



Australia  
Federated States of Micronesia  
Fiji  
Kiribati  
Nauru  
New Zealand  
Palau

Papua New Guinea  
Republic of Marshall Islands  
Samoa  
Solomon Islands  
Tonga  
Tuvalu  
Vanuatu



Samoa  
Chairman of Pacific Islands Forum

**Pacific Islands Forum Group**

Pacific Islands Forum  
United Nations Member States

STATEMENT **BY**

**HONOURABLE AMBEROTI NIKORA**  
MINISTER OF INTERNAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM **GROUP**

**TO THE**

**FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK**

**7 MARCH 2005**

*Please check against delivery*

Madame Chairperson  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to address the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum group of countries which are members of the United Nations namely Australia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Kiribati. We are happy to be represented here at this important Conference to review progress made over the last ten years on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. We also wish to express our heartfelt congratulations to you on your election as Chair of this important conference.

We reaffirm our commitment to the consensus Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome of the Twenty Third Special Session of the General Assembly, and note the importance of the link between the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame Chair

Over the past decade, there has been considerable progress towards gender equality in the Pacific region, with increasing recognition of the importance of gender equity and the necessity to integrate gender into key policy and planning processes.

Our regional preparation for this global Beijing+10 review took place at the 9<sup>th</sup> Pacific Women's Triennial Meeting in Nadi, Fiji in August 2004, during which progress against the 13 critical areas of the 1994 Pacific Plan of Action were reviewed. As a region, we have strengthened commitment to four critical areas: strengthening institutions and mechanisms to advance women; focusing on gender equality within the legal and human rights context; access to services; and economic empowerment. For the Pacific, reaffirmation of the twelve critical areas of Beijing goes hand in hand with a renewed commitment to our regional response.

We acknowledge that progress made is in part attributable to the strong and effective networking between women's departments, regional organizations and NGOs in our region. Gains made in the past decade include the

formulation of national policies and action plans in line with unanimous adoption of the 1994 Pacific Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women. National Machineries and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women have been established and strengthened. The majority of our Forum Member countries are signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with five of them having ratified CEDAW since 1995. We are pleased to acknowledge that two of our island country members - Fiji and Samoa - have now had CEDAW reports considered by the UN CEDAW Committee.

Madame Chair

Gender equality has been achieved at certain levels of education in most of our countries, maternal health status has improved, constitutional guarantees against sex discrimination exist in many countries, and there are now more women in politics and senior positions in some member states. Violence against women is no longer a taboo subject and much work has and continues to be done around support for victims of violence, improving law enforcement, judicial education, and effective sexual offences legislation.

Growing attention is being directed towards the gender impact of globalization on our societies. It is vital that there is greater consideration of social and gender impacts by each government when undertaking trade negotiations particularly the proactive creation of opportunities for Pacific women to reap the benefits of trade agreements alongside our men. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat co-hosted a Regional Symposium on Gender and Trade in 2003 and is enhancing its collaborative work with non-state actor partners to enhance capacity for conducting social and gender impact assessments of trade agreements in member countries.

We have a vibrant process taking place in implementing our gender policies and strategies in the regional organizations that serve the Pacific Islands Forum Group. Gender policies are in place in six of the ten affiliated Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific agencies. This Council-wide engagement has been given impetus by the position of a Gender Issues Adviser in the Forum Secretariat.

Madame Chair,

These achievements, however, do not disguise the reality that, in all of our countries, we still have much work to do in the implementation of the gender equality agenda. Continued efforts need to be made to mainstream gender issues, so that women can equally reap the benefits of development. This, we believe, is one of the most critical tools for delivering outputs which can, together with the Millennium Development Goals, be mutually supportive processes.

There remains in some jurisdictions a lack of systematic sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators to monitor actual progress and inform policy development. Although our national policies demonstrate commitment to achieving gender equality, many of our women's departments that are responsible for implementation tend to be under-resourced and are not located in central ministries with greater influence. Women remain under-represented in decision-making and in parliament, and as a result, gender issues are less likely to be addressed at the political level.

Emerging issues of concern include the increasing exposure to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the region, the human rights of migrant workers in jurisdiction where they exist, and the growing problem of trafficking in women. These concerns require closer regional cooperation in order to address them.

Our women have played an outstanding role in regional peace-building efforts in areas previously affected by armed conflict, such as Bougainville and Solomon Islands. We therefore welcome the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, noting its relevance in alerting governments to the impact of conflict on women and children, and its use as a tool to ensure peace, security and stability.

We also acknowledge that since religion and tradition play such an important role in our communities, there is a need for faith-based organizations to use their influence to take a leadership role in promoting gender equality. We also need to facilitate women's access and participation in media, information and communication technologies, and to work with the media to reduce stereotypical portrayal of women.

We wish to conclude with the message that all members of our group call for all governments to reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action, without qualification, and pledge their renewed commitment to its implementation. We cannot support an outcome declaration from this meeting that contains anything less. The only way forward requires the total commitment of our governments if the original vision of the Beijing Platform for Action is to become a reality.

Thank you.