



gap 

# Pacific and Small Island Nations Summit

Report and Recommendations

18 June 2021





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## Global Access Partners Pty Ltd

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AUSTRALIA

T +61 2 8303 2420

[www.globalaccesspartners.org](http://www.globalaccesspartners.org)



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## INTRODUCTION

On 18 June 2021, Global Access Partners (GAP), in association with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP), hosted the inaugural GAP Summit for the Pacific and Small Island Nations to consider Environment, Society and Governance (ESG) issues in the context of a post-pandemic recovery.

The Summit acknowledged the devastating impact of COVID-19 measures on the Pacific region. The pandemic's disruption of trade, tourism and travel has seen Small Island Nations face their biggest collective challenge in a generation. The health crisis has exacerbated existing economic vulnerabilities and threatens to reverse progress across a range of Sustainable Development Goals.

The Summit brought together a select group of 120 Australian and international thought leaders, business and government executives, national and state policy makers, academics and social commentators from 13 countries. Participants were invited to consider common challenges and potential solutions and suggest a program of action for the GAP community over the next twelve months.

Introduced by **Catherine Fritz-Kalish**, the Summit opened with an acknowledgement of country by **Prof Peter Yu** and a Pacific welcome by **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**, Director of ICDP.

In his Opening Address, **Senator the Hon Zed Seselja**, Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, outlined Australia's support measures in the region and stressed the importance of greater economic integration and

stronger partnerships with international organisations and civil society to the post-pandemic recovery.

Keynote speaker **the Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum CF**, Attorney-General of Fiji, spoke about the opportunity for the Pacific to 'reset' in the wake of COVID-19 to chart a new course and take charge of its own destiny.

The first session was chaired by **Dr Ian Watt AC** and focused on a 'blue recovery' for the region. Thought leaders included Australian Minister for the Environment **the Hon Sussan Ley MP**, OECD Head of Public Governance Reviews **Sara Fyson**, and member from the National Parliament of Solomon Islands **Peter Kenilorea Jr**, who emphasised resilience and rebranded Small Island Nations as 'Large Ocean Developing States', highlighting their deep historic, cultural and economic connection to the ocean.

The following session on an integrated ESG approach was chaired by **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu** and featured **Varelle Croes**, Chief Innovation Officer of the Government of Aruba, **Peter Manettas**, Founder of ShoreTrade, and **Taholo Kami**, Special Representative for Oceans from the Government of Fiji. It was suggested that a post-COVID reset which emphasised ESG issues could improve regional resilience, climate preparedness and food security, but also rethink economic and social relations to diversify production, reduce inequality, share ownership, and increase economic participation. New partnerships should stem from realising the true value of the Pacific's societies and environment, with long-standing aid relationships being elevated into genuine partnerships.



The third and final session of the GAP Summit focused on a shared vision for the future and was chaired by **Prof Brian Schmidt AC**, Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University. **Tuiloma Neroni Slade OS**, the 8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, framed climate change as an issue of equity and justice, before 4<sup>th</sup> President of Kiribati **His Excellency Anote Tong** spoke passionately about the catastrophic consequences of climate change for his country.

The Summit raised a range of potential project ideas (see *page 8*) that will be progressed by GAP and its partners over the next twelve months, with a view to report back on their development at the next Summit in 2022.

As part of the proceedings, participants enjoyed a virtual demonstration of *Shifting Homes*, a Virtual Reality (VR) platform developed through ICDP.

### **About GAP Summits**

GAP Summits have become an important feature of Australia's policy landscape since 2010. These high-level, invitation-only annual gatherings are known for their unique format and networking opportunities, and their unwavering focus on economic activity and practical results.

The Summit's parliamentary format encourages open, informed and constructive dialogue in a safe environment under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution.

Summit reports of proceedings can be reviewed at [globalaccesspartners.org/think-tanks/growth-summit](https://globalaccesspartners.org/think-tanks/growth-summit).

## SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE

1. We, the participants of the GAP Pacific and Small Island Nations Summit, convened online on 18 June 2021 to discuss a 'blue recovery' for the Pacific in the wake of COVID-19. We also considered the need for an environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework to underpin greater regional resilience, and worked towards a shared vision for the region's future.
2. We thank **Catherine Fritz-Kalish** and the organisers at Global Access Partners (GAP) for hosting the Summit, the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) for their financial contribution, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for their in-kind support. We also appreciate the technical assistance delivered by the team at EventFrog to ensure the event's smooth proceedings.
3. We congratulate the organisers for delivering a successful and highly engaging virtual forum, bringing together 120 senior executives from government, business and academia from 13 countries: Aruba, Australia, Fiji, France, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Switzerland, Tonga and Vanuatu.
4. We thank **Senator the Hon Zed Seselja**, Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, and **the Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum**, the Attorney-General of Fiji, for their forward-looking keynote speeches.
5. We also thank **the Hon Sussan Ley MP**, Minister for the Environment in the Australian Government; **Sara Fyson**, Head of Public Governance Reviews at the OECD; and **Peter Kenilorea Jr**, Member for East 'Are'are in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands, for their thoughtful considerations of a 'blue recovery' for the Pacific region.
6. We appreciate the valuable contributions of **Varelle Croes**, Chief Innovation Officer in the Government of Aruba; **Peter Manettas**, Founder of ShoreTrade; and **Taholo Kami**, Special Representative for Oceans of the Government of Fiji, and their insights into ESG issues.
7. We were inspired by the arguments for unity and progress offered by **Tuiloma Neroni Slade OS**, 8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; and **His Excellency Anote Tong**, 4<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Kiribati.
8. We thank **Dr Ian Watt AC**, **Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu** and **Prof Brian Schmidt AC** for chairing the Summit's three sessions and the many contributors from 13 nations who offered their opinions on the issues under debate. We also thank facilitators **Michael Collins**, **Catherine Fritz-Kalish** and **Taholo Kami** for moderating the discussion.
9. We acknowledge the devastating impact of COVID-19 measures on the Pacific region and hope a broad vaccine roll-out will allow the swift and safe resumption of international tourism and trade. We accept the need for economic diversification and development throughout the region, and note the potential of niche agriculture, digital services, and other alternative revenue streams.



10. We agree that a successful 'blue recovery' will require policy coherence and cross-jurisdictional cooperation within domestic governments, productive partnerships with commercial companies and non-government organisations (NGOs), and improved international financial mechanisms to encourage greater investment and support.
11. We recognise the importance of a healthy Pacific environment to Pacific people and communities, and support measures to improve environmental sustainability, maintain fish stocks, reduce plastic and oil pollution, and protect coastal mangroves.
12. We emphasise the importance of strong and ethical leadership, transparency and robust civic institutions to regional resilience, and urge international donors and financial bodies to pursue productive and respectful partnerships with regional nations and stakeholders.
13. We accept the need to rebuild public trust in government institutions and urge regional governments to recognise and dismantle administrative silos, update the skills of civil servants, and embrace data technology to improve policy implementation.
14. We advocate recovery packages which prioritise economic diversification, environmental protection, national resilience, and social equality. We stress that ambitious global commitments on climate change and Sustainable Development Goals must be turned into practical and inclusive regional outcomes.
15. We believe that greater regional unity would amplify the voice of the Pacific in international forums, and implore global leaders to accelerate action on climate change, given its real and present danger to the very future of Small Island Nations.
16. We look forward to working with GAP, ICDP and other stakeholders to pursue a range of projects raised by the Summit, including work with the OECD on building regional economic and governance capability to empower a 'blue recovery' in the Pacific, a digital fisheries platform, and regional biomarine research hubs.
17. We hope to build on the knowledge shared and relationships begun and strengthened during the Summit, and look forward to contributing to a follow-up event in the future.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The GAP Summit for the Pacific and Small Island Nations identified several potential projects and areas of action that will be further explored by GAP and its partners through the Second Track process:

## **1. Building regional economic and governance capability**

An OECD project on building regional economic and governance capability to empower a 'blue recovery' in the Pacific and Small Island Nations.

GAP will facilitate cross-regional learning and data collection with the delivery of capacity-building workshops.

## **2. A Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Program**

A Pacific Sustainable Fisheries Program involving Peter Manettas and underpinned by the Second Track to link Pacific fishermen directly with customers, allow digital tracking of supplies and maximise the potential of the tuna market.

A Pacific Partnership Fund could also be established to support the development of sustainable fishing industry, underpinned by a digital data and trade platform.

## **3. A Sustainable Timber Initiative**

A sustainable timber initiative supporting the complete ban of round log exports and ensuring local stakeholders receive a larger share of revenue for the export of dressed timber.

## **4. A new Regional Marine Research Hub**

The creation of world-class research hubs or a new regional marine research body to foster collaborative research between Australia and the Pacific, perhaps located at a vacant property in Vanuatu.

## **5. New public-private partnerships underpinned by ESG principles**

A series of joint ventures and partnerships between business and government, underpinned by ESG principles, to develop regional and global economic opportunities while maintaining local control and maximising regional revenues.

## **6. Accelerating the development of Pacific carbon markets**

An exploration of the potential for Pacific carbon markets to generate income while reducing emissions, protecting natural resources, and combating climate change.



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **Summit Partners**

Global Access Partners  
International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP)  
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

## **Summit Steering Committee**

Prof Attila Brungs, Michael Collins, Martin Forst, Peter Fritz AO, Catherine Fritz-Kalish, Andrew Henderson, Taholo Kami, Peter Kenilorea Jr, Carina Lindberg, Simone Pensko, Michele Rumsey, Prof Brian Schmidt AC, Dr Melis Senova, Ernest Soria Morales

## **Global Access Partners (GAP)**

Benjamin Blackshaw, Olga Bodrova, Alicia Caruso, Peter Fritz AO, Catherine Fritz-Kalish, Helen Hull, Nicholas Mallory, Leila Maugeri

# PROCEEDINGS

## WELCOME AND SETTING THE SCENE

### Introduction

Catherine Fritz-Kalish  
Co-Founder and Managing Director, GAP  
Director, International Centre for Democratic  
Partnerships (ICDP)



Ms Fritz-Kalish welcomed participants to the event and praised the involvement of over 120 people from 16 nations. She thanked the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for their involvement, and the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships for its financial support.

