

Meeting Brief: Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Henry Puna

Time and date: 3:00pm, Friday 15 December 2023



Henry Puna was Prime Minister of Cook Islands from 2010 to 2020. He stood down as Prime Minister in June 2020 to contest the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General role, taking up a three year term in May 2021. In mid-2024, former Nauru President Baron Waqa will take over the role, as decided by Leaders in February 2023.

Puna was educated at New Plymouth Boys' High School and the University of Auckland, and worked as a lawyer before entering politics.

Key objectives

- Seek Puna's views on the health of Pacific regionalism and its resilience to the threats of climate change, geostrategic competition and compounding development challenges.

Key points

- Emphasise the **importance New Zealand places on the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)** as our region's premier political institution. The Pacific, and the PIF, has never mattered more for New Zealand's own security and prosperity.
- Seek **Puna's reflections on his term as Secretary General**, which has seen challenges to regional unity, responding to COVID-19 and increased interest from external partners.
- Acknowledge **Puna's leadership in the implementation of the Suva Agreement**, which saw the Micronesian Members return to the Forum. This included the endorsement of former Nauru President Baron Waqa as the next Secretary General, s6(a), s6(b)(ii)
- Seek Puna's **views on how to strengthen PIF unity** following the Suva Agreement.
- Seek Puna's reflections on how the **PIF should manage parallel architecture established by dialogue partners**, s6(a)
- s6(a), s6(b)(ii)

Meeting Brief: Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka

Time and date: 4:30pm, Friday 15 December, Victoria Room, Grand Pacific Hotel



Hon Sitiveni Rabuka became Fiji's Prime Minister for the second time in December 2022 (his previous term ran from 1992-99). He also holds the Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veterans Affairs portfolios.

Key objectives

- Reconnect with Prime Minister Rabuka and seek his views on his government's priorities, a year on from being elected. Discuss how New Zealand can best support Fiji.
- Discuss Pacific regional priorities including geo-strategic developments and Prime Minister Rabuka's "Zone of Peace" concept.

Key points

- Making your **first visit this term to Fiji and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat** underscores the importance the Government places on our relationship and the region.
- We appreciate Fiji's role in **hosting the PIF Secretariat and brokering the Suva Agreement** as PIF Chair in 2022. s6(a)
- s6(a)
- Enquire about Prime Minister Rabuka's **experience leading Fiji's first Coalition Government**. How is the Government of Fiji's programme developing and does he see any particular challenges ahead?
- We are keen to understand how New Zealand can **best support Fiji's development and other priorities**.
- s6(a)
- s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- PIF Leaders recently agreed to develop Prime Minister **Rabuka's "Zone of Peace" concept**. It is currently in its early stages and so we are interested in hearing his vision.
- Prime Minister Rabuka has taken on a **role as a PIF Special Envoy for engagement with Indonesia on Papua**. We would be interested in understanding how that engagement has gone so far and what are the next steps from Fiji's perspective.

- New Zealand is becoming increasingly concerned about the **deteriorating situation in Gaza**. Our recent joint statement with Australia and Canada, reflects the priority we attach to the safety of all civilians, the critical need for more humanitarian support, adherence to international law and an end to the violence. **Fiji voted in support of the recent UN General Assembly Resolution**. We are interested in Fiji's thinking on the conflict.
- s6(a)
- s6(a)

New Zealand High Commission Suva; Pacific Melanesia and Micronesia Division
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