



## PORT VILA DECLARATION ON BUILDING VIBRANT & RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMIES & COMMUNITIES IN THE PACIFIC

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Outcomes of the Pacific Local Government Symposium and Annual General Meeting of the CLGF Pacific  
Technical Advisory Panel held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 11-14 October 2010

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### INTRODUCTION

Over one hundred (100) representatives from ten (10) Pacific island countries met in Port Vila, Vanuatu, from 11-14 October 2010 on the occasion of the third Pacific Local Government Symposium hosted by the Government of Vanuatu. In conjunction with the Symposium several other forums were convened, including:

- Annual General Meeting of the CLGF Pacific Technical Advisory Panel
- Annual Meeting of the Pacific Capital Cities Forum
- Papua New Guinea Good Practice Scheme Dissemination Workshop
- Local Government Ministers Meeting
- Development Partners Roundtable.

RECALLING that the 2004 Pacific Local Government Symposium on 'Making Local Government Work' held in Suva, Fiji is the primary basis of the current work of the CLGF Pacific Office. Over the last five years, a number of significant outcomes have been achieved including the establishment of several new local governments, improvements in local government legislative frameworks, strengthened working relations between central, local and traditional structures, improvements in the performance of local elected and appointed leaders as well as local government innovation and capacity to deliver basic services and facilities.

NOTING that the event has been held for the first time in Vanuatu, and that the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Hon Edward Nipake Natapei, addressed the official opening of the Symposium, a reflection of the region's growing commitment to strengthening and reforming local government.

RECOGNISING that the purpose of this Symposium is to share good local government practices and lessons and to agree on a strategic framework for improving local government to better represent communities, enhance service delivery and provide an enabling environment for local economic development in the Pacific over the next five years and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGING that improving local government is an essential component of the Commonwealth vision that sees local government as an enabling body, that can act as a community leader and is empowered to forge alliances and partnerships with other organisations to maximise resources in the interests of local development for all;

RECOGNISING that expanding the role of local governments does not mean it should neglect its traditional role of service delivery in local communities. Instead, it is about articulating and promoting the real value of local governments in support of the collective social and economic development goals of communities. In order to further strengthen and explore other ways of efficiently delivering services, local governments need to build alliances with a wider range of partners including from the community, private sector, government as well as regional and international sectors.

AGREEING the Port Vila Declaration will build on and strengthen the outcomes of the work already done by the CLGF Pacific, its members and partners and look towards the next five years and beyond through building alliances to achieve a common vision of improving local government across the Pacific.

## REINFORCING THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT THROUGH ENGAGING IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Local government can and should play a fundamental and positive role in local economic development. Local economic strategies developed by local governments as part of their community planning process provide an effective mechanism for marketing the unique identity and resources of its locality, fostering business and community networks and partners and enabling conducive business environments through effective planning, regulation and service delivery. These strategies should also embrace the informal and youth sectors.
- 2 The ability of local government to play a greater role will depend on the institutional context, the level of resources available to local governments, their ability to attract and retain skilled workers and their ability to innovate. A greater degree of support is needed for local government in this area, in particular through improved exchange of information, technical skills and building alliances.

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE PACIFIC

- 3 Local governments in the Pacific are extremely diverse, varying in structure, form, size, functions and financial and administrative capabilities. They range from major capital cities, to regional urban centres, towns, provinces, villages, rural areas and island communities.
- 4 There is no single model for improved local government that will fit all situations: improvement must fit the purpose within different local contexts and values.
- 5 Local government needs to be reshaped and repositioned in systems of government in the Pacific to overcome capacity constraints and be confident to adopt its genuine role as part of government. Building on the *Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles for Local Democracy and Good Governance* and outcomes of the CLGF Pacific Project, local government should have as a core objective continuous improvement of the quality of services and governance it provides to the local community.

### ■ Raising the profile of local government in the region

- 6 Further raising the profile of local government will require local government to step up beyond local politics and local service delivery and be noted as a legitimate player and partner in national and regional development and cooperation. It will also require better articulating local government's role in supporting the delivery of regional and international commitments and programs, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as sector areas addressing among others economic development, gender, climate change and disaster risk management.
- 7 Strengthening CLGF Pacific's partnership with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) will be an essential mechanism for ensuring local government needs and interests are on the regional agenda. Engaging at the national political level with heads of government and local government ministers will also be an important strategy to increase support for local government and its improvement agenda.
- 8 Given the existing work of local government in pursuit of the objectives of the Pacific Plan, an initiative will be taken with the support of the Forum Chair to ensure formal reference to local government's role in the Pacific Plan and at the 2011 Forum Leaders Meeting in Auckland.

