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## President Heine and Pacific Leaders Meet President Obama



Photo: President Heine & Pacific Leaders greet and meet President Obama at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine joined her Pacific Island counterparts in Honolulu, Hawaii from 30–31 August to attend the 10th Pacific Island Conference of Leaders (PICL) with the United States of America. This year’s PICL theme was entitled *Enhancing Sustainably in our Pacific Islands: Collective Action for our Shared Future*.

The PICL was established in 1980 at the East-West Center and convenes every three to five years to

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discuss critical issues of common concern. This year’s PICL focused discussions on the following important areas– advancing the Pacific Islands region’s relationship with the United States, the structure of regional cooperation, and pressing climate change/environmental issues.

During the meeting, Pacific Leaders shared their concerns on Climate Change, Oceans, Fisheries, Trade, and Upper Airspace Management, with the goal of improving relations with the United States in alignment with regional priorities. President Heine, along with Pacific Island Leaders, met with United States President Barack H. Obama to voice shared concerns in hopes of strengthening political and economic partnerships in the region.



Left photo: President Heine joins Pacific Island Leaders at PICL. Right photo: Micronesian Presidents L-R: Palau President Tommy Remengesau Jr., RMI President Dr. Hilda C. Heine & FSM President Peter Christian



Left photo: President Dr. Hilda C. Heine & PICL Chair, PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, at Jefferson Hall, East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.  
Right photo: PICL Heads of States & Representatives at the Imin International Conference, Jefferson Hall, East-West Center

## 10th Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders Statement to President Barack Obama and the Government of the United States of America

We, the elected Leaders and representatives of Pacific Islands Governments and Administrations present at the 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders, gathered in Honolulu, Hawai'i on 31 August 2016:

1. Welcome the foreign policy rebalance by the Obama Administration towards the Asia Pacific, and encourage the Government of the United States of America (US) to continue to enhance its relationship and engagement with the Pacific islands region in the spirit of partnership.
2. Acknowledge the contribution of the East West Center and Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP) in facilitating the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (PICL) since 1985, and commend them for their effective advocacy in raising awareness of Pacific issues with successive US Administrations since then. In light of the new Framework for Pacific Regionalism, we propose to re-examine and re-invigorate the PICL and PIDP, aimed at strengthening the focus on facilitating awareness of Pacific issues with the US going forward.
3. Reaffirm our commitment to working in partnership and cooperation between the US Government and the Pacific islands region. We acknowledge the important contribution of the triennial PICL process, and the annual Pacific Islands Forum Post-Forum Dialogue, as well as shared membership of regional organisations, including the Pacific Community and the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, as vehicles for enhancing the understanding between the Pacific and the US based on mutual respect and responsibility.
4. We seek to jointly articulate a framework for development cooperation with the Government of the United States of America, including global response to climate change, oceans and safe islands, cooperation in times of disaster and on transboundary issues relating to shared resources and health threats such as Zika.
5. Commend the leadership of President Obama leading up to COP21 in Paris and urge the US Government to join our countries and the international community in ratifying the Paris Agreement, and prioritise support for the implementation of key obligations under the Agreement. In this regard, we seek the US's political support to facilitate simplified access to climate finance for the Pacific island region, through the Green Climate Fund Board, and other climate finance entities. We further encourage the US Government to meet its pledge under the Green Climate Fund.



6. Reaffirm our strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDGs 13 and 14 on Climate and Oceans and Seas, underpinned by SDGs 16 and 17 on the enabling environment and implementation.

7. Invite the US Government to join us in our call for action under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the 2014 Palau Declaration: “The Ocean: Life and Future” to chart a course to sustainability and its support of the ‘pre-cautionary principle’. We also reaffirm the 2002 Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and the 2010 Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape: “Our Sea of Islands, Our Livelihoods, Our Oceania” as our guiding regional Ocean policy instruments.

