



OUR PEOPLE, OUR STRENGTH: SECURING OUR PACIFIC FUTURE

## Chair's Summary

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Resilience Meeting 11-13 October 2023**

Bula, Malo e lelei and a very good afternoon to you all.

My name is Siale Ilolahia, Executive Director of PIANGO and on behalf of the PRP Taskforce Chair and as co-chair representing Civil Society and Private Sector, it is my pleasure to provide a brief summary of the key takeaways from this third Pacific Resilience Meeting, which started on Wednesday preceded by a PRP youth forum on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

But before I do so, I take this opportunity to thank you all for your participation at this event. A special mention to our main donor – the European Union through the PACRES project, our partners, our speakers, Pacific youth, community representatives and the 2023 PRM organizing committee including our team from Varysian responsible for the amazing PRM online platform and Greenhouse Studios who did a great job with setting up the national hubs, - your contribution and commitment has made this a very successful event.

I acknowledge the government of the Cook Islands and, specifically, the Foreign Affairs and Climate Change Division for organising a beautiful opening ceremony and reminding us of the need to embrace our traditional and cultural knowledge, keeping people at the centre of our actions and approaches while working collectively towards our vision for a resilient and prosperous Pacific. Spotlighting the youth as part of the opening ceremony really emphasizes why securing our Pacific Future is so important.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Resilience Meeting has brought together over 300 participants hailing from government, the private sector, civil society organisations, development agencies, local/ national/ regional and international organisations, youth and community representatives. It has been heartening to have new sectors participating this year, not least, representation from the education sector, Water Utilities, a focus on our food systems and reaching communities outside of our capital areas including Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia and Kiritimati in Kiribati.

A little over two years ago, through necessity, we convened the PRM virtually. This year we wanted to build on the virtual platform arrangement and provide opportunity for greater participation through 15 physical hubs across the region. While this has not been without its challenges, it has been pleasing to see the numbers of participation through the 3-day meeting. Many of these participants may not have been able to attend a physical meeting if we had held it in a single regional venue. As I emphasized when I invited everyone to attend, your voices and feedback matter.

The PRM is unique in that it is a space for equal participation and equal voice by all stakeholders, through which we can all share our actions and experiences that together contribute to implementing the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP).

The 2023 PRM theme Our People, Our Strength: Securing our Pacific Future has been highlighted through the examples being showcased with many actors coordinating, collaborating and advocating across sectors to mobilise resources and engage communities to take action at local and national level for their own benefit – it starts with us and is about us – Our People, Our Strength.

The programme was aligned around the four pillars of Pacific Resilience: Integrate, Inform, Include and Sustain with plenary sessions setting the scene for each day.

Day 1 started with the first plenary session led by our youth. The region has seen many disasters in the past two years, and we were reminded that our first responders are in the main, young people aged between 24 and 35 years old. Youth are leading much of the action in disaster risk management and response.

The Technical Sessions focused on different sectors that contribute to our resilience including a focus on community resilience and their central role in driving nature-based solutions, advancing school safety, climate finance and ensuring value for money in investments. The Learning Lab gave us an insight into what knowledge brokering was about and how it can assist with critical decisions tailored for the Pacific.

Day 2 plenary centred the discussion on water security – water is the essence of life and what is dignity when there is no water, no toilet? And despite the fact that our region faces a myriad of water security issues, life goes on because as one of speakers reminded us – our people make the most of what they have. As the Pacific goes into an El Nino phase, we need to prepare for both too little water and too much of it. Building water security requires investment in water resources management and building reliable and resilient water systems that are fit for purpose with everyone having a part to play because water is a Connector to building resilient food systems, health, human and ecosystems wellbeing.

The Technical Sessions highlighted the need to address issues in a wholistic manner. Our Food systems underscored coordination across sectors including the private sector, understanding different needs and challenges and diversity of end users and to build on scientific as well as community knowledge for more effective Food systems. In addition, while much progress has been made in many areas, we must continue to support the engagement and participation of women and girls, people living with disabilities and gender and non-binary people in decision making. The Learning Lab provided an insight into our water security indicators and what that means and what can be done to improve such indicators.

On Day 3, the Plenary session reminded us of the importance of partnerships and how it can enhance our work towards resilience, with the understanding that partnerships are made up of people, of all of us working together. We are stronger together.

The Technical Sessions highlight the different issues that this region faces – through climate mobility or immobility – the ties to the land even if people are no longer residing on their ancestral lands and the desire to stay rather than move. Financial protection to ensure we are able to recover effectively from disasters and the need to provide more awareness/outreach and communication to promote understanding of and accessibility to DRF products. More collaboration is needed between the Government & private sector to support community efforts. The different impacts on people with disability including emphasis that accessibility isn't just

related to the built environment, it also applies to access to information and services and the need to make sure that authorities and community leaders are including people with psychosocial disability, not just during but before times of natural disaster.. The psychological impacts including post-traumatic stress from disasters but at the same time not assuming all people are impacted the same, the power of sports for both physical and mental health and the fact that children are not responsible for the impacts of climate change but one of the most impacted – a very clear case of climate justice. Greater awareness and understanding should help guide more focused and effective approaches. The Learning Lab offered an opportunity to reflect on the past and future of integrated approaches to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the context of the review of the Framework for a Resilient Development in the Pacific.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The PRM has successfully brought together committed individuals, representing a wide range of sectors and interests. Together we have had a chance to share, explore and discuss ideas and best practices in building a resilient Pacific. Importantly, we have heard many great stories of endurance and hope – communities and individuals experiencing great shocks and change and rising above these while helping others to do the same. Our People, Our Strength – Securing our Pacific Future. We are stronger together.

With these words, I now bring the 3rd Pacific Resilience Meeting to a close. Thank you.