

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Joint Statement by Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States on the Establishment of the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)
June 24, 2022

A new initiative for more effective and efficient cooperation in support of Pacific Island priorities

The Pacific Islands region is home to nearly a fifth of the Earth's surface and many of its most urgent challenges, from the climate crisis to the COVID-19 pandemic to growing pressure on the rules-based free and open international order. It was in this context that the Pacific Islands Forum, the premier driver of regional action, committed to organize its members "as one collective if we are to address our increasingly common challenges."

As our countries—*Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States*—continue to support prosperity, resilience, and security in the Pacific, we too must harness our collective strength through closer cooperation. To that end, our governments dispatched high-level officials to Washington, D.C. on June 23 and 24 for consultations with Pacific Heads of Mission and other partners, including France, as well as the European Union in its observing capacity. These meetings followed discussions with Pacific partners, including with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; they remain ongoing, including with other partners engaged in the region. Today, our five countries launched an inclusive, informal mechanism to support Pacific priorities more effectively and efficiently: *the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)*.

This new initiative builds on our longstanding commitment to the region. Australia and New Zealand are of the region and members of the Pacific Islands Forum; Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States are founding Dialogue Partners. Our countries maintain close people-to-people ties to and are longstanding development partners with the Pacific Islands, reflected in our combined \$2.1 billion in development assistance for the region. We are united in our shared determination to support a region that benefits the peoples of the Pacific. We are also united in how we realize this vision—according to principles of Pacific regionalism, sovereignty, transparency, accountability, and most of all, led and guided by the Pacific Islands.

With these principles at its core, the Partners in the Blue Pacific aims to:

1. *Deliver results for the Pacific more effectively and efficiently.* Together and individually, our five countries will enhance our existing efforts to support Pacific priorities, in line with the Pacific Islands Forum's upcoming 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. To do so, we will work with Pacific partners. We will map existing projects and plan future ones, seeking to drive resources, remove duplication, and close gaps, which will avoid greater burdens and lost opportunities for Pacific governments and Pacific people. In parallel, each of our governments will continue to increase the ambition of our individual efforts in the region.
2. *Bolster Pacific regionalism.* The PBP will forge closer connections with Pacific governments and with the Pacific Islands Forum, by facilitating stronger and more regular engagement with our governments. We will further elevate Pacific regionalism, with a strong and united Pacific Islands Forum at its center, as a vital pillar of the regional architecture and of our respective approaches in the region.
3. *Expand opportunities for cooperation between the Pacific and the world.* The PBP will encourage and facilitate greater engagement with the Pacific by any other partner

that shares the Pacific's values and aims to work constructively and transparently to benefit the people of the region. As it develops, the PBP will remain inclusive, informal, and open to cooperating with additional partners similarly invested in and committed to partnership with the Pacific Islands. Globally, the PBP will identify opportunities to expand Pacific participation in international fora.

At every stage, we will be led and guided by the Pacific Islands. We will seek Pacific guidance on the PBP's selection of its lines of effort and its flagship projects. In meetings in Washington, including at Blair House, our governments and Pacific Heads of Mission discussed diverse areas in which to deepen cooperation, including the climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, maritime security and protection, health, prosperity, and education. We commit to continuing to engage with Pacific governments as well as with Pacific-led regional institutions, particularly the Pacific Islands Forum; we will align our work with outcomes from the upcoming Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in Suva, Fiji. Later this year the United States intends to invite Partner countries' foreign ministers to convene and review our progress.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken; Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong of Australia; Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi of Japan; Minister of Foreign Affairs Nanaia Mahuta of New Zealand; and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs Elizabeth Truss of the United Kingdom. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

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