8. In recognising that the revised US Tuna Treaty has been negotiated and is subject to final legal review, we look forward to the US Government’s timely rescission of its withdrawal from the Treaty, to enable Pacific island countries to finally decide allocation of fishing access in 2017.

9. Welcome the development focus of the revised Treaty and urge the US Government to promote US investment in the Pacific island countries’ tuna industry and encourage greater employment opportunities of Pacific island nationals, including as fishing crew and in processing plants in American Samoa.

10. As a coastal state in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, and given the presence of US territories, call on the US Government to cooperate with Pacific island countries in adopting measures that foster sound and equitable conservation efforts of highly migratory resources in the West Central Pacific, which would seek to conserve these species while sustaining the economic viability of Pacific island countries that are heavily reliant upon fisheries.

11. Given the need to enhance Pacific Islands and US engagement, we call on the US Government to ensure policy coherence between US development policies and in particular fisheries policies. In that regard, we encourage the US to support the Parties to the Nauru Agreement and the Vessel Day Scheme.

12. Call on the US Government to improve preferential trading arrangements by expanding goods allowed under the GSP, to include travel goods, which could be manufactured competitively in with Pacific island countries. In this regard, we urge the United States to expand US investment opportunities in the Pacific through the Overseas Private

Investment Corporation, including facilitating the establishment of a Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Promotions Office in the United States.

13. Urge the United States to commit to dialogue with Pacific island countries under US-managed oceanic airspace, to discuss arrangements to further recognise states’ airspace sovereignty and management.

14. Acknowledge the United States Government’s long-standing support for Pacific island scholarships, such as the Fulbright Program and US-South Pacific Scholarship, and encourage the United States to enhance their assistance in this regard. We also request the US Government to support regional tertiary institutions to bolster regional capacity and create more opportunities for exchange.

15. Urge the US to take action to address meaningfully the lingering needs resulting from the US Nuclear Weapons Testing Program in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. We recognize the Special Rapporteur’s 2012 report to the United Nations Human Rights Council and urge the US Government to work with the United Nations to achieve a final and just resolution for the Marshallese people.

[Click here for the online version of Statement](#)



Photo: United States President Barack H. Obama delivers his remarks at the 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders. [Watch the video here.](#)

## United States Announces New Investments in Resilience and Clean Energy in the Pacific



Photo: discussions between Leaders prior to President Obama delivering his remarks

In his remarks at 10<sup>th</sup> PICL, United States President Barack H. Obama discussed U.S. responsibility to address climate change and commitment to “helping our friends in the Pacific region.” In furtherance of this commitment, the United States is announcing a suite of new investments in resilience and clean energy in the Pacific. They include:

- Nearly \$40 million in new programming to enhance resilience to climate change in the Pacific, including new programming that will build the capacity of regional organizations, national governments and local communities. In addition, USAID is announcing new funding for disaster risk reduction that will help ensure that these islands are able to withstand the increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters.
- New energy initiatives that will help mobilize tens of millions of dollars in private finance for clean energy and provide technical assistance in support of the Pacific Islands’ ambitious renewable energy goals.

## Statement Following US & China Announcement on Climate Change

The Minister-in-Assistance to the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Minister Mattlan Zackhras, released the below statement today (3 September) following the joint announcement by the United States and China on climate change:

**“Today’s announcement is the strongest signal yet that what we agreed in Paris, will soon have the force of law.”**

**“With the two biggest emitters ready to lead, the transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient global economy is now irreversible.”**

**“It’s critical we now see the other big emitters quickly follow-suit and clarify their own plans to help bring the Paris Agreement into force this year.”**



Photo L-R: Minister-in-Assistance Mattlan Zackhras, Hawaii Governor David Ige, & President Dr. Hilda C. Heine at the Pacific Ocean Summit held at the Hilton in Honolulu, Hawaii

## President Heine Speaks at the Pacific Ocean Summit

President Heine addressed the importance of the Oceans and the 2030 Pacific Ocean Partnership during the Pacific Ocean Summit. In her remarks at the Summit's opening session, President Heine emphasized on the connection between oceans, well-being and prosperity, and outlined threats, such as, climate change and illegal fishing.

