards certificates or diplomas, degrees, and post-graduate study.

As part of government support during the COVID recovery period, we also introduced the Apprenticeship Boost to help employers keep and take on new apprentices.

Since its establishment in 2020, more than 55,000 apprentices have been able to continue learning the trade while working on the job during the pandemic.

Climate change and sustainability are also front and centre for our government and I am sure all of you will agree that it is one of the biggest challenges currently facing our planet, particularly for us in the Pacific.

The recent devastation in Tāmaki Makaurau, Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti due to Cyclone Gabrielle and unprecedented flooding events have been a wakeup call for most New Zealanders, albeit a belated one.

I realise that these weather events are well-known to many of you, and I want to particularly acknowledge our colleagues from Vanuatu, who are now dealing with the aftermath of both Cyclone Judy and Cyclone Kevin. It is proof how big of a threat climate change is, not just to our economy, but to the lives, present and futures of people, especially our younger generation.

Awareness of climate change, the environment, and our place in it are all important themes that can now be explored through our existing national curriculum. There are already a range of resources that are available to our schools to support learning and actions to address climate change.

We hope that this will increase learner awareness of, and participation in, local, national, and global climate change issues in the next decade.

That said, the recent School Strike for Climate in Aotearoa shows that our young people are way ahead of us adults when it comes to this issue.

The Ministry is focusing on how it can support schools to make changes. Aside from incorporating climate change and sustainability in teaching and learning, the Ministry of Education is also reviewing its school infrastructure.

Our schools make up a big part of the government's property portfolio and will play an important role in the transition to public sector carbon neutrality by 2025.

For example, in May last year, we announced that we were replacing coal fired heating sources in New Zealand schools with electric or woody biomass to make it more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable.

You sadly, know much more about this than we do. And, of course, you have been advocating action much earlier than we have.

On climate change, we have much to learn from you. But you can be assured that we, as a government will continue to support you as together, we advocate for more action on climate change.

I look forward to discussing with you how we can make all our education systems more resilient as, unfortunately, this crisis will worsen before it gets any better.

This is just a snapshot of the many pieces of work happening in our education system to support all learners to succeed in their education.

We can see progress in many of them. But it is far from perfect or complete. We still have a long way to go.

Our own education system will continue to evolve and be refined based on ongoing feedback from learners, the education sector, parents, iwi, communities, and our partners.

As mentioned, I come to this gathering with humility and as a learner, I look forward to a robust Talanoa about the education issues that are front and centre for our nations and hear your experiences and learning from your work programmes as well as your advice as to what we can do better to support all learners, both here and in your own countries.

I am so pleased that you will have some school and tertiary campus visits as part of this conference. I am sure this will be a great experience for our learners, teachers, and education staff as well as for you, as you get a glimpse of the teaching and learning experience across Aotearoa.

Thank you for listening. I and my officials are happy to answer any questions you may have about the Pacific education experience in Aotearoa, or on our education system in general.

I wish you all the best for the conference. And with that, I formally open the floor for my Ministerial colleagues for their statements and observations.

## ANNEX 3

### Senior Officials Meeting – Report to the CPEM 2023

The senior officials had their meeting on at 2.30 pm on Monday 23 March at the Waitakre Hall, Aotea Conference Centre, Auckland, New Zealand. The meeting was chaired by Permanent Secretary for Education, Tuvalu in his capacity as chair of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES).

The following were the main outcomes of the meeting which are being presented for Ministers’:

- The importance of the vernacular languages for inclusion in the school curriculum. Students must be proud of their own language and strategies should be developed on how best to integrate vernacular languages into the curriculum;
- Senior officials recognized that the Pacific region is a region where communities are scattered over vast areas of ocean. The importance of internet connectivity to improve delivery of education services to the remote communities to ensure equity in student learning and access to services;
- Senior officials agreed to the following researches to be undertaken with support from the Asian Development Bank as part of the PacREF agenda:

*Study 1: Equitable access to education in the Pacific*

*Study 2: Education financing in three selected Pacific countries*

*Study 3: Strategies to minimize learning loss and maximize learning recovery – senior officials suggested to focus on building resilience of education systems under this study.*

*Study 4: Labour migration in the Pacific and its impact on skills loss*

- Senior officials proposed to prioritize Studies (3) and (4).
- Senior officials considered a proposed funding strategy for PacREF Phase 2 and agreed for the PacREF Facilitating Unit, ADB, and MFAT to progress the strategy in consultation with the Pacific Heads of Education Systems Steering Committee (PHES SC).
- Senior officials noted that the placement of education at the heart of the 2050 Strategy, within the theme of People-Centred Development reflected Leaders’ recognition that education is to be the most critical long-term factor in the region’s achievement of its shared vision and aspirations.