She underlined the importance of environmental, social and governance issues to the region, noted the urgency of action on climate change and labour mobility, and encouraged participants to engage in free-flowing, confidential discussion to generate future projects to progress.

### Acknowledgement of Country

Prof Peter Yu  
Vice-President (First Nations)  
The Australian National University

Prof Peter Yu paid respect to the traditional owners of the land and welcomed participants to the Summit. He acknowledged his Yawuru ancestors (Saltwater People) and their *Mabu Liyan* – good wellbeing – philosophy that weaves people, community and country together. Prof Yu encouraged participants to leave their differences aside and focus on the common things that unite them, to help them engage in a constructive and positive dialogue.

### Pacific Welcome

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu  
Director, ICDP  
Partner and Legal Consultant, Latu Lawyers  
Honorary Consul for Great Britain and  
Northern Ireland to Samoa

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu offered a warm Pacific welcome to all participants and introduced the first Summit speaker, Senator the Hon Zed Seselja.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Senator the Honourable Zed Seselja  
Minister for International Development  
and the Pacific, Australian Government

Minister Seselja stressed the need for regional cooperation to overcome the impact of COVID-19, noting the economic and social cost of closing national borders to contain the virus over the last 18 months.



***‘One of the best ways we can support the Pacific is through greater economic integration, opening up new markets and bringing down barriers to trade.’***

Senator the Hon Zed Seselja



The Asian Development Bank estimates that the Pacific suffered an economic contraction of 5.8% in 2020 and will grow by just 1.4% in 2021. Despite this slow recovery overall, seven Pacific nations will face a further fall in gross domestic product (GDP) this year, with declines of 10% in domestic consumption in Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Half a million people may fall into extreme poverty as a result, with governments facing revenue shortfalls due to the collapse of tourism.

Australia announced a ‘Pacific Step-Up’ in 2016, backed by a \$523 million Health and Security initiative, and has now tailored its support to help the region through the pandemic. Over 300,000 vaccines have been sent to Timor Leste, Fiji and the Solomon Islands since May 2021, and Australia is working with UNICEF to procure and deliver vaccines for 15 million people in the Indo-Pacific by mid-2022.

As well as supporting health training and resources, Australia is building more resilient regional economies through \$1.44 billion in development assistance. Australia is underwriting essential services in Timor Leste, tourist services in the Solomon Islands and social security payments in Fiji. Australian subsidies for air services are maintaining vital supply chains, while a suite of infrastructure projects will improve village water and sanitation in hundreds of villages in the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

Australia is also furnishing sustainable loans to the governments of Palau, the Solomon Islands and PNG for infrastructure projects and advocating for debt suspension through the Paris Club’s debt service

suspension initiative. Australia is encouraging regional growth through economic integration, market development and reducing barriers to trade. Over 7,000 Pacific workers have been welcomed to Australia since the start of 2020, allowing remittances to be sent home to their communities.

Australia is also acting on climate change, an issue of utmost importance to the region, through investment in renewable energy and disaster resilience. The \$39 million Pacific horticultural and agricultural market access Plus Program is working with farmers and agribusiness in Fiji, PNG, and Tonga to provide climate projections and tailored advice to improve food security.

Australia’s Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will pursue their closer engagement with Pacific Island leaders and ministers, and the Australian Government will further its work with the business sector to leverage finance, support investment in key sectors, and create jobs.

The Minister stressed the importance of partnerships with international organisations and civil society, including GAP and the ICDP, and saw a strong role for the OECD under the leadership of its new Secretary-General, the Hon Mathias Cormann. While the challenges facing the region are significant, so is the Pacific’s collective resolve to face them.

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu thanked Minister Seselja and introduced the next keynote speaker, the Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum.



***'We need to have a well-planned strategy to mobilise more resources. And that strategy should not be held hostage to the geopolitical power plays or larger, more developed nations.'***

**The Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum CF**

## OPENING ADDRESS

**The Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum CF**  
**Attorney-General, Minister for Economy,**  
**Civil Service and Communications**  
**Republic of Fiji**

Pacific Island countries face a host of common challenges, including geographical distance from major markets, vulnerability to global economic fluctuations, accelerating climate change and inadequate access to international finance. Small Pacific nations cannot afford the substantial stimulus packages which larger, more developed nations can give themselves, and so global economic disparities are increasing.

The region must therefore take the opportunity for a reset in the wake of COVID-19 to chart a new course and take charge of its own destiny, rather than fall victim to geopolitical power plays. The World Bank has offered concessional finance to Fiji and other middle-income nations, but greater allowance for the impact of weather events exacerbated by climate change is required.

COVID-19 decimated the tourist industry on which Fiji and other Pacific nations relies, a financial disaster which followed a series of devastating cyclones in recent years. These setbacks have limited the resources available to local governments for service delivery and economic development, and greater bilateral, international, and philanthropic support will be required to ensure a strong recovery.

Fiji enjoyed nine years of economic growth before the COVID-19 crisis, but tourism generates 40% of the nation's GDP and so the provision of vaccines from New Zealand and Australia will be crucial in easing border restrictions once 80%+ of the population is vaccinated.

Fiji has almost universal literacy and is well-placed to host call centre services for Australia, the USA, and the UK. Fiji is also diversifying its agricultural sector by growing 'superfoods' such as turmeric for export to the USA. It is also developing its digital service sector, deploying renewable energy generation, and looking at the provision of electric public buses.

Retirement villages for Japanese retirees are being planned, and Australian companies are contributing to public-private partnerships in the health sector to attract foreign visitors as well as service local people. Although Fiji has a strong health sector, greater investment and training will improve national resilience to future pandemics and natural disasters while maintaining a healthy working population.

Fiji's government is working with the private sector to incentivise a sustainable 'green-blue' recovery, but better finance provision from development partners is still required. In collaboration with the British government, Fiji plans to release a 'blue bond' in 2022, while philanthropic organisations have funded solar power schemes in rural regions.

Green bonds have been issued in the past, and problems around interest rates can be explored with development partners to ensure their success in the future. Work is also underway on reducing



private sector risk, including climate insurance schemes, credit guarantees, concessional blended finance, and domestic green financing.

The Attorney-General was thanked for his remarks. Participants supported his calls for long-term economic diversification from multilateral development banks as the recovery of international tourism may take more time than previously anticipated.

## SESSION ONE

### ***A ‘blue recovery’ for the Pacific and Small Island Nations – how do we achieve it?***

#### SESSION CHAIR

**Dr Ian Watt AC**

Chairman, ICDP

Director, ICDP Foundation

#### THOUGHT LEADER PANEL

- **Hon Sussan Ley MP**  
Minister for the Environment  
Australian Government
- **Sara Fyson**  
Head of Unit, Public Governance Reviews,  
Public Governance Directorate  
OECD
- **Peter Kenilorea Jr**  
Member for East 'Are'are,  
National Parliament of Solomon Islands  
Ambassador of *Pacific Connect*



Dr Ian Watt AC outlined the topic of the first session and invited participants to consider the roles which governments, businesses and individuals can play in driving a 'blue' post-COVID recovery for the Pacific. He then introduced the Session's first thought leader, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, to the virtual stage.

#### **The Hon Sussan Ley MP**

**Minister for the Environment  
Australian Government**

Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island states are surrounded and sustained by the ocean, and 85% of Australians live within 50km of the coast. Thirty-seven percent of Australia's sovereign waters are already protected areas, representing 3.3 million km<sup>2</sup>, and there are plans to extend this area to 45% of the total, with new marine parks in Australia's Indian ocean territory and around Christmas and Cocos Island.

Healthy and sustainably managed oceans can strengthen the region's 'blue economy' and help Pacific nations recover from COVID-19. Blue carbon ecosystems, such as mangroves, tidal marshes, and expanses of sea grass, for example, offer habitats which supports fish stocks and food security, filter water run-off from the land, protect coasts from erosion and sequester two to four times as much carbon as terrestrial forests.



***‘Blue carbon ecosystems can sequester two to four times more carbon than terrestrial forests, and thereby can make a significant contribution to global action on climate change.’***

The Hon Sussan Ley MP

The Australian government recently announced \$100 million in funding for ocean management and research. \$30.6 million will be spent restoring blue carbon ecosystems and sharing expertise with international partners, as restoration of such habitats will generate a host of biodiversity, carbon and community benefits. \$19 million will be spent on restoring coastal ecosystems around Australia, while \$10 million will support regional Pacific blue carbon restoration schemes, such as protecting mangroves and sea grass in Fiji and Indonesia.

Australia’s blue carbon partners include the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Regional Environment Program, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNESCO, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Australia supports the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Global Ocean Alliance, which aims to protect 30% of the world’s oceans by 2030. It recently joined the Coalition for Nature and People which plans an ambitious global biodiversity framework to be announced in late 2021.

Australia has also signed a new 10-year partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to pursue practical projects to improve climate resilience and adaptation. It has given \$16 million to tackle the problem of plastic litter in the Pacific, for example, as a healthy, sustainable Pacific environment is fundamental to the quality of life and economic security of all Pacific nations.

**Sara Fyson**  
**Head of Unit, Public Governance Reviews**  
**Public Governance Directorate**  
**OECD**

The COVID crisis revealed underlying economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities across the region. The collapse of tourism saw the GDP of Pacific Island nations fall by \$7.4 billion, with repercussions across the region’s whole economy.

The close links between ocean and land-based economies underline the need to protect the Pacific environment by reducing the 8 million tons of plastic waste dumped into the ocean every year – equivalent to a dump truck every minute – and tackling the challenges caused by rising seas and climate change.

Stakeholders agree that recovery packages should promote economic diversification, environmental protection, national resilience and social equality – an issue ignored in previous recoveries from financial setbacks. COVID-19 had disproportionate effects on vulnerable cohorts, and growing income disparities should be addressed. Ambitious global commitments on climate change and sustainable development goals must be turned into practical and inclusive regional outcomes to be meaningful.

Coherent government policies are required for successful implementation, and the trade-offs between economic, environmental and social goals must be acknowledged at the planning stage. Infrastructure projects, for example, could impact coastal ecosystems, undermining efforts to protect

***‘We need to build governments’ capacities to deliver on climate change and blue recovery. The number and importance of transboundary and global challenges which cannot be addressed by one government alone have increased significantly.’***

Sara Fyson



fish stocks and shorelines. Projects with a broad range of benefits and multiplier effects should be prioritised to ensure a fast and sustainable recovery.