President Heine assured the RMI Government's commitment to the partnership on Sustainable Development Goal 14 entitled: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources. President Heine stated, "All of us whose lives are directly impacted by the sea on a daily basis --whether it be our source for daily nourishment or simply because we dwell at its shores—we all have an obligation to understand and appreciate the symbiotic relationship between humans and the sea. To respect that relationship as paramount." She further stated, "That action is not only reliant on the highest levels of government. Community and grassroots action is equally, if not more important."

With the conclusion of the Paris Agreement last year, the world now has a collective call to action in implementing the agreements contained in that Agreement and once again, the Pacific Ocean stands at the forefront, said President Heine. "Our islands are amongst the first in the world to experience the effects of sea level rise caused by global warming. We are amongst the most vulnerable to severe weather patterns that generate in our own backyards. We are most susceptible to the impacts of changing ocean temperatures on resources that we rely on for economic development and security."

President Heine expressed hope that implementation of the Paris Agreement will feature prominently in efforts to achieve SDG14. "The Agreement is about action and action is exactly what we need right now."

The Summit, convened in conjunction with the IUCN World Conservation Congress, was held at the Hilton Hotel in Honolulu, Hawaii, on 1 September.



President Heine delivers remarks at opening session of Pacific Ocean Summit held at the Hilton Hotel in Honolulu. Photo courtesy: iisd/IUCN.

## President Heine Announce New Sustainable Shipping Center

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine, Tuvalu Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga, & Deputy Prime Minister Siaso Sovaleni of the Kingdom of Tonga participated in discussions on climate change during session 3 of the Pacific Ocean Summit. During discussions, President Heine underscored the importance of the Pacific's collective work in securing the Paris Agreement, and the need to maintain political momentum as a region. She also stressed on the importance of tackling climate change in all sectors– including all maritime emissions, aviation emissions and HFCs.

President Heine announced that new Sustainable Shipping Center will shortly be established in Majuro working regionally through the University of the South Pacific, thanks to the German Government. "Its mandate will be to test new and sustainable methods of global shipping, drawing on the traditional methods of yesteryear."



## President Heine Meets Hawaii Governor David Ige

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine met with Hawaii Governor David Ige at the Governor's Office in Honolulu on 30 August 2016. During the meeting, President Heine stressed on the important relationship between the RMI and U.S., in general, and the State of Hawaii, in particular. Issues discussed were on compact impact, Medicaid eligibility for COFA citizens, climate change, and nuclear issues, among others. President Heine reiterated the RMI Government's commitment in advancing the interests and aspirations of the State of Hawaii and the RMI.

The meeting was held ahead of the 10th Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders (30 August– 1 September 2016) and the Pacific Ocean Summit (1 September 2016), meetings that President Heine attend along with other Leaders of the Pacific. Accompanying President Heine to the meeting with Governor Ige were Minister-in-Assistance Mattlan Zackhras, Ambassador Gerald Zackios, Consul General Neijon Edwards, and Legal Adviser Bernard Adiniwin.

Top photo: President Heine meets Governor Ige. Bottom photo: RMI delegation, led by President Heine, with Governor Ige at the Governor's Office in Honolulu



President Heine and Minister-in-Assistance Zackhras met RMI participants of the East-West Center Pacific Islands Future Leaders program. (Photo L-R: Ebeye NTC Ricky Raymond, Minister Zackhras, President Heine & MICS Brandon Nathan at Jefferson Hall, East-West Center, in Honolulu)



RMI delegation attended RMI's very own Selina Leem (pictured) perform "blue passport" on 30 August. Selina was among youth participants of the Hawaii Conservation Alliances' Bio Culture Conservation stories event. Watch the [footage](#) (Selina@10:40). Selina's participation was sponsored by the RMI Government.