### ■ Strengthening local government policy, structures and systems

- 9 Local governments standing and ability to be a meaningful arm of government and to deliver community services is heavily dependent on how it is structured within the prevailing system of government, the extent or levels of powers and functions for which it has legislative authority, how realistically resources and finances available to local government are aligned with its formal responsibilities, and the relationships between the various spheres of government.

#### *Improving legislative frameworks*

- 10 Legislative frameworks should provide an enabling operating environment for local government to effectively address the challenges they face. It should clearly set out the structures, powers and functions of the local government. In particular, it should also better articulate its responsibilities for community engagement and local economic development.

### ***Improving central local financial relations***

- 11 Central government should ensure adequate resources and finances are available for local government to enable it to meet its service delivery expectations. There should be a proper alignment between the formal responsibilities of local government and their capacity to deliver.
- 12 Essential local infrastructure cannot be met from traditional sources of local revenue alone. Funding from national governments through mechanisms such as the challenge fund in Papua New Guinea and other alternatives will be required. Local government will also need to maximise and diversify its own source revenue to meet expanding community needs and priorities.

### ***Improving intergovernmental relations***

- 13 Effective working relationships between different spheres of government are essential if local government is to meet the needs and interests of local communities. Innovations and mechanisms for improving intergovernmental relations currently exist such a dialogues and forums between central, local and traditional leaders that build mutual respect, clarify roles and responsibilities and ensures local government is included in 'whole of government' approaches. These mechanisms need to be strengthened and consistently adopted as normal government practice.
- 14 The inclusion of traditional leaders and their strengths in the process of building intergovernmental relations is critical to maintaining and respecting local cultural practices and values. Traditional governance structures should be accommodated in the broader system of government. Managing the interface between traditional and modern systems of government needs to be encouraged.

### ***Building and improving the effectiveness of local government networks***

- 15 National and regional local government associations (LGAs), such as the Pacific Capital Cities Forum, play an important role in representing and raising awareness of local government needs and aspirations, facilitating the sharing of good practice and providing opportunities for the professional development of local government leaders and practitioners. To fulfil their role effectively, LGAs require formal recognition and must have the necessary resources for their staffing and services.
- 16 Other networks such as the 'Women in Local Government Network' also play an important role in raising the profile and needs of special interest and sector groups and should be further supported.
- 17 Strengthening the CLGF membership across the region will provide greater opportunities for local governments to network within the region, including Australia and New Zealand, as well as with other Commonwealth and CLGF networks such as the Inclusive Cities Network.

### **■ Strengthening local governments capacity to meet communities needs**

- 18 Strengthening the institutional and service delivery capacity of local governments remains both a critical and ongoing objective if local government is to be a respected sphere of government in the Pacific. The increasing challenges of urbanisation, climate change, disaster risks, rising youth populations and community expectations are placing pressure on local budgets. Councils need to make use of greater efficiencies and improvements to maintain service delivery standards.
- 19 Long term sustainability improvements for local government cannot be achieved by a piecemeal approach. Institutional strengthening must involve all spheres of government that impact upon and influence local government including national ministries, departments of local government and local governments themselves.
- 20 Equally achieving improved and sustainable organisational performance requires the integration of essential interrelated management components including:
  - a. Local leadership and governance: ethical and strong leadership focused on the public interest
  - b. Strategic or community planning: clear corporate vision and operating plans reflecting community aspirations and maximising the use of scarce resources
  - c. Financial management: securing sufficient funding to achieve the priorities of the corporate plan and the effective and prudent stewardship of the councils' scarce resources
  - d. Human resource management: improving the professional and technical capacity of staff to deliver the services and facilities expected by their communities.

