



Pacific Islands Forum Statement for the Food Systems Summit

**Delivered by Hon. Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama,
Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum**

(5 Minutes)

23 September 2021

**The President of the 76th Session;
The Secretary-General António Guterres;
The Special Envoy of the Food Systems Summit;
Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Ni sa bula vinaka.

1. I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the 14 Members of the Pacific Islands Forum with presence at the United Nations. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important matter for our Blue Pacific Continent.

2. At the outset, I wish to thank the Regional High-Level Champions, the President of Fiji, Hon. Jioji Konrote and Honourable Minister for Health, Kingdom of Tonga, ‘Amelia Afuha’amango Tu’ipulotu for their efforts on behalf of the Pacific in the lead-up to this Summit.

3. I must also thank the technical organizations, food experts, civil society members, youth, persons with disabilities and the UN System for progressing issues around food insecurity in our region after months of national and regional consultations.

4. Mr President, it has been well established since the emergence of COVID-19 that communities are looking to us as Leaders to recover and build back better for a sustainable and secure future, bearing in mind the challenges that lie ahead, especially within the climate change context.

5. Food security must be recognized as a cross-cutting aspect of human development and a fundamental building block for sustainable development. In 2018, the Pacific Sustainable Development Report had already highlighted food security as one of our region's key development challenges. We must act on the promises we make at this Summit.
6. For the Pacific, climate change represents a major threat to the maintenance and development of Food Systems which are vital to food security. Our greatest challenges include sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion of freshwater areas and ocean acidification.

All of these combined will impact our culture, water and food security; livelihoods; biodiversity; health and well-being.

7. Pacific Island biodiversity is under intense pressure from climate change and human-induced disturbances. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are vital to national and regional recovery efforts, therefore, coordinated, integrated and ecosystem-based sustainable development approaches with all our partners are required to improve resource management practices and to rebuild food security and livelihoods.

8. Mr President, the Pacific region is also grappling with Non-Communicable Disease (NCD), a crisis that is closely linked to our food systems, health and nutrition. Intensifying multi-sector efforts and financing to address NCD crisis is necessary through:

- i) increasing resourcing for enforcement of policies and legislation;
- ii) strengthening preventative interventions across people's life cycles;
- iii) promoting nutrition and food security and limiting industries interference; and
- iv) enhancing investment, resource allocations and accountability.

9. Other threats to food security in the Pacific region include rapid urban population growth, land degradation and declining land productivity, erosion of crop genetic diversity, coastal and coral degradation, declining productivity of fisheries, illegal fishing, food storage and transportation limitations.
10. Within the framing of the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, food security has been identified as a key driver of change for improving the socio-economic well-being of all Pacific peoples.

The region has stepped up its efforts to guide investments and reforms necessary to ensure resilient sectors so that we can achieve food sovereignty, enabling the region to receive a fair and equitable share from the contribution of Pacific resources and Blue Foods to global Food Systems.

11. The Pacific region also intends to strengthen e-commerce and expand digitalization to accelerate progress on resilient Food Systems, improve nutrition and health and to build climate resilient adaptation capacity.

12. COVID-19 has had devastating impacts on food security with exponential increases arising from trade disruptions, and loss of jobs in the service sectors.

This has reinforced the need for regional and global trade co-operation which are essential for sustainable Food Systems.

13. We are encouraged to see a growing recognition that Blue Food Systems serve as an anchoring pillar in the development and maintenance of sustainable food and we recognize that a successful management of Blue Foods requires co-operation among governments and between governments together with relevant stakeholders.

14. We are supportive of efforts to create a network to ensure that Blue Foods are brought into the heart of discussions and decisions about Food Systems, and to mobilize support for countries and communities that are taking action to build the vibrant, sustainable Blue Food Systems of the future.

15. We are in firm agreement with the Secretary-General that transforming our food systems is central in our effort to achieve the SDGs.

We join the call for all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, producers, women, youth and the business sector to work together to adopt a sustainable food systems approach which incorporates science, policy and action into diverse and complex food systems effectively.

16. It is critical that we redouble our multilateral efforts to address these vital issues, drawing on the shared capacity within this august body and the common ideals that bring us here. Just as our environment, peoples and food systems are profoundly interwoven and mutually sustaining, so must our response be, for the sake of our and future generations.

17. Vinaka, I thank you.