As well as identifying such trade-offs, regional governments should align their domestic and international objectives and limit the negative impacts of their actions on other nations. Current data relating to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators could inform these calculations and improve policy coherence at the local, national and international level.

Governance finance and service delivery must also be reframed to rebuild public trust shaken by the global financial crisis 12 years ago as well as COVID-19. Surveys show that the responsiveness and reliability of the public sector shapes citizen trust in government, and social harmony will depend on government performance regarding immediate recovery and long-term issues such as inequality and climate change.

COVID-19 highlighted the need for governments to coordinate their policies across different domains, and has forced more collaborative approaches, including Australia’s National Cabinet. Created in March 2020, the National Cabinet’s shared sense of purpose and frequent meetings created an agile and effective forum for delivering policy to manage the initial pandemic, and these approaches should be continued for the recovery.

The pandemic forced increasing use of digital public services, and citizens now expect greater speed of service delivery across the whole of government. Ministers now expect to use near instant feedback from digital data to shape policies in more agile ways and create a more flexible government. Data can also inform green budgeting approaches and improve equality of access and outcomes.

Government capacity to tackle global challenges must also be improved across the Pacific, with regional and global cooperation towards mutually beneficial goals. Issues such as climate change require international agreement as well as national action to coordinate policies across departments and jurisdictional boundaries.

Overall, governments across the region should modernise governance mechanisms to deliver on domestic and global challenges, adopting proven, evidence-based methods to maximise results. Civil servants therefore need a new suite of interdisciplinary skills incorporating risk anticipation and management and to engage with stakeholders in new ways.

The OECD is working with regional authorities, including the Government of Aruba, to share effective tools and best practice, improve leadership skills and facilitate a coherent whole-of-government response to achieve a ‘blue recovery’ and UN SDGs. The OECD’s Policy Framework for Sound Public Governance, for instance, offers integrated guidance and benchmarking tools to improve public governance.



***'We have been guilty in turning our back to the blue that surrounds us, and looking very much inwardly onto the small slivers of land that we have. And that focus needs to shift in this post-COVID or 'the new normal' we are now entering to give oceans the prominence they deserve.'*** Peter Kenilorea Jr

**Peter Kenilorea Jr**  
Member for the East 'Are'are  
National Parliament of Solomon Islands  
*Pacific Connect* Ambassador

Pacific Islanders see themselves as 'born of the ocean', a trope which has been adopted in popular media across the world. The ocean is the lifeblood of many Pacific communities, and Small Island Nations prefer to see themselves as 'large ocean developing states'. COVID-19 offers the region an opportunity to renew this identity, just as its islands have proved themselves resilient in the face of varied challenges in the past.

Small communities in the Solomon Islands use traditional knowledge to survive cyclones which strip their land bare, and such leadership can be integrated into conversations of development issues. The pandemic pressured the Pacific's varied economies, societies and health systems, but regional and global solidarity can help them recover, while Pacific Island nations can play a greater role in international forums.

The Pacific covers a vast area; indeed, the entire Caribbean would fit into the Solomon Islands. Island states can offer themselves as 'labs' for partnerships with investors and institutions to build capacity and make progress.

Marine science and technology are a fruitful sector, and the creation of a regional body to encourage technology transfer would have significant impact. The world's best scientists could be attracted to the Pacific if it offers itself as a centre for pharmaceutical work.

National policies should match political rhetoric, and island nations should establish Ministries of Oceans or Seas, in addition to the Ministries of Lands that are already established. The ocean environment should be front and centre of regional discussions, rather than be limited to fisheries, to ensure a 'blue recovery' takes place.

## DISCUSSION / TALANOA

### CO-FACILITATORS

- **Michael Collins**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Strategic Development Group
- **Catherine Fritz-Kalish**  
Co-Founder and Managing Director, GAP  
Director, ICDP

Participants were encouraged to share ideas which might generate practical projects in the year ahead. A clear definition of a 'blue recovery' might include any economic activities related to the ocean, including but not limited to fisheries.

Dietary problems in the Pacific, from a lack of nutrition in childhood, to adult obesity, could be eased by better sanitation, diet and hygiene education. The protection of mangroves would preserve fish stocks, while domestic production of fruit and vegetables and access to refrigeration would improve health outcomes. Transdisciplinary solutions to problems which involve education, health, economic and environmental services can therefore have a significant multiplier effect on other issues.



Governments have usually been expected to lead policy implementation, but Global Access Partners encourages industry groups and other stakeholders to take responsibility. GAP's Second Track engagements allow participants to think differently, incorporate traditional knowledge and implement solutions themselves.

A range of sectors must cooperate to implement effective change, and a 'blue recovery' in the Pacific will require the involvement of the business sector in Australia, New Zealand and Island states. Social and environmental systems must also be seen through a 'blue lens', while tourism should rank alongside fisheries when exploiting the Pacific's economic potential.

Marine science can be seen as an ecosystem in its own right, and encouraging participation from sector stakeholders in the region should be a priority. Marine research can produce commercial opportunities with global reach and generate significant exports for Small Island Nations.

Seventy percent of income in the Maldives usually derives from tourism, but the industry's cessation during COVID-19 forced attention back on traditional methods of support and production which had long been neglected.

Regional nations should take stronger steps to translate the international agreements they sign into practical domestic policy to achieve the goals they espouse.

Participants agreed that rehabilitating marine infrastructure would encourage the growth of local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and ignite private investor interest from Australia.

## SESSION TWO

### ***How could an integrated ESG (Environment, Society, Governance) approach increase the resilience of Small Island Nations' economies and societies?***

#### SESSION CHAIR

**Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**

Director, ICDP

Partner and Legal Consultant, Latu Lawyers

Honorary Consul for Great Britain and

Northern Ireland to Samoa

#### THOUGHT LEADER PANEL

- **Varelle Croes**  
Chief Innovation Officer  
Government of Aruba
- **Peter Manettas**  
Founder, ShoreTrade  
Director, Peter Manettas Seafood
- **Taholo Kami**  
Special Representative for Oceans  
Government of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kami Pasifiki Solutions

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu outlined the topic of the second session and invited participants to discuss the ways in which an integrated Environment-Social-Governance (ESG) approach to public policy could improve regional resilience.





***‘Change is hard. We are trying to achieve the systematic change, and doing it during a crisis is a challenge. That being said, I think our people are determined to do things different this time around.’***

**Varelle Croes**

**Varelle Croes**  
**Chief Innovation Officer**  
**Government of Aruba**

Aruba adopted the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals before the onset of COVID-19 and pursued an ‘aggressive’ strategy of inclusive growth and innovation. Aruba was also working on a digital transformation plan for government, as well as improving governance, combating corruption, and adopting a renewable energy plan when the pandemic occurred.

The impact of COVID-19 measures highlighted the fragility of Aruba’s economy and prompted the government to reflect on the need for greater resilience and adopt an integrated framework for recovery.

Rather than work through separate departments, the Government of Aruba now takes an integrated approach to achieve five ‘national missions’. It accepts that a range of institutions must be strengthened to achieve success and that systematic change requires structural reforms. The government pursues a cross-sectoral, cross-ministry, multidisciplinary approach, with each mission incorporating a portfolio of projects, innovations and legislative reforms.

These new key performance indicators have been aligned with SDGs, retain a practical focus, and are driven by strong leadership and good governance. Over 155 local stakeholders are involved, with support from the public, private and civic sectors to mobilise the nation behind its five goals, rather than pursue dozens of separate and perhaps competitive projects.

While the recovery is at an early stage, Aruba’s government is determined to meet the challenges ahead. The nation will pursue an integrated approach to its economic, social and environmental problems as they cannot be solved in isolation. A well-staffed National Innovation Lab is coordinating project implementation and partner training, but additional funds are required as COVID-19 cut GDP by up to 40% due to tourism restrictions.

**Peter Manettas**  
**Founder, ShoreTrade**  
**Director, Peter Manettas Seafood**

Mr Manettas’ family has been in the seafood business for four generations, and his father developed a large wholesale business across Australia.

New technology introduced by ShoreTrade three years ago now allows fishermen to sell their catch direct to customers, bypassing middlemen, through fully integrated, end-to-end, cold chain logistics. Previous arrangements allowed wholesalers, supermarkets, and auctions to squeeze fishermen on price, but the new system allows them to reap more rewards for their labour.

It was a challenge to overcome long-entrenched anti-competitive practices, but ShoreTrade won the respect of primary producers by increasing transparency. The platform allows more customers to purchase produce, rather than forcing fishermen to sell in bulk to a single wholesaler. It has over 4,000 fisheries and 10,000 buyers across Australia, including hotels, hospitality, fish retailers and wholesalers.

***‘There is not one [catch] dataset in Australia or globally that is capturing everything under one platform. So, when we’re making decisions about what our sustainable future in the ocean looks like, we are bringing together a disaggregated dataset that is not all-encompassing.’***

**Peter Manettas**



Talks with fishermen across Australia, Malaysia and Singapore reveal their shared aim to increase the price they receive for their product and secure the future of the profession for their children. ShoreTrade’s platform has shifted power back into their hands, despite inevitable opposition from entrenched vested interests.

The company has now secured agreements with a large trading house and a major Southeast Asian country to extend its offerings and create a complete data set on a unified platform. This data will monitor catches to ensure they meet regulatory limits, and pool information from 14 other countries to enhance engagement and collaboration. Customers can now negotiate with fishermen to target specific species in the future, as well as use the platform to simplify cross-border trade.

**Taholo Kami**  
**Special Representative for Oceans**  
**Government of Fiji**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Kami Pasifiki Solutions**

The Pacific islands range across an area larger than Africa but, excluding Australia and New Zealand, have less than 10 million citizens. A post-COVID reset which emphasises ESG issues should improve regional resilience, climate preparedness and food security, but also rethink economic and social relations to diversify production, reduce inequality, share ownership, and increase economic participation.

Many Australian firms have withdrawn from the region to seek greater rewards elsewhere, but digital innovations to trace produce from source to table, trade in digital currencies and improved transparency could create new investment opportunities.