In this context, Senior Officials:

- (i) **Noted / Commended** the progress made to develop the Implementation and Monitoring Plan for the 2050 Strategy;

- (ii) **Recognised** the critical role education will play in realising the 2050 Strategy Vision set by Leaders, and encouraged for vernacular languages and tradition and culture to be accentuated in the first implementation and Monitoring Plan; and
- (iii) **Discussed** the linkages between the PacREF and the 2050 Strategy and agreed for the PacREF Secretariat, Senior Officials, and Implementing Agencies to work together to ensure policy coherence between the two moving forward.

## **ANNEX 4:**

### **Civil Society Organisations Meeting – Report to CPEM 2023**

Having considered the importance of inclusiveness in education, the invaluable contribution of young people in education leadership, ensuring greater and more relevant links between education outcomes and livelihoods, and the need for greater investment in strategic, cultural, spiritual and political “spaces for engagement”, we in solidarity, present the following recommendations we believe, calls for our Ministers’ action.

#### **Recommendations to Pacific Education Ministers**

- Create spaces and opportunities for the voice and representation of youth leaders from Indigenous and other underrepresented communities. Elevate youth leadership voices and consider how power can be shared.
- Invest more in inclusive education including assistive technologies and adopt the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Framework (PRIEF).
- Host an education summit that focuses on topics such as community, democracy, climate, decolonisation and essential skills to prepare students for an uncertain future. Prioritise teacher capacity development to enable them to take the lead on our reimagined education system. In addition to teacher inputs, build parental, care-giver and community engagement so these important perspectives can contribute to the rethinking of education for quality livelihoods.
- Harness and activate the Pacific regional architecture to include CSOs in coordination and engagement, and also allows for accountability. The review of the regional architecture as part of the 2050 Strategy should be explored to ensure that it can be an opportunity for incorporating CSO Engagement in the Education System. Invest in the engagement process of CSO and Non-Government Agencies at the National level – engaging at the public spaces.
- Engagement of Civil Society in Education System should be mainstream to include non-traditional education actors given the role education can play in diagnosing and leveraging capacity of our young people and communities to find solutions and resilient livelihoods.

#### **Recommendations to Education Senior Officials**

- Facilitate engagement of CSOs in Public Finance and national budget planning to ensure that adequate national and sector budgets are invested in the delivery of education system and ensuring that its fit for purpose
- Enact policies that do not allow students to be “pushed out” of the education system but instead encourages them to pursue a variety of qualifications and recognizes various pathways to learning.
- “Consultation is not co-design.” Move to a new model and invest in knowledge sharing and integrated engagement through the inclusion of CSOs and youth representatives in national meetings and delegations at regional forums.
- Recognise the multiple dimensions of learning and teaching and how best to embed them across other government ministries’ planning and budget priorities.

## *Annex 5:*

### **CPEM Multi-stakeholder Roundtables – Report to the CPEM 2023**

The main recommendations from the four Roundtable groups:

#### **Roundtable 1 - Quality and Relevance**

- Integrated solutions need to be captured in all existing regional and national frameworks and requires investment in data and research.
- Partnerships need to be developed for investment in teaching, curriculum, qualifications, and workforce especially in vocational education and Pacific languages.
- Put investment and value on TVET pathways so that they are accessible and valued
- Lift Pacific languages and knowledge higher in our policy and educational priorities and frameworks

#### **Roundtable 2 - Education Financing**

- A threshold of what percentage of GDP is spent on Education.
- Utilising dataset particularly PILNA as part of the story telling and advocacy for finance
- Create a stronger anchor for education financing in the Pacific regional architecture.
- Regional capacity building on educational financing data
- A reminder for eligible countries to take action on GPE funding.
- More funding to teachers

#### **Roundtable 3 - Building Resilience**

- Prioritise **the needs of the most marginalised and remote communities** when creating policies for climate resilience.
- More investment in both **digital and physical infrastructure**, as both are important for resilience.
- Incorporate **green and blue skills**, as well as **resilience skills**, into existing curricula, and make sure that curricula incentivise **life-long learning**.
- **Whole-of-government approach**, as well as **collective approach which incorporates education, finance and environmental views**, are needed to address the challenges brought by climate change and natural disasters.
- We should **incorporate digitalisation** into the basics of learning and teach from early learning, as it is now part of the everyday learning and life for students and wider community.
- Consider the **cultural value of resilience**.

