

POLICY ON CONSULTATIVE STATUS AND ACCREDITATION BETWEEN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM (PIF) AND PACIFIC REGIONAL NON-STATE ACTORS (PRNSA)

Part I

PRINCIPLES TO BE APPLIED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH PRNSA ORGANISATIONS

1. Consultative relationships may be established between the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (hereafter 'PIFS') and Pacific Regional NSA (hereafter PRNSA) organisations in conformity with the principles and criteria established under this policy.
2. Organisations eligible to apply for consultative status to PIFS and accreditation to specific PIF-related meetings shall be PRNSA organisations concerned with matters falling within the competence of the Pacific Islands Forum (hereafter 'PIF') through the PIFS.
3. For the purposes of the consultative relationship, a PRNSA organisation is defined as one which:
 - is headquartered in a PIF member state;
 - has an established presence in at least one third of the member states of the PIF;
 - is legally registered in a PIF member state as a Non-State Actor (hereafter NSA) and/or charitable trust;
 - must possess efficient technical expertise and quality services to support the implementation of regional initiatives at the national level;
 - is actively involved in the implementation of regional initiatives in service delivery and/or advocacy at national levels;
 - is organized and led in a democratic and transparent manner in accord with section 8 of this policy; and
 - has been established for at least 3 years.
4. In establishing consultative relationships with each organisation, due regard shall be given to the nature and scope of its activities and to the assistance it may offer the PIF or its members in carrying out its functions.
5. As mandated by PIF member states, a Consultative Status Committee (CSC) shall be established comprising representatives of the past, present and future Forum Chairs plus a representative of the PIFS. It will also be open to other Forum members plus an agreed PRNSA member. The CSC shall be responsible for the granting, suspension and withdrawal of consultative status. The CSC can suspend a PRNSA based on the recommendation of PIF member states. The granting, suspension and withdrawal of consultative status as well as the interpretation of norms and decisions relating to this matter are the prerogative of PIF member states exercised through the CSC. An organisation applying for consultative status shall have the opportunity to respond to any queries being raised by the CSC before the CSC takes its decision.

6. In recognizing the evolving relationship between the PIF and PRNSA's, the PIFS in consultation with PRNSA's will review the consultative arrangements as and when necessary, to facilitate the contributions of NSA's to the work of the PIF.

CONSULTATIVE STATUS

7. Organisations that meet the requirements of this policy:
 - as specified in Paras 3 and 8 of this policy, and
 - are concerned with the activities of the PIF, and
 - are closely involved with the economic and social life of the peoples of the region,may apply for consultative status to the PIFS.
8. All applications for admission to consultative status must be accompanied by information on the competence of the organisation and the relevance of its activities to the work of the PIF, and should include the following information:
 - (a) The purpose of the organisation;
 - (b) Information as to the programmes and activities of the organisation in areas relevant to the PIF member states in which they are carried out. Pacific regional NSA organisations seeking consultative status shall confirm their interest in the goals and objectives of the Forum;
 - (c) Confirmation of the activities of the organisation at the national and regional level;
 - (d) Copies of the annual reports of the organisation with audited financial statements for the preceding three years;
 - (e) A description of the membership of the organisation, indicating the total number of members, the names of organisations that are full or associate members and their geographical distribution;
 - (f) A copy of the constitution and by-laws of the organisation;
 - (g) Evidence that the organisation has a regular consultative mechanism with national NSA members in at least one third of the PIF member states that the organisation represents at a regional level; and
 - (h) Evidence that the national affiliates and partner NSA members in at least one third of the PIF member states mandate the Pacific regional NSA organisation to speak and/or act on their behalf.
9. The CSC in assessing the information provided in 8 above, may request additional information to assist in making its decision.

10. Following an assessment of applications by the Consultative Status Committee based on guidelines in this policy, the committee will forward its decision to the Secretary General of the PIFS, who will then inform the applicant organisation and PIF members.
11. The PIFS shall be responsible for the receipt and preliminary evaluation of requests from organisations seeking consultative status.
12. Upon formal admission to consultative status, the organisation will have a consultative status with the PIFS for a period of 3 years which shall be renewed by the CSC upon expiry if the organisation still meets the criteria in this policy.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

13. Decisions on arrangements for consultation should be guided by the principle that consultative arrangements are to be made for the purpose of enabling the PIF to secure expert information or advice from organisations having special competence and would enable regional organisations that represent important elements of public opinion to provide perspectives to the subjects for which consultative arrangements are made.
14. While recognising that PIF members remain the priority for participation and implementation of Forum decisions, PIFS shall facilitate the participation of organisations with consultative status to contribute on issues relating to their speciality.