Half the world’s tuna, for example, is caught in the South Pacific, and Pacific Island nations could reap greater rewards from this valuable harvest. High-value coastal fisheries can also produce oysters, clams and other produce, and research partnerships with Australian institutions could help unlock this potential in a responsible and sustainable manner. The Pacific as a region could become the world’s biggest supplier of sustainable tropical seafood.

Climate change measures should now scale from pilot projects, and new carbon markets could help protect the region’s oceans and forests from harm. Timber exports should be sent directly to Australia, rather than processed in Asia, to benefit primary producers. Partnerships with Australian and NZ industry could develop world-class sustainable markets for carbon, exotic timbers and seafoods that are not exploitive but maximise benefits from the landowners to markets. Island governments should also build on traditional friendships and relationships to create a stronger regional identity.

New partnerships should stem from realising the true value of the Pacific’s societies and environment, with long-standing aid relationships being elevated into genuine partnerships. Australia has created special aid packages for women in the Pacific, technical training such as the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), as well as infrastructure over the last 15 years. A new public-private fund



***‘Let’s start with new partnerships that are underpinned by the value of our environment, our societies, and then the kinds of governance structures that can make this happen. Let’s look at how aid can be elevated again into new kinds of partnerships.’*** Taholo Kami

could have an equally significant impact on partnerships that transform sustainable seafood markets, sustainable timber and carbon reserves with forests and oceans, and sustainable high-value agriculture.

Environmentally sustainable, high-value forestry, agriculture and fishery businesses can be developed with digital produce tracking to benefit local producers, alongside world-class research hubs.

## DISCUSSION / TALANOA

### CO-FACILITATORS

- **Catherine Fritz-Kalish**  
Co-Founder and Managing Director, GAP Director, ICDP
- **Michael Collins**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Strategic Development Group

Participants agreed that digitisation not only improves efficiency but helps to democratise markets and secure more revenue for local primary producers.

The ShoreTrade fishing platform adopted across Australia, for example, could help local Pacific enterprises directly access global markets, although the powerful entities which dominate the Pacific’s seafood trade would oppose such innovations. It was suggested that GAP could run a Second Track project on a **sustainable Pacific fisheries programme**.

A **Pacific Partnership Fund** could support the development of sustainable fishing industry underpinned by a **digital data and trade platform**. Such digital innovations should have a values-based core, protecting the rights of local participants and factoring in the value of long-term sustainability to prevent over-exploitation.

A **marine research hub** could be sited in a property currently for sale in Vanuatu which served as a private college and comprises a mini campus with dormitories and seminar rooms. It could also become a ‘co-working’ space for multiple stakeholders, including those involved in fishing, marine research, and trade. Similar hubs could be created in other regional nations to combine field learning with data collection and study.

Nurses and midwives comprise three quarters of the Pacific health workforce, 95% are women and half are under 35. Improving health provision supports economic growth and social equity, but experience shows that government departments across the region act in silos, rather than working together. Joint action on issues such as malnutrition, disaster readiness and female empowerment is therefore required to make progress.

Bilateral trade for members of the Australia Fiji Business Council dwindled due to COVID-19, but vaccinations should allow tourism and other businesses to recover. Island economies should diversify tourist provision by offering foreign visitors authentic experiences of local environments and cultures. Tourists can help collect litter, rather than create it, and partner with research organisations to protect the environment.



Tourism may not be fully restored for some time, and so more diverse income streams are still required. Carbon and other markets might achieve the scale required to be effective by pooling a range of business interests and national governments, increasing their economic clout while retaining political independence. This pooling of resources would also help increase Pacific influence on regional and global decision-making bodies, which are currently dominated by larger, more developed nations.

Participants were thanked for their inspiring ideas and project suggestions, before the session was brought to a close.



Prof Brian Schmidt AC invited participants to think about the big problems over the next 10-30 years, consider a shared vision for the region's future and suggest practical action items to progress.

## SESSION THREE

### *What is our shared vision for the future and how can we build it together?*

#### SESSION CHAIR

**Prof Brian Schmidt AC**

Vice-Chancellor and President  
The Australian National University  
Winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics

#### THOUGHT LEADER PANEL

- **Tuiloma Neroni Slade OS**  
8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- **His Excellency Anote Tong**  
4<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Kiribati

#### **Tuiloma Neroni Slade OS** 8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Humanity is confronted by complex challenges on a global scale, but decisions on the future will always be shaped by those in the past.

Seven Pacific states met in Wellington in 1971 to create the Pacific Islands Forum to foster regional corporation, and this body now has sixteen members. Nuclear testing was a major issue in the early 1970s, with atmospheric and underground tests of nuclear weapons having been inflicted on the region since 1946. This testing ended in the 1990s, but issues of education, telecommunications and trade remain.

The Forum's vision in 1971 foresaw a united Pacific of peace, harmony, security, and economic prosperity for all. The region is still working towards these aspirations, despite the current crisis caused by COVID-19, climate change and geopolitical tension. The Forum recently suffered a split, when an entire subregion left the organisation, and it is vital that people of goodwill restore its unity and solidarity.



***‘Climate change is an issue of equity and justice; ultimately, for the blameless and the vulnerable, justice and the rule of law offer the best protection.’***

**Tuiloma Neroni Slade**

Climate change is a pressing issue of equity and justice as well as environmental peril, while global action is required to preserve the health and biodiversity of the ocean. The 2050 strategy for the Blue Pacific will require concerted action from all partners to tackle a range of pollution issues. A new international crime of ecocide, or ‘killing the environment’, is being envisioned by a group of lawyers<sup>1</sup> to use the power of the international criminal court in response to gross assaults on the natural world. A report outlining this proposal will shortly be presented to the public.

The spread of COVID-19 highlighted global gaps in national resilience and service provision, and, above all, exposed a collective failure in global leadership. Regional nations must play their part in global governance reforms to ensure effective multilateralism and reduce the inequities affecting the Pacific. Preparations for future pandemics must also be made, including better education and vaccinations against known threats such as measles.

Superpower confrontation in the Pacific will only intensify, and the Pacific has no wish to once again be a theatre of wars it did nothing to cause. The Pacific should develop a greater voice in international affairs to preserve regional security, driven by strong, ethical leadership, rather than self-interested autocracies. Following the Boe Declaration on Regional Security signed by all members of the Pacific Islands Forum, the region must embrace democratic government, independent judiciaries and the rule of law while tackling corrupt and the abuse of power.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ecocidelaw.com/independent-expert-drafting-panel/>

While COVID-19 exposed the vulnerability of the Pacific and the need for a stronger international voice, the pandemic now offers an opportunity to build a more resilient region through greater cooperation and unity.

#### **His Excellency Anote Tong 4<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Kiribati**

His Excellency emphasised the gravity of the existential threat which ongoing climate change poses to low-lying Pacific nations. Although the region has suffered economically due to the pandemic’s effect on tourism and has become an unwilling arena for renewed superpower confrontation, rising seas may soon obliterate small island states such as Kiribati and the Marshall Islands entirely.

These Pacific islands face inundation even if emissions are contained, and so their populations must plan to relocate, given the unwillingness of the international community to furnish the large sums required to protect their land from the sea. Pacific islanders must be ruthlessly pragmatic to protect themselves, rather than remain in emotional denial, and begin to plan now for relocation.

***‘For those countries likely to be target destinations for the climate displaced, you need to ask yourself the most difficult question: do we have the moral capacity to be part of the solution?’***

His Excellency Anote Tong



## DISCUSSION / TALANOA

### CO-FACILITATORS

- **Taholo Kami**  
Special Representative for Oceans  
Government of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kami Pasifiki Solutions
- **Michael Collins**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Strategic Development Group

- **Climate Change**

Participants agreed that climate change, rather than COVID-19, should be the focus of attention, given its much greater long-term threat. While the pandemic can be managed, rising seas will threaten the very existence of Pacific Island nations in coming decades, and once climate tipping points are passed, they may prove irreversible.

While some people in Australia continue to deny the reality or seriousness of climate change, it will undoubtedly prove the major issue for our children. Pacific nations help write the United Nations' Convention on Climate Change, and continue to speak at high-level forums, as well as take domestic action. However, climate action requires resources, as does protecting fisheries and the ocean environment, and governments could do more to partner with the private sector.

Island governments can unduly dominate their small nations, become suspicious of NGOs, and look to maintain control for its own sake, but NGOs can be remarkably effective in service provision.

The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney is working to embed awareness of climate change into development and aid provision. It argues that risk should be considered in a general sense, incorporating the threats of both climate change and the pandemic into future resilience planning.

No government in the world is really facing the scale and urgency of the climate change issue, including the need for relocation for Pacific populations. New financial mechanisms are required to support the investment in resilience infrastructure required, and major global institutions must address the need for more private-public partnerships. The climate situation will continue to deteriorate, and policy solutions must be considered now as adaption will not prove sufficient in the long term.

- **Private Sector Partnerships**

Domestic partnerships with the international private sector are also vital if economic progress is to be made, alongside the provision of low-interest loans. However, these agreements should preserve natural resources, allow local interests to retain control and ensure a fair share of revenue is shared with Island nations. Private competition can also reduce prices and increase supplies of staple goods compared to public provision.

Regional connectivity will be improved by the provision of two new undersea cables, allowing the development of domestic digital services and greater access to education and other information resources.

- **International Relations**

China's 'wolf warrior' diplomacy represents a growing challenge, and better personal relations are required to counteract increasing tensions. The Pacific has no wish to be colonised by another foreign power, but the economic clout of China is a reality.

China is offering substantial incentives to ensure the support of Pacific Island nations, and Australia and other democratic countries should do the same to retain their influence, perhaps through a global fund to maintain global equilibrium. Debt restructuring could help support systemic solutions and encourage small states to participate in the global economy.

Pacific Islands do not have to choose between China and the democratic world, and in the past have maintained good relationships with competing powers. While Australia and the USA have their own interests, it makes sense for Pacific Islands to seek support from a variety of sources, including China, given the challenges they face and their lack of domestic funding.

Cooperation between entities or nations can be positive or negative, or be dominated by the larger party, and so consideration of what makes a productive partnership is important, alongside metrics to measure outcomes.