- 21 In all local government operations, the public interest must be paramount. Strategies and processes must be applied to engage and reflect the interests of the whole community including women, youth and disadvantaged groups.
- 22 Training, support and technical exchanges for these essential components for sustainable long term improvement must be delivered in a structured and coordinated manner.
- 23 Programs such as the Local Elected Leadership (LEL) and Financial Management for Local Government (FMLG) training programs are effective tools for strengthening the knowledge and skills base of local leaders and practitioners. Likewise the CLGF Good Practice Scheme is recognised as an important mechanism for institutional strengthening and capacity building.

#### ***Emerging issues for local government***

- 24 Local government is faced with a number of emerging issues including climate change, disaster risk management and related planning, and peace and security. Whilst there have been some responses to these issues, local government needs to be more informed and engaged at a higher national level in order to ensure effective local response and more appropriate allocation of resources.
- 25 Initiatives such as the Cities and Climate Change Initiative (CCCI) and 2010-2011 World Disaster Reduction Campaign on *Making the Pacific Resilient – Is Your Community Getting Ready?* are effective mechanisms for raising awareness of the need to more seriously consider the role and capacities of local government in making communities resilient to disasters and climate change, and for galvanizing support and enthusiasm for joint action within local government and the communities they represent.

#### **■ Strengthening local governments role in managing urbanisation**

- 26 Urban growth and development is a fundamental concern for local government. Cities and towns are increasingly being driven by informal development and livelihoods. Meeting the needs of the informal sector provides an important role for local government in enhancing livelihoods and ensuring access to services and local economic opportunities.
- 27 Greater coordination and partnering is needed between all spheres of government, the private sector and development agencies for the development and implementation of appropriate strategies. The Pacific Urban Agenda (PUA) and its core alliance of development partners is an effective regional coordinating mechanism for providing practical assistance to countries and should be strengthened including support for the PUA3 Sub-Regional Workshop to be held in 2011.

#### **■ Improving knowledge management and sharing of local government good practice**

- 28 Access to a broad range of information is vital for the improvement of local government, especially given the changing circumstances and emerging issues facing local government in the Pacific.
- 29 Developing profiles of local government, for example village profiles in Samoa, are an important resource and effective mechanisms for documenting local structures, systems, services and needs.
- 30 Opportunities to make best use of available information communication technology (ICT) to improve governance and service delivery should be actively explored, and support provided to local government to best apply ICT.

#### **■ Improving monitoring and evaluation of the local government sector**

- 31 For continuous improvements and the effective use of resources local government must continually measure and assess its performance, review the impacts of its programs and services, and affect change where results have not met expectations.
- 32 A clear and achievable monitoring and evaluation process is a necessary requirement for all spheres of government impacting on local government.

### **THE ROLE OF CLGF PACIFIC IN SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FUTURE**

- 33 CLGF Pacific will ensure that the key outcomes of the Port Vila Declaration are incorporated and prioritised in its Strategic Plan for the next five years (2011-2015) as part of a continuous process of improvement.
- 34 CLGF Pacific will continue to ensure its response is developed and implemented in partnership with its member countries and reflect the national and local development priorities.

- 35 CLGF Pacific will seek to establish an online regional resource centre in response to the call for greater information and knowledge management.
- 36 CLGF Pacific will seek to realign its human and financial resources to match the scope of its Strategic Plan and future programs.
- 37 CLGF Pacific will seek to further strengthen its network of development partners to support the implementation of its Strategic Plan and future programs.
- 38 CLGF Pacific will maximise the benefit of being part of a broader Commonwealth/CLGF network. CLGF Pacific Board Members will play a stronger political advocacy role in support of the work of the CLGF Pacific, encourage CLGF membership in the region and members' involvement in CLGF activities such as the 2011 CLGF Conference in Cardiff, UK, which will make recommendations to the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, Australia.
- 39 CLGF Pacific will seek endorsement of this Declaration from the CLGF Board and will monitor the progress of its implementation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Appreciation is extended to the Conference Chairs, the Director-General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr George Bogiri; immediate past Chair of the CLGF Board, Mr Basil Morrison; and the other CLGF Board Members Mayor Lawrence Yule (New Zealand) and Graham Sansom (Australia); and the Technical Working Group Chairs, Ms Cherol Ala (Vanuatu), Mr Maulolo Tavita Amosa (Samoa), Mr Kaminiel Warkia (PNG), Ms Amina Uriam (Kiribati), Mr Lopati Samasoni (Tuvalu), and Ms Teina Frank-Jessie (Cook Islands).

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