Part II

PRNSA ACCREDITATION TO PIF-RELATED MEETINGS

15. PRNSAs with consultative status that wish to attend a meeting convened by the PIF may apply for accreditation of a representative to attend as an Observer to the meeting. The Secretary General of the PIF, in consultation with PIF Member States, Post Forum Dialogue partners or any other co-hosts of relevant meetings will consider all requests for attendance on a case-by-case basis. The PIF will reserve the right to decline such requests and meet independently of PRNSAs. Where PRNSAs are permitted to attend a Forum-related meeting as an Observer, the following should be noted:
 - Accredited PRNSAs, through their nominated PRNSA Observer, may be invited to provide written papers or submissions for the information of participants in such meetings.
 - The representative of such PRNSAs will be expected to fund their own attendance at PIF-related meetings and activities.
 - In their engagement with the PIF, accredited PRNSAs and their nominated PRNSA Observer will be expected to respect, and to act in accordance with, the vision and purpose of the PIF.

16. The Secretariat shall publish and disseminate on a periodic basis the updated list of applications for admission to consultative status and, where applicable, accreditation of a nominated PRNSA Observer to a PIF-related meeting.
17. Subject to the approval of PIF members:
 - (a) The draft provisional agenda of Ministerial or Officials-level meeting under the auspices of the PIF shall be communicated to PRNSAs with consultative status.
 - (b) Organisations with consultative status may request the Secretary-General of the PIFS to place items of special interest to the organisations in the provisional agenda of the PIF-related meetings.
 - (c) PRNSAs with consultative status may designate one authorized Pacific regional PRNSA representative to sit on their joint behalf as a PRNSA Observer at open meetings under the auspices of the Forum.
18. Upon invitation by the PIFS, PRNSAs with consultative status may submit papers relevant to items on the provisional agendas of PIF-related meetings to the Secretary General of the PIFS and ask them to consider they be included as meeting papers.
19. The following conditions shall be observed regarding the submission and circulation of such statements:
 - (a) The written statement shall be submitted in the English language;
 - (b) It shall be submitted at least six weeks (or as determined by the CSC) before the scheduled date of the start of the meeting for appropriate consultation to take place between the PIFS and the PRNSA before circulation;
 - (c) The PRNSA shall give due consideration to any comments that the Secretary-General of the PIF may make in the course of such consultation before transmitting the statement in final form.

Part III

SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF CONSULTATIVE STATUS

20. A PRNSA with consultative status may voluntarily withdraw, giving reasons, and may reapply at a later date subject to meeting eligibility criteria.
21. PRNSAs granted consultative status shall conform at all times to the principles governing the establishment and nature of their consultative relations with the Forum. If an PRNSA does not conform to the principles outlined in Part I of this policy and/or breaches the rules and procedures of Forum meetings, its status shall be suspended or withdrawn in line with the provisions of Para 5.

22. A PRNSA whose consultative status is withdrawn may be entitled to reapply for consultative status not sooner than 12 months after the effective date of such withdrawal.

Part IV

SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

23. The Secretary-General of the PIFS shall use his or her best endeavours to ensure that the Secretariat has sufficient capacity and resources for the purpose of fulfilling the commitments defined in this policy.
24. The PIFS will make this policy widely known through proper channels to facilitate the involvement of Pacific regional NSA organisations in the work of the PIF.

Part V

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT OF POLICY

25. The PIF will reserve the right to amend the policy at its discretion from time to time. In doing so, the PIF will consult with Pacific regional NSAs prior to making such amendments.

ADDENDUM

For the purposes of this policy, the term Non-State Actors and Pacific Regional Non-State Actors shall mean non-profit, voluntary groups such as a Non Government Organisation (NGO); Civil Society Organisation (CSO); Community Based Organisation (CBO) and Faith Based Organisation (FBO), organised at a regional level respectively.