**Closing Remarks**

Catherine Fritz-Kalish thanked the Summit's participants for their contributions and project recommendations. These include an OECD project on capacity building towards a blue recovery, a Pacific fisheries programme using a digital trading platform, and the establishment of a regional marine science body. These and other ideas will be developed by Global Access Partners through its Second Track process over the next twelve months.

Sponsors and Steering Committee members were also thanked for their support, before the forum was closed with the hope the event would be repeated next year.



# PROGRAMME

8:15am Registration



## WELCOME & SETTING THE SCENE

8:30am – 9:05am

8:30am Introduction



### CATHERINE FRITZ-KALISH

Co-Founder & Managing Director  
Global Access Partners (GAP)  
Director, International Centre  
for Democratic Partnerships  
(ICDP) & ICDP Foundation



Acknowledgment of Country

### Prof PETER YU

Vice-President (First Nations),  
The Australian National University

Pacific Welcome



### Taulapapa BRENDA HEATHER-LATU

Director, ICDP  
Partner, Latu Lawyers  
Honorary Consul for Great  
Britain & Northern Ireland  
to Samoa

Opening Address

### The Hon AIYAZ SAYED-KHAIYUM CF

Attorney-General, Minister  
for Economy, Civil Service  
& Communications,  
Republic of Fiji

Keynote Address

### Senator the Hon ZED SESELJA

Minister for International  
Development & the Pacific  
Australian Government



9:05am



## SESSION ONE

*A 'blue recovery' for the Pacific and Small Island Nations – how do we achieve it?*

9:05am – 10:00am

### Session Chair



**Dr IAN WATT AC**

Chairman, ICDP  
Director, ICDP Foundation

### Thought Leader Panel



**The Hon  
SUSSAN LEY MP**

Minister for the Environment,  
Australian Government



**SARA FYSON**

Head of Unit, Public  
Governance Reviews,  
Public Governance  
Directorate,  
OECD



**PETER  
KENILOREA Jr**

Member for  
the East 'Are'are,  
National Parliament  
of Solomon Islands

9:30am

### Discussion

Zoom Discussion



### Facilitators



**MICHAEL COLLINS**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Strategic Development  
Group



**CATHERINE FRITZ-KALISH**

Managing Director, GAP  
Director, ICDP & ICDP Foundation

10:00am



## SESSION TWO

*How could an integrated ESG (Environment, Society, Governance) approach increase the resilience of Small Island Nations' economies and societies?*

10:00am – 11:00am

### Session Chair



**Taulapapa  
BRENDA HEATHER-LATU**

Director, ICDP  
Partner & Legal Consultant, Latu Lawyers  
Honorary Consul for Great Britain &  
Northern Ireland to Samoa

### Thought Leader Panel



**VARELIE CROES**

Chief Innovation Officer,  
Government of Aruba



**TAHOLO KAMI**

Special Representative  
for Oceans,  
Government of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Kami Pasifiki Solutions



**PETER MANETTAS**

Founder, ShoreTrade  
Director, Peter Manettas  
Seafood

10:30am

### Discussion

Zoom Discussion



### Facilitators



**CATHERINE  
FRITZ-KALISH**

Managing Director, GAP  
Director, ICDP &  
ICDP Foundation



**MICHAEL COLLINS**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Strategic Development  
Group

11:00am

Break

11:15am



### SESSION THREE

*What is our shared vision for the future and how can we build it together?*

11:15am – 12:30pm

#### Session Chair



#### Prof BRIAN SCHMIDT AC

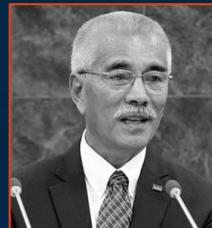
Vice-Chancellor and President,  
The Australian National University  
Winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics

#### Thought Leader Panel



#### Tuiloma NERONI SLADE OS

8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General  
of the Pacific Islands Forum  
Secretariat



#### His Excellency ANOTE TONG

4<sup>th</sup> President of the  
Republic of Kiribati

11:45am

#### Discussion

Zoom Discussion



#### Facilitators



#### TAHOLO KAMI

Special Representative for  
Oceans, Government of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Kami Pasifiki Solutions



#### MICHAEL COLLINS

Chief Executive Officer,  
Strategic Development  
Group

12:30pm

#### Vote of Thanks & Close

# SPEAKER PROFILES

## CATHERINE FRITZ-KALISH



**Co-Founder and Managing Director  
Global Access Partners**

**Director, International Centre for  
Democratic Partnerships (ICDP)  
and ICDP Foundation**

Catherine Fritz-Kalish is co-founder and Managing Director of Global Access Partners Pty Ltd (GAP) and Director of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships (ICDP) Pty Ltd and ICDP Foundation.

Over the last 20 years, under Catherine's guidance, GAP has grown to be a highly respected and influential public policy and implementation institute, with over 1,000 active members. It initiates and facilitates high-level discussions at the cutting edge of the most pressing commercial, social and global issues of today. GAP's current initiatives span the industry sectors of Health, Education, Security, Energy and the Environment, and Digital Engagement.

Catherine's broader business experience includes coordination of a number of international initiatives as part of the annual programme for the small and medium-sized enterprise unit of the OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development), at headquarters in Paris, France; marketing and brand management within all seven divisions of the George Weston Foods Group; and just prior to establishing GAP, working within the TCG Group of companies, particularly in the area of start-up incubator establishment.

Catherine sits on the boards of social justice charity *Stand Up*, the Fritz Family Office and Fritz Family Foundation, and is a member of the advisory board for the Social Impact Hub. She co-founded *Thread Together* which provides brand new clothing to disadvantaged communities across Australia. Catherine is also part of a significant giving circle which engages whole families in the act of giving to those in need. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of NSW and a Masters of Business in International Marketing from the University of Technology, Sydney.

## Prof PETER YU



**Vice-President (First Nations)  
The Australian National University**

Peter Yu is a Yawuru man from Broome in the Kimberley region in North West Australia with over 40 years' experience in Indigenous development and advocacy in the Kimberley and at the state, national and international level. Peter was a key negotiator on behalf of the Yawuru Native Title Holders with the Western Australian State Government over the 2010 Yawuru Native Title Agreement. He was recently Chief Executive Officer of the Yawuru Corporate Group and is the current and inaugural Vice – President First Nations at The Australian National University.

He has been an advocate for the social, cultural and economic advancement and well-being of Kimberley and other Aboriginal communities for his entire career. He has been instrumental in the development of many community-based organisations and initiatives which have had an enduring influence on the Kimberley region. He was Executive Director of the Kimberley Land Council during the 1990s and a member of the national leadership team negotiating the Federal Government's response to the 1992 Mabo High Court judgement on Native Title.

He is currently the Chair for the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to the Northern Ministerial Forum and Deputy Chair of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA).

**Taulapapa  
BRENDA HEATHER-LATU**



**Director, ICDP**

**Partner and Legal Consultant,  
Latu Lawyers**

**Honorary Consul for Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland to Samoa**

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu is the former Attorney General for Samoa, and Partner in the family owned law firm – Latu Lawyers in Apia, Samoa. Brenda has been in practise for 33 years in both New Zealand and Samoa. She worked at Crown Law Office in New Zealand from 1988-1996 and was appointed a Crown Counsel in 1991. In 1996, she went to Samoa under a New Zealand Aid Scheme as Principal State Solicitor in the Attorney General’s Office. Then in 1997, she was appointed Attorney General of Samoa. Heather-Latu held the post for 3 consecutive terms from 1997-2006.

Brenda is also the Honorary British Consul to Samoa and is a serving Judicial Officer with World Rugby and is also a Board Member for Habitat for Humanity (NZ) and holds the chiefly title of Taulapapa from the village of Fogapoa in Savaii, Samoa.

Brenda is a highly respected leader with outstanding, high-level connections across the whole Pacific. She is assisting ICDP to implement *Pacific Connect* through support of Strategic Development Group.

**The Hon AIYAZ  
SAYED-KHAIYUM CF**



**Attorney-General  
Minister for Economy, Civil  
Service & Communications,  
Republic of Fiji**

The Hon Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum is the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service, and Communications, and also serves the Minister responsible for climate change.

Since joining the Fijian Government in 2007, Mr Sayed-Khaiyum has spearheaded efforts to modernise Fiji's laws in the key areas of domestic violence, corporate governance and criminal code. He oversaw the work to finalise the Fijian Constitution and establish Fiji's first genuine parliamentary democracy. He helped guide the Fijian economy through its longest-ever unbroken streak of economic growth, while cutting taxes for low-income families. He has led the rapid expansion of Fiji's telecommunications and the digitisation of government services, and codified long-term strategic and national planning throughout the public sector, bringing newfound transparency and accountability to the Fijian Government.

He is a strong proponent of climate adaptation and finance, working with governments, multilateral organisations and development banks to allow countries such as Fiji to obtain adequate levels of funding to build their resilience. He is a leading global advocate for granting concessional finance to vulnerable countries in the aftermath of severe weather events.

The Attorney-General holds a Masters in Law from the University of Hong Kong and a Bachelor of Arts in political science and development studies from the Australian National University. He is admitted to the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the High Courts of Australia and Fiji.

He lives in Suva with his wife, Ela, and their three young children — Ibrahim, Idris, and Imaan.

**Senator the Honourable  
ZED SESELJA**



**Minister for International  
Development and the Pacific  
Australian Government**

Senator the Hon Zed Seselja is the Senator for the Australian Capital Territory and was sworn in as Minister for International Development and the Pacific on 22 December 2020.

The Minister entered the Senate in 2013 and has served as Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs, Assistant Minister for Science, Jobs and Innovation, Assistant Minister for Treasury and Finance, and Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities & Electoral Matters in previous roles.

Prior to entering the Senate, the Minister was elected to the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly in 2004. He served as Leader of the Opposition in the ACT Legislative Assembly from 2007-2013.

The Minister attended the Australian National University and holds degrees in Law and Arts.

Minister Seselja was born in Canberra to Croatian immigrant parents, and lives in Canberra's south with his wife Ros and their five children.

