



## **Key conclusions from the Round Table Consultation on Pacific Issues**

### **International Conference on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: 'Development for all: Stop conflict, build states and eradicate poverty'**

*26 February 2013, Palácio do Governo, Dili, Timor-Leste*

We thank the Government of Timor-Leste for bringing together over 30 government and civil society delegates from Pacific island countries, and development partners, for a round table consultation on Pacific issues relating to the post-2015 development agenda. The Pacific consultation reached the following conclusions:

- We agreed the MDGs have played an important role in focusing our development efforts, facilitating dialogue and making our development strategies more results-oriented. However, the MDGs do not fully reflect our national development priorities, and sometimes distort them by emphasising the quantity of outputs over the quality of outcomes.
- As a region, we have been labelled a failure in terms of meeting the MDGs. This raises concerns about the application of global goals at the regional and national level, particularly in areas over which Pacific island countries have little or no control, such as carbon emissions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing our development aims.
- In our discussions about the issues that matter most for the Pacific, we identified five broad areas that are not adequately covered in the MDGs: inclusive economic growth, environmental and natural resource management, state effectiveness, peace and justice, and aspects of social service delivery. Our focus in all these areas is on the human dimension of development, based on our own conceptions of poverty and well-being, which incorporate economic, social, environmental and cultural factors.
- The need for more investment in economic infrastructure was strongly emphasised, as it provides the foundations for economic growth, including through regional integration and global connectivity. We were reminded of the reluctance of donors to make the necessary long-term investments in infrastructure. With such investments, and conducive policy and regulatory environments, our development should increasingly be driven by trade and investment rather than aid. We reaffirmed our commitment to focus on developing the productive sectors and create employment that recognises the importance of the informal economy.
- We agreed our national development efforts must be fully inclusive of women, youth and children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. Our traditional Pacific ways are shifting as people increasingly move to urban centres. Traditional social security networks and land tenure systems are under threat and vulnerability is increasing. In response to this, we need to put in place new social protection measures that identify and provide targeted support to those suffering hardships.
- We discussed the pressing need for better management of our natural environment, especially our oceanic fisheries in order to ensure we receive fair and sustainable returns.
- Climate change was a central focus of our attention. We are not part of the cause of climate change; nor can we manage its inevitable effects on our own. We must hold to account the countries that contribute most to the problem, and marshal international support for climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies. To this end, we need to explore regional mechanisms and approaches that pool resources and share risks. We agreed there is a need for donors and international organisations to greatly simplify criteria and processes for accessing climate change financing, which is particularly disadvantageous to small states.

- In discussing issues of state effectiveness, we agreed that governance is fundamental to the achievement of development goals, and that development progress in the region continues to be impeded by weak state capacity. We noted also the importance of corresponding improvements in the policies and practices of many of the developed countries with whom we interact, including in the areas of trade and labour migration, the regulation of the activities of multinational corporations and the management of aid.
- We supported the perspective, articulated most prominently by the g7 Plus group, that the MDGs cannot be achieved in small and vulnerable states in the absence of peace, stability and the rule of law. We affirmed the need for our development efforts to be underpinned by universal principles of respect for human rights, fairness, justice and peace.
- In discussing our social development objectives, we noted that the focus of the MDGs on relatively narrow targets had in some cases caused governments to lose focus on important issues, such as the quality of educational outcomes and important health challenges affecting our region, particularly access to sexual and reproductive health and family planning rights, adolescent health and non-communicable diseases.
- Ownership was a key theme of our discussions for the post-2015 development agenda. We need to own our problems, and understand their root causes, in order to develop effective, culturally sensitive solutions to our development challenges. We ourselves must define our national development priorities based on self-assessments and a results-oriented approach to national planning. We acknowledged the importance of building ownership and commitment at the political, bureaucratic and grassroots levels, and underlined the critical role of political leadership and sustained political commitment. We agreed that our donor partners need to more closely align their activities with our nationally defined priorities. We must deconstruct colonial thinking and start truly conducting ourselves as independent states.
- We believe our national development goals should be linked but not subordinate to the global development agenda. We are open to a multi-level post-2015 development framework that embodies universal aspirational goals, but includes a capacity to customise targets to regional and national contexts. We agreed on the need for rationalisation and integration of the many parallel processes that collectively set the global agenda. Many of our countries struggle to deal with the multitude of international agreements, policy commitments, and related implementation and reporting requirements.
- We did not reach a conclusion on the most appropriate time horizon for the post-2015 development agenda, but did note the need for it to provide a realistic opportunity to reach the new goals, and to recognise the different stages of development of our national public institutions.
- We recognised that there remain major constraints in our region on the availability of data and on the capacity to develop policy on the basis of what data is available. Improvements in these areas will be essential if we are to be able to undertake effective self-assessments, define realistic targets and track progress.
- Finally, delegates emphasised the importance of cross-regional, regional and sub-regional solidarity in ensuring our voices are heard on the global stage. Defining common ground and working in partnership with the g7 Plus group will be particularly important in this regard.

Delegates expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of Timor-Leste for hosting this important round-table dialogue, which was viewed as an excellent example of the consultative approach that needs to underpin the development of the post-2015 framework. Delegates also welcomed the gracious offer of Her Excellency Emilia Pires, Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste, to take the outcomes of our discussion to the United Nations High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Pacific participants also agreed to take the discussion outcomes into their own participatory processes leading into the 2014 Small Island Developing States conference. Drawing on lessons from the 'Asian Drama', Pacific delegates want to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda is a process that allows us to take ownership of our drama as custodians of the world's largest ocean.

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