



Briefing for PICAN Members: Analysis of the 54th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Communique

1. Overview

The 54th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in Honiara produced a Communique that reflects a region at a critical turning point. On one hand, it delivered historic, Pacific-led achievements that align with our long-standing goals. On the other hand, it does not address the root cause of the climate crisis, exposing deep and concerning issues within the "Forum family."

This brief provides a concise analysis of the key outcomes, measured against our Pacific Climate Justice Demands and science, to equip our members with the essential findings for their advocacy and work.

2. The Central Failure: A Retreat on Fossil Fuels

The most significant outcome of the Communique is what it *doesn't* say. The document completely omits any mention of "fossil fuels," "coal," "oil," or "gas". This is a major step backwards from the 2023 Communique, which explicitly committed to transitioning away from these fuels. This omission is a direct concession to Australia and New Zealand, whose domestic policies of fossil fuel expansion now fundamentally contradict the survival of the Pacific. The communique further cedes to developed country members by only mentioning 'short-lived climate pollutants' to limit near-term warming. However this overlooks that limiting near-term warming requires rapid cuts in such pollutants *alongside* immediate, deep reductions in CO₂ which is the long-lived gas that largely determines the long-term temperature goal of 1.5°C.

- The Forum endorsed Australia's bid to co-host COP31 as a "Pacific COP". This endorsement provides a greenwashing platform for a nation that is simultaneously approving massive new fossil fuel projects. The planned extension of Woodside's North West Shelf gas project alone is a "carbon



bomb" set to lock in emissions until 2070, directly threatening the 1.5°C survival limit. This action raises serious contradictions around Australia's claim to be a credible partner to the Pacific.

- New Zealand's new government has confirmed it will repeal its ban on offshore oil and gas exploration and has withdrawn from the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA). This reversal was condemned by Pacific civil society as a "betrayal" and a direct violation of regional commitments.
- In a crucial development, Leaders commended the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on climate change and urged all members to use it to inform their obligations. This is a powerful new lever for our advocacy. The ICJ AO confirms that states have a legal duty to prevent climate harm—including from their exports—and that failure to do so is an "internationally wrongful act" requiring reparations. By endorsing this, Australia and New Zealand have politically agreed to a legal standard that their own fossil fuel expansion policies violate.

3. Key Wins and Critical Cautions

Despite the failure on fossil fuels, the Forum made important progress in other areas. However, these wins must be approached with caution, as key details regarding their implementation remain unclear.

- **The Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF) is a Reality:** The formal establishment of the PRF is a landmark victory for Pacific self-determination. This Pacific-owned and led fund is designed to provide direct, grant-based finance to communities for resilience projects, bypassing the complex and slow international climate finance system.

- ◆ **Critical Details missing:** While a major achievement, critical questions remain. The PRF's funding targets—an initial US\$500 million and a long-term goal of US\$1.5 billion—appear to be more political and aspirational than based on a comprehensive, bottom-up quantification of the region's total resilience needs. The US\$1.5 billion figure is symbolically linked to the "1.5 to Stay Alive" message, but



there is no evidence of a detailed needs assessment informing this quantum. Broader analyses show the needs are vast, with the UN estimating annual disaster costs at US\$1.07 billion and the World Bank identifying over US\$112 billion in assets at risk, suggesting the PRF's current capitalization is a fraction of what is required.

- ◆ Furthermore, the mechanism for community access is not yet confirmed. While a "direct to communities" funding window is proposed, the specific modalities of *how* communities will access these funds are yet to be developed. This will be determined through a future "programming co-design" process involving CSOs, which makes our engagement in this next phase absolutely critical to ensure the facility is truly accessible and just.

→ **An Ocean of Peace, A Vision in Need of Definition:** The adoption of the *Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration* is a significant achievement, establishing a uniquely Pacific security framework that rejects militarization and correctly identifies climate change as the region's single greatest security threat.

- ◆ **Unanswered Questions on the Ocean of Peace:** This declaration should be viewed with precaution. It is a statement of political intent, not a legally binding treaty, and its success depends entirely on political will. Crucially, recent official dialogues have concluded that the very concept of "peace" within the declaration needs to be better defined. There is a tangible risk that it could become an "ocean of pacification" that masks ongoing geopolitical competition and increasing militarization rather than fostering genuine peace. Civil society has rightly asked, "Whose peace is being upheld?" arguing that true peace is impossible without addressing foundational drivers of insecurity, including decolonization, gender equity, nuclear remediation, and climate justice.

→ **Unity on Pollution:** Leaders showed strong, unified positions on tackling plastic pollution and addressing the region's nuclear legacy, aligning closely with our demands for a binding plastics treaty and nuclear justice.



4. Divisions and Ongoing Challenges

- **Deep-Sea Mining (DSM) Fracture:** The Communique reveals a deep split on DSM. Instead of the permanent ban we demand, Leaders endorsed a vague "member-led regional approach". This is a diplomatic compromise that allows pro-mining Pacific states to pursue exploitation, prioritizing national economic interests over the collective stewardship of our shared ocean and risking irreversible harm to marine ecosystems.
- **Civil Society Remains on the Margins:** We achieved a procedural victory in extending the time provided for direct dialogue with Leaders While welcomed, this is not the structural change we need. Our demand for full and meaningful participation in decision-making remains unmet, as CSOs are still excluded from the formal spaces where key decisions are made.

5. What This Means for PICAN

The Honiara Communique has armed us with new tools—like the endorsed ICJ Advisory Opinion and the Ocean of Peace framework—that we must now use to hold our own Forum members, particularly Australia and New Zealand, accountable.

The central contradiction is clear: our region cannot build resilience while its largest members are actively fueling the fire. Our advocacy must focus on exposing this hypocrisy and making it politically untenable. The lack of detail on the PRF and the Ocean of Peace are not just gaps in policy; they are critical opportunities for PICAN to step in and shape these initiatives to ensure they deliver genuine justice for our communities.