## MICHAEL COLLINS



**Chief Executive Officer  
Strategic Development Group**

Strategic Development Group is a consulting firm that works across Australia and overseas. Strategic helps clients to engage effectively with their communities and stakeholders, to plan how to achieve the best outcomes for business and people, and to measure the effectiveness of what they do.

Michael leads Strategic's team of exceptional personnel and oversees project delivery for clients. Michael is also a Director of not-for-profit Opportunity International Australia, and Chair of not-for-profit Immanuel Afrika Australia.

Prior to joining Strategic in 2014, Michael held a variety of diplomatic, policy and analysis roles across the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Office of National Assessments (ONA).

## Dr IAN WATT AC



**Chairman  
ICDP**

Dr Ian J Watt AC has had a long career as one of Australia's most distinguished public servants, with nearly 20 years at the highest levels of the public service. His most recent and most senior appointment was as Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and head of the Australian Public Service, a position he held from 2011 until the end of 2014. Prior to that, he was Secretary of the Departments of Defence; Finance; and Communications, Information Technology and the Arts between 2001 and 2011. Before that, he was Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Dr Watt is Chair of the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships, Chair of the ADC Advisory Council, and Chair of the Australian Governance and Ethical Index Fund. He is also the recently retired Chair of BAE Systems Australia. He serves on the Boards of Citibank Pty Ltd, Smartgroup Corporation, the Grattan Institute (University of Melbourne), O'Connell Street Associates Pty Ltd and the Committee for Economic Development of Australia and is a Member of the Australian National Maritime Museum Council.

Dr Watt is also a Member of the Male Champions of Change, a Member of the Melbourne School of Government Advisory Board at the University of Melbourne, a Fellow of ANZSOG, and Senior Adviser to Flagstaff Partners. He also has an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Technology, Sydney.

**The Honourable  
SUSSAN LEY MP**



**Minister for the Environment,  
Australian Government**

Born in Nigeria to British parents, Sussan spent her early childhood in the United Arab Emirates, before migrating to Australia at the age of 13 with her parents and older brother.

Schooled in the UK, QLD and ACT, later tertiary study led to a Bachelor of Economics, Master of Taxation Law and a Master of Accounting. Developing an early fascination with the skies and flying, a young Sussan worked a variety of odd jobs and hours to finance this passion, obtaining a commercial pilot's license which she still holds.

This interest also led to work as an air traffic controller with Sydney and Melbourne Airports, aerial stock-mustering in outback New South Wales and Queensland before life on-the-land as a shed hand/shearers' cook through a large chunk of rural Australia.

During a livestock and dairy farming partnership (near Tallangatta in North East Victoria) of seventeen years, Sussan experienced the highs and lows that routinely test the resolve of farming families.

Starting university when her first child turned one led to ten years of part time study, on the way to three children and three finance degrees.

Still helping to manage the farm, she took up a position with the Australian Taxation Office at Albury, graduating to the role of Director, Technical Training before seeking Liberal Party pre-selection for the Federal seat of Farrer in 2001.

Returned as the Member for Farrer at six subsequent elections, Sussan regards it as an honour to represent the people living in this substantial part of south west NSW, making time to routinely travel the electorate, hearing the views and concerns of her constituents.

Now in her 18<sup>th</sup> year of Federal Politics, Sussan has been appointed to a number of ministerial and parliamentary positions, most recently as Minister for the Environment in May 2019.

## SARA FYSON



**Head of Unit**  
**Public Governance Reviews**  
**Public Governance Directorate**  
**OECD**

Sara Fyson, a New Zealand national, is Head of the Public Governance Reviews unit in the Public Governance Directorate at the OECD leading the team responsible for reviewing the performance of countries' public governance systems and in particular the centre of government. She previously headed the work on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development at the OECD and worked as Counsellor in the Director's Office for a number of years.

She was previously Lead Governance Advisor in the Development Cooperation Directorate responsible for reviewing donor-supported governance programmes. She led the policy work in this Directorate on public procurement and public financial management.

Prior to the OECD, Sara worked at the World Bank covering issues related to public financial management and public procurement, at a private sector consulting firm providing economic and political analysis, and with a number of media outlets (Radio France Internationale and Libération).

She has degrees from the London School of Economics, Kings College London, Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Paris and the University of Oxford.

## PETER KENILOREA JR



**Member for East 'Are'are  
National Parliament of  
Solomon Islands**

Peter Kenilorea is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. Prior to his appointment by the Solomon Islands Government, Peter was employed as an International Civil Servant with the United Nations Secretariat in New York.

From 2000-2017 he has held positions in the UN Office of Legal Affairs, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States. From 1996-2000, he was employed by the Solomon Islands Government, serving in the Attorney General's Chambers and from 1994-1995 he was employed by Jennifer Corrin Barrister & Solicitor.

Peter has obtained an LLB from the University of Waikato in New Zealand as well as an LLM in International Law from the University of Nottingham in the UK.

## VARELIE CROES



**Chief Innovation Officer  
Government of Aruba**

Varelie leads the Government of Aruba's national innovation strategy as the country's first-ever Chief Innovation Officer. She also spearheads the Futura Lab platform; the National Innovation Lab established in 2018. She further leads the country's national digital transformation strategy to convert the Government into a pro-active government.

Varelie has led numerous innovation initiatives. An island native, Varelie co-founded a non-profit initiative; ATECH Foundation with a mission to develop the startup and technology ecosystem in Aruba and the Caribbean region through community, an annual conference in Aruba (top 15 innovation events in the world ~ Forbes). The ATECH platform has leap-frogged on to the global stage by applying ingenuity and grassroots techniques to the policy creation process. She also helped develop the "Isla Innovativo" framework, led by the Central Bank of Aruba to serve as a public-private collaboration platform to accelerate innovation on the island.

As a Private Equity and Growth Equity expert with over a decade of experience in Financial Services, Varelie has spearheaded multiple billion-dollar global deals and worked with several of the world's largest investment funds and Fortune 100 companies.

Prior to founding The Liv Group, Varelie has had a distinguished career as Director of International Tax Financial Services at PricewaterhouseCoopers New York. She has worked in The Netherlands and Aruba as a tax lawyer. She received her Masters in Law from Leiden University, The Netherlands and completed the Exponential Technologies Executive Program at Singularity University, Silicon Valley.

She was named a global change-maker by the World Bank Youth Steering Committee for her unique approach to leadership and inspiring both entrepreneurs and policymakers to innovate.

Varelie is an accomplished keynote speaker and sought after thought-leader on the innovation economy. She has spoken at TEDx and TEDx Women, United Nations, The World Bank, Legacy, SXSW, Columbia University, and has been featured in The New York Times, Forbes, Coinbase, MasterCard Biz, Tech.Co, Inc.com, The Next Web, and other major international publications.

## TAHOLO KAMI



**Special Representative for  
Oceans, Government of Fiji**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Kami Pasifiki Solutions**

Taholo is based in Suva, Fiji and is a well-respected leader across the Pacific who has led regional organisations, developmental coalitions, and various initiatives across the region.

Taholo was part of Fiji's COP23 team as Special Representative for the Ocean from 2017 - 2020, where he was responsible for creating a dialogue for the Ocean within the UNFCCC. He was also Sherpa for the Fiji PM on the High Level Panel for Ocean and co-chair of the Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership.

He is a senior Advisor to Nia Tero in developing the Pasifika Programme and has completed 10 years as head of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Oceania office, where he established a strong regional programme in conservation, sustainable development and high-level policy frameworks.

Taholo provides key opportunities for ICDP and Pacific Connect to build and strengthen relationships between the Pacific and Australia through identification of common projects.

## PETER MANETTAS



**Founder, ShoreTrade**

**Director, Peter Manettas  
Seafood**

Since launching Manettas Seafood Market (Business to Consumer) in 2016, Peter has been instrumental in bringing to the forefront the relationship between technology and the seafood industry, further developing and shaping the future direction in this primary industry space.

Peter has since founded ShoreTrade in June 2019, a Business to Business digital marketplace designed to bring the seafood industry into the digital age and shift the power back into the hands of fishermen to have direct supply relationships with their true customers.

ShoreTrade is a global digital seafood ecosystem allowing direct trade, whilst capturing solid datasets to put the seafood industry on a more sustainable pathway that encompasses trade, finance, recruitment, traceability and a sustainable future for our oceans.

**Prof  
BRIAN SCHMIDT AC**



**Vice Chancellor and President  
The Australian National  
University**

**Winner of 2011 Nobel Prize  
In Physics**

Professor Brian P. Schmidt was appointed the 12th Vice-Chancellor of ANU in January 2016. In this role, Professor Schmidt provides executive leadership to the University and takes overall responsibility for delivering the ANU Strategy. He also chairs key management committees including the University Senior Management Group and the ANU Executive and is also a member of the ANU governing body, the Council.

Professor Schmidt is one of Australia's most eminent scientists. Winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics, alongside many other academic awards and distinctions, Professor Schmidt spent most of his academic career as an astrophysicist at the ANU Mount Stromlo Observatory and Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics before becoming Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Schmidt makes a significant contribution to public debate through the media, and via his membership of bodies including the Prime Minister's National Science and Technology Council.

Professor Schmidt received undergraduate degrees in Astronomy and Physics from the University of Arizona in 1989, and completed his Astronomy Master's degree (1992) and PhD (1993) at Harvard University. Under his leadership, in 1998, the High-Z Supernova Search team made the startling discovery that the expansion rate of the Universe is accelerating. Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, The United States Academy of Science, and the Royal Society, he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2013.

**Tuiloma  
NERONI SLADE OS**



**8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat**

**Former Attorney General  
of Samoa**

**First (and only) Judge of the  
International Criminal Court  
from the Oceania region**

Tuiloma Neroni Slade OS is former Attorney General of Samoa and the 8th Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

He was elected to the Secretary General position for three years on 20 August 2008 and was reappointed to a second term by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum on 8 September 2011. He began his career as a Samoan lawyer, serving as the senior prosecutor for the attorney general and the Parliamentary Counsel to the Samoan government. He became the Attorney General of Samoa in 1976 and remained in office until 1982.

In 2003, Tuiloma Slade became the first and only Judge of the International Criminal Court in The Hague from the Oceania region. He served extensively internationally and in the region as senior counsel in the Legal Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London; Samoa's Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the United Nations based in New York, and concurrently Ambassador to the USA and to Canada; and as Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat based in Suva, Fiji.