#### **Roundtable 4 - Access, Inclusion, Equity**

##### *Workforce – quality teaching*

- Minister of Education across the region need to consult, meet and plan with their respective Ministers of Finance to budget for education and look at the cost to society if the correct investment is not made into education
- The Pacific Region needs to plan and strategise together to look at teacher shortage and opportunities across countries to support teaching. The strategy needs to look at

partnerships with NZ and Australia to support teacher shortages across the region (USP Tonga)

*Holistic Inclusion – no one left behind*

- Local Intelligence and People Solutions – ensure strategies and planning are inclusive of the end users, students, teachers, and families – the system needs to reflect the different groups using the system (Te Mana Akonga)
- Promote regional partnerships and learning. Support and make commitments into intersectional learning -Mana Akonga
- The Government must subsidize schools fees to bring into acutalization equitable access to education -Min of PNG

## ***ANNEX 6***

### **Development Partners Meeting – Report to CPEM 2023**

Development partners presented the following key recommendations to Ministers:

- Development Partners are committed to strong coordination for engagement and investment in the education sector across the Pacific.
- Development Partners welcome the opportunity to engage in the review of Pacific architecture, including for education and PacREF, and work with the review to ensure that coordination structures are fit for purpose.
- PFU will coordinate a group of Development Partners, including Implementing Agencies, to prepare a paper that sets out how we can achieve greater coordination and integration between regional and national level programmes, and report back to PHES.



## **ANNEX 7:**

### **Report of the Ministerial Retreat**

Ministers at their retreat discussed the following issues:

- The importance of protecting our cultures and values and the need to maintain our identity. The importance of cultural exchange programs between countries acknowledging the different cultures and the need to unite all people in the Pacific. Strengthen cultural heritage and values as one people and one community.
- We need to realise our similarities and differences as we face different challenges. In terms of addressing issues, we should note that solutions may differ depending from country to country depending on national contexts. In regards to funding, countries need to assess how effective or efficient donor funding have been in the development of education.
- Migration trends and the need to refocus our attention, not only on academic pathways, but also through TVET. The need to develop alternative learning pathways or second chance education that allows those who have left the system re-enter the formal education system.
- MFAT and DFAT as traditional partners to education in the region need to coordinate better with other partners and NGOs, and aligned to national education systems to support the achievement of SDG 4 indicators.
- Teacher exchange in teacher professional development, narrow gaps of transition of students to create pathways through TVET or formal education systems. Information system in managing data and reporting, the need to ensure national level data is used to support prioritize and respond to needs in the countries.
- Education is key, ocean connects the Pacific Islands also context of distance. Noting the future is with education of the children, Minister's responsibility is important to progressing this and SDGs and how global agenda and targets need to be met.
- The field visits provided learning experiences and new knowledge to design of programs which could serve as a model for the region.
- Access to data to support national education systems in decision-making and planning is important, however, there is a need to ensure data security of the data and in how this is used by partners and agencies. Donor partners and USP to chair sub-committee to education data and how this is used and managed.
- Empower and building resilience and engaging communities to strengthen education approaches and strategies. Parental engagement is also part of the approach.
- Consideration of the vastness of the ocean and scatter of islands and the challenges it brings to education.
- Strengthen inclusive education and conduct community visitations and emphasizing their role in strengthening IE

- Education financing as a key issue for students who are exploring opportunities in other countries for their education. How can we consider issues around fees for both formal and informal education placements in overseas countries.
- Education of women needs to be realized and need for evaluation of women in education systems. Language of instruction in English. Role of churches and communities in our schools and for our children. Inclusive education assistance to be supported.
- The issue of Cyber safety with increased use of technology with online learning and new learning platforms and the need to implement safety measures.
- National languages in education utilizing national university expertise as with Samoa and New Zealand. Investigate teaching approaches and best strategies for implementation.