He received the Elizabeth Haub Award for Environmental Diplomacy in 2001. He was the recipient of the Elisabeth Mann Borgese Medal and the Global Oceans Leadership Award, both in 2003 for his work on behalf of the oceans and developing small island states. In 2005, he was awarded the Order of Samoa ù Poloaiga Sili a Samoa. In 2016, he was awarded an Hon Doctor of Laws by his *alma mater*, the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

## His Excellency ANOTE TONG



**4<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic  
of Kiribati**

Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, winner of the Sunhak Peace Prize and 2012 Hillary Laureate, HE Anote Tong is a world-renowned leader in the battles against climate change and for ocean conservation.

Throughout his three terms as President of the Republic of Kiribati he was forced to confront an extraordinary challenge and a bleak, all-but-unthinkable future for his compatriots: Kiribati is, he believes, quickly disappearing beneath the waves due to climate change, and the entire population may need to resettle – not as climate change refugees but as citizens who migrate on merit and with dignity.

Nevertheless, despite and perhaps because of this vast and unenviable task, Tong was able to achieve a great deal during the 13 years he spent in office. Under his leadership, the government of Kiribati created the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, a 150,000 square-mile UNESCO World Heritage site off limits to fishing and extractive industry. Initiatives such as this one, typical of Tong's vision and his ability to balance political reality with humanitarian and ecological idealism, have earned him the Peter Benchley Ocean Award from the Blue Frontier Campaign.

Since leaving office he has continued to speak about the realities of climate change: the urgency of the issues; the complexity of the causes and possible solutions; the stark simplicity of the consequences should we fail to act.

He speaks with quiet dignity and unwavering conviction to scientists, politicians, industrialists and schoolchildren all over the world. He speaks as an expert and as an advocate, as a statesman and as a grandfather. He speaks on every medium and in person, on CNBC, on the floor of the UN General Assembly and on film in *Anote's Ark*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018. But wherever he speaks and whomever he speaks to, his message is consistent: the fate of Kiribati is the fate of the world.

# SPONSOR PROFILES

## GLOBAL ACCESS PARTNERS (GAP)



Global Access Partners Pty Ltd (GAP) is an independent not-for-profit institute for active policy that initiates strategic discussions on the most pressing social, economic and structural issues and challenges facing Australia today. Through its pioneering '*Second Track*' process, GAP seeks to foster links between community, government, industry and academia to increase stakeholder participation in the development of government policy and promote novel, cross-disciplinary approaches to regulatory problems.

Since its establishment in 1997, GAP has been running multidisciplinary taskforces, forums, conferences, seminars, consultative committees, research and feasibility studies, online collaboration and executive consultancy, both internationally and in Australia. The GAP alumni network comprises over 4,000 members, with more than 1,000 people actively engaged in various GAP projects on a regular basis.

GAP works with Federal and State governments, major corporate enterprises, peak industry and community bodies, universities and research institutes.

[globalaccesspartners.org](http://globalaccesspartners.org)

## INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC PARTNERSHIPS (ICDP)



International Centre for Democratic Partnerships

ICDP is an independent, non-profit, non-political organisation that encourages and facilitates dialogue, discussions and better relationships between current and emerging Pacific and Australian leaders in government, civil society, and the private sector on common challenges. ICDP aims to forge genuine and enduring strategic relationships between Pacific and Australian individuals and organisations to progress 'Second Track' dialogue, policy discussions and leadership development. It was established in July 2017. Supported by Global Access Partner's alumni network of over 4,000 people, ICDP draws on the very best of Australian expertise and utilises the GAP model to expand and improve strategic discussions, policy processes and networks between Australia and the Pacific. Its objectives are:

- Facilitating the greater exchange of ideas and expertise, and fostering enhanced collaboration and business opportunities between Australia and the Pacific in applying digital technology to support sustainable development;
- Shaping and influencing emerging leaders from the Pacific and Australia with a greater focus on promoting Pacific Island women as current and future leaders;
- Increasing Australia's regional standing and links by cultivating enduring relationships between current and emerging leaders from Australia and the Pacific; and
- Enabling Pacific Islanders to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Australia through participation in the range of *Pacific Connect* programme activities, and as a member of the *Pacific Connect Community* (alumni).

[icdp.com.au](http://icdp.com.au)

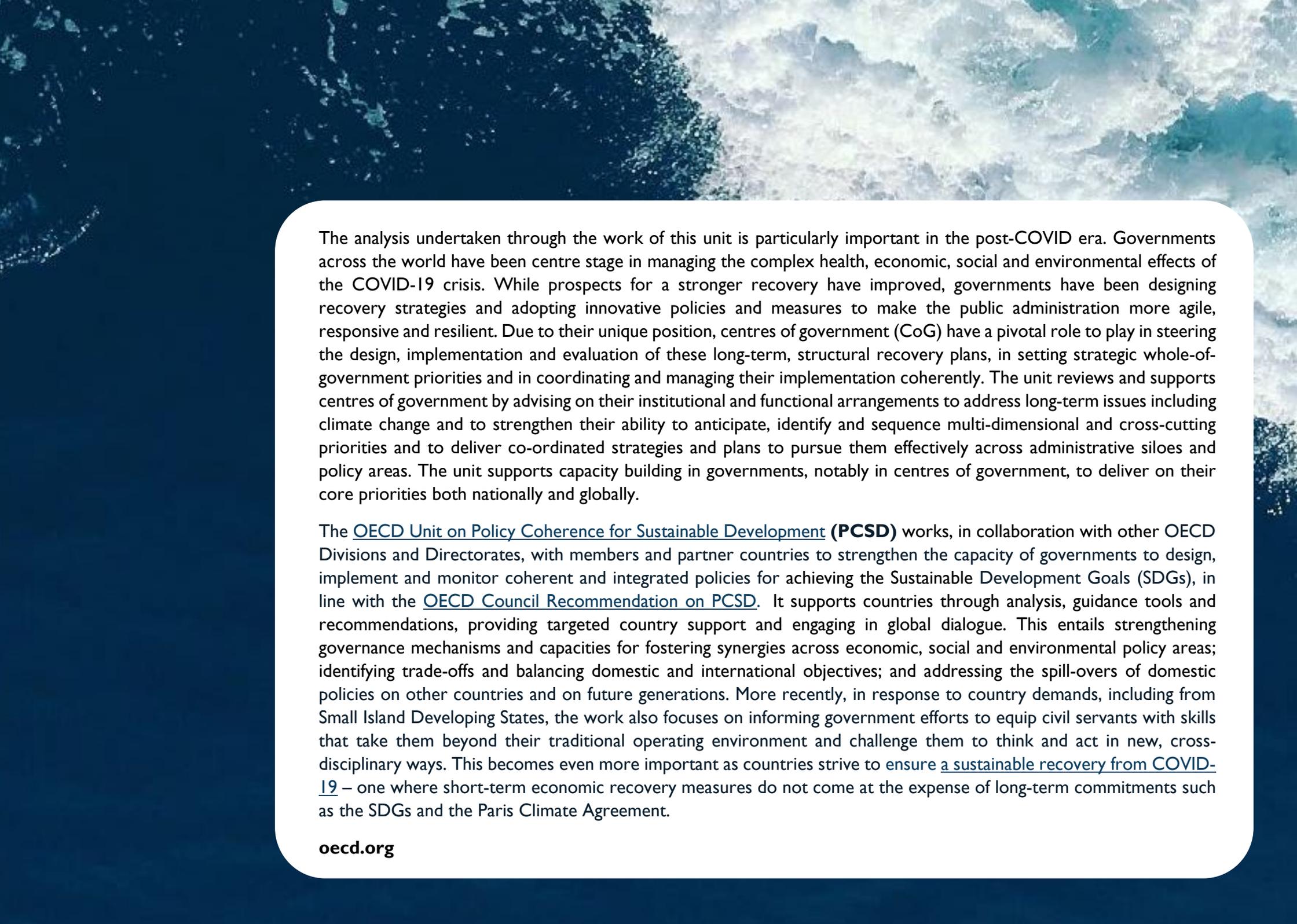
## ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)



The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation comprised of 38 member countries that works to build better policies for better lives. The OECD's mission is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. Together with governments, policy makers and citizens, we work on establishing evidence-based international standards, and finding solutions to a range of social, economic and environmental challenges. From improving economic performance and creating jobs to fostering strong education and fighting international tax evasion, we provide a unique forum and knowledge hub for data and analysis, exchange of experiences, best-practice sharing, and advice on public policies and international standard-setting.

The [Public Governance Directorate](#) supports countries to promote good governance through more strategic, agile and action-oriented public sectors that improve the functioning of national economies and support more inclusive and sustainable growth. It helps governments design and implement strategic, evidence-based and innovative policies to strengthen public governance, respond effectively to diverse and disruptive economic, social and environmental challenges and deliver on government's commitments to citizens.

The [Public Governance Reviews Unit](#) supports governments in addressing key governance challenges by assessing and providing whole-of-government recommendations on the capacities of a country's central public administrations to design and deliver public policies and services inclusively and sustainably. In so doing, it supports strategies to implement governance reform agendas successfully so that governments can, and can be seen to, improve outcomes for citizens and businesses.



The analysis undertaken through the work of this unit is particularly important in the post-COVID era. Governments across the world have been centre stage in managing the complex health, economic, social and environmental effects of the COVID-19 crisis. While prospects for a stronger recovery have improved, governments have been designing recovery strategies and adopting innovative policies and measures to make the public administration more agile, responsive and resilient. Due to their unique position, centres of government (CoG) have a pivotal role to play in steering the design, implementation and evaluation of these long-term, structural recovery plans, in setting strategic whole-of-government priorities and in coordinating and managing their implementation coherently. The unit reviews and supports centres of government by advising on their institutional and functional arrangements to address long-term issues including climate change and to strengthen their ability to anticipate, identify and sequence multi-dimensional and cross-cutting priorities and to deliver co-ordinated strategies and plans to pursue them effectively across administrative siloes and policy areas. The unit supports capacity building in governments, notably in centres of government, to deliver on their core priorities both nationally and globally.

The [OECD Unit on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development \(PCSD\)](#) works, in collaboration with other OECD Divisions and Directorates, with members and partner countries to strengthen the capacity of governments to design, implement and monitor coherent and integrated policies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in line with the [OECD Council Recommendation on PCSD](#). It supports countries through analysis, guidance tools and recommendations, providing targeted country support and engaging in global dialogue. This entails strengthening governance mechanisms and capacities for fostering synergies across economic, social and environmental policy areas; identifying trade-offs and balancing domestic and international objectives; and addressing the spill-overs of domestic policies on other countries and on future generations. More recently, in response to country demands, including from Small Island Developing States, the work also focuses on informing government efforts to equip civil servants with skills that take them beyond their traditional operating environment and challenge them to think and act in new, cross-disciplinary ways. This becomes even more important as countries strive to [ensure a sustainable recovery from COVID-19](#) – one where short-term economic recovery measures do not come at the expense of long-term commitments such as the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

# DELEGATES

**Ms Zha Agabe-Granfar**

Executive Director, Verge (PNG)  
Papua New Guinea

**Prof Kathryn Barclay**

Professor of Global Studies,  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Australia

**Ms Wiebke Benze von Fritz**

Board Member, Fritz Family Foundation  
Australia

**Mr Alexander Benze von Fritz**

Consultant  
Information Integrity Solutions  
Australia

**Mr Benjamin Blackshaw**

Communications Coordinator  
& Program Support  
International Centre for Democratic  
Partnerships (ICDP)  
Australia

**Mr William Blank**

Business Development Manager,  
Hall Contracting  
Executive Committee Member,  
Australia Pacific Islands Business Council

**Ms Olga Bodrova**

COO and Director of Research  
Global Access Partners  
Australia

**Ms Delvene Boso**

Country Director, Solomon Islands  
WorldFish

**Mr Martin Bowles AO, PSM**

National Chief Executive Officer  
Calvary Health Care  
Australia

**Ms Tina Briggs**

Program Manager, ICDP  
Australia

**Mr Jay Caldwell**

Deputy Director Education  
Australia Pacific Security College

**Mr Andrew Carriline**

Non-Executive Director, Kina Securities  
Chairman, ICDP Foundation  
Australia

**Dr George Carter**

Research Fellow, Geopolitics and Regionalism,  
Department of Pacific Affairs,  
Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs  
Director, The Pacific Institute  
ANU College of Asia and the Pacific  
The Australian National University

**Ms Alicia Caruso**

Project Manager, Global Access Partners  
Australia

**Mr Ian Clarke OBE**

President, Australia Pacific Islands  
Business Council  
Consultant, Dentons  
Australia

**Mr Michael Collins**

Chief Executive Officer  
Strategic Development Group  
Australia

**Ms Megan Cornelius AM**

Director, Springrose Management Pty Ltd  
APEC Women Leaders Network  
Australian Delegate  
Former Director of Australia Post

**Ms Varelle Croes**

Chief Innovation Officer  
Government of Aruba

**Ms Alison Crook AO**

Chair, Enova Community Energy  
Managing Director, Waterview Consulting  
Australia

**Prof Alan Davison**

Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Australia

**Mr Stephen Deklin**

Pacific Partnerships Section (SSP)  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Australian Government

**Mr Ian Dunlop**

Director, Chôra Foundation  
Australia

**Mr Denis Etournaud**

President, Bluescope ACIER NC  
Vice-President, Australia Pacific Islands  
Business Council  
New Caledonia

**Dr Anne Fritz**

International Education Consultant  
Australia

**Mr Peter Fritz AO**

Group Managing Director, TCG  
Chairman, GAP  
Director, ICDP Foundation  
Australia

**Ms Catherine Fritz-Kalish**

Co-Founder and Managing Director, GAP  
Director, ICDP  
Australia

**Ms Sara Fyson**

Head of Unit, Public Governance Reviews  
Public Governance Directorate  
OECD, France

**Ms Anna Gero**

Research Principal  
Institute for Sustainable Future  
Australia

**Ms Julie Gibson**

Chief Executive Officer, Hitnet  
Australia

**Ms Niki Goulding**

Network Facilitator  
Australia Pacific Climate Alumni Network  
Fiji

**Ms Taylor Hawkins**

Managing Director,  
Foundations for Tomorrow  
Founder & Strategy Director  
Future Frontiers Group  
Curator, Sydney Global Shapers (WEF)  
Australia

**Ms Allison Haworth West**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Captain Cook Cruises Fiji  
President, Australia Fiji Business Council

**Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu**

Director, ICDP  
Honorary Consul for Great Britain and  
Northern Ireland to Samoa  
Samoa

**Prof John Hewson AM**

Professor, Crawford School of Public Policy  
The Australian National University  
Director, Graphite Energy  
Chairman, Council for the Human Future

**Dr Stephen Hollings**

Director, The Heart Research Institute  
Australia

**Ms Helen Hull**

Editor, First 5000  
Australia

**Dr Henry Ivarature**

Pacific Fellow  
Australia Pacific Security College

**Ms Nicole Jeune**

Communications Specialist  
United Nations in Papua New Guinea

**Mr Taholo Kami**

Specialist Representatives for Oceans  
Government of Fiji  
Chief Executive Officer, Kami Pasifiki Solutions  
Fiji

**Mr James Kana**

Managing Director  
Uenisu'unu Agribusiness Group  
Solomon Islands

**Mr Peter Kenilorea Jr**

Member for East 'Are'are  
National Parliament of Solomon Islands

**Ms Samantha Kies-Ryan**

Director, Communication,  
Community Engagement and Social Impact  
Earth Water People  
Solomon Islands

**Mr Ashok Kumar**

Financial Controller, TCG Group  
Australia

**Mr Sheng Lee**

Chief Executive Officer  
ANZ Vanuatu

**The Hon Sussan Ley MP**

Minister for the Environment  
Australian Government

**A/Prof, Dr Michael Liffman**

Adjunct Associate Professor  
Swinburne University of Technology  
Australia

**Ms Philippa Louey**

PhD Candidate  
The Australian National University

**Mr Drew Mackey**

Student, Institute of Public Policy & Governance  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Australia

**Mr Peter Manettas**

Founder, ShoreTrade  
Director, Manettas Seafood Market  
Australia

**Ms Olisana Mariner**

Co-Founder & Development Manager  
The Hub  
Samoa

**Ms Leila Maueri**

Research Assistant  
Global Access Partners  
Australia

**Ms Sophie Mayo**

Intern, United States Studies Centre  
University of Sydney  
Australia

**Mr David McIlwraith**

Legal Counsel, GEOobjects  
Australia

**Mr Joe Morrison**

Group Chief Executive Officer  
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation  
Australia

**Ms Simone Pensko**

Chief Executive Officer, ICDP  
Australia

**Mr Michael Pilbrow**

Chairman, Strategic Development Group  
Australia

**Dr Gonzaga Pua**

Pacific Research Fellow, Department of Pacific  
Affairs, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs  
ANU College of Asia and the Pacific  
The Australian National University

**The Hon Christopher Pyne**

Director, ICDP and ICDP Foundation  
Chairman, Pyne and Partners  
Australia

**Dr Athaula Rasheed**

PhD Candidate  
The Australian National University

**Mrs Heather Ruddock**

Strategic Engagement Consultant  
Australia

**The Hon. Cr Philip Ruddock AO**

Mayor, Hornsby Shire Council  
President of the NSW Liberal Party  
Australia

**Ms Michele Rumsey**

Director, WHO Collaborating Centre  
Australia

**Ms Karolina Salanoa**

Director, Pacific Business Networks  
Australia

**Mr Chris Sampson**

Director, Digital Society Foundation  
Australia

**The Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum CF**

Attorney-General, Minister for Economy,  
Civil Service and Communications,  
Minister responsible for Climate Change  
Republic of Fiji

**Prof Brian Schmidt AC**

Vice-Chancellor & President,  
The Australian National University  
Winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics

**Mr John Scollen**

Director of Global Strategy  
GEOjects  
Australia

**Senator the Hon Zed Seselja**

Minister for International Development  
and the Pacific  
Senator for the Australian Capital Territory  
Australian Government

**Mr Prashanth Shanmugan**

Director, Serendipity Ventures  
Australia

**Dr Anthony Sherbon**

Specialist Consultant  
Sherbon Advisory  
Australia

**Tuiloma Neroni Slade**

8th Secretary General  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
Former Attorney General of Samoa  
New Zealand

**Prof Nara Srinivasan**

Professor of Security & Risk  
Edith Cowan University  
Australia

**Ms Jodi Stewart**

Trade Commissioner for Europe  
Pacific Trade Invest  
Switzerland

**Prof Natalie Stoianoff**

Director, Intellectual Property Program, Faculty of Law  
Chair, Indigenous Knowledge Forum Committee  
University of Technology, Sydney  
Australia

**Ms Ashleigh Streeter-Jones**

Founder, Raise Our Voice Australia  
Australia

**Mr Daniel Stricker**

Director, DP Immersive  
Australia

**Mr Jeremy Stringer**

Assistant Director, Strategic Policy  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Australian Government

**Mr Paula Taumoepeau**

President, Tonga Chamber of  
Commerce & Industry

**His Excellency Hon Anote Tong**

Fourth President of the  
Republic of Kiribati

**Ms Linda Uan**

Liaison Officer  
Betio Hospital  
Kiribati

**Ms Wilma Vocor**

General Manager  
Wanfuteng Bank Ltd  
Vanuatu

**Dr Amanda Watson**

Research Fellow, Department of Pacific Affairs  
Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs  
ANU College of Asia and the Pacific  
The Australian National University

**Dr Ian Watt AC**

Chairman, ICDP  
Director, ICDP Foundation  
Australia

**Ms Chelsea Wilson**

Student  
The Australian National University

**Mr Mark Wood**

Managing Director & Senior Partner  
GEOjects  
Australia

**Mr Zane Yoshida**

Founder and Director, Fiji Kava Limited  
Executive Committee Member  
Australia Fiji Business Council

**Prof Peter Yu**

Vice-President (First Nations)  
The Australian National University

**Mr Christopher Zinn**

Consultant, Consumer Engagement  
and Media Strategies  
Determined Consumer  
Australia