

Regionalism – Responding to the Pacific Plan Review

Some reflections on regionalism
and the role of the private sector

Presentation Outline

- Some thoughts on the Pacific Plan review
- Regionalism: Managing expectations
- Strengthening the capacity of the current regional institutional architecture
- The role of the private sector
- Conclusions

Some thoughts on the Pacific Plan Review

- A timely exercise
- Perceived to be a professional, highly consultative and inclusive process
- Right focus on the 'plan' being a 'framework' for advancing regional cooperation and economic integration, not a regional development plan
- Agree Pacific regionalism is a 'political' agenda to be owned/led/driven by Forum Leaders
- Agree with recommendation PPAC not the competent body to provide 'oversight' for the plan and 'policy advice' to Leaders
- Suggest selected group of senior finance, planning and foreign affairs officials plus representatives of private sector and civil society

Regionalism: Managing expectations

- Regionalism is a challenging process requiring sustained political will & commitment, patience, dialogue, and adjustments along the way (similar public sector reforms at national level)
- Regional cooperation in areas of climate change, renewable energy, sustainable development and management of natural resources, including marine resources are priority areas for regionalism.
- Regionalism is also about implementing good governance systems and practices at both regional and national level to ensure effective utilisation of resources and timely reporting to both countries and development partners

Regionalism: Managing expectations

- Delivery of public goods and collaboration in developing common standards/norms (OCO, PSAI, PFTAC/PFM) generally less challenging than pursuit of economic integration goals.
(national sovereignty issues)
- Learn from both successes and past failures

Strengthening the capacity of current regional institutional architecture

Regional organisations have an important role in implementation of draft framework for regionalism

RIF review was undertaken in 2006. Recommended RIF based on 3 pillars

- Pacific Islands Forum and secretariat (political & general policy institution)
- Pacific Community and secretariat (sector-focused technical institution)
- FSM, PIDP and USP (academic & training organisations)

Forum Leaders decided to merge SPC & SOPAC. SPREP & FFA to continue as separate organisations

Strengthening the capacity of current regional institutional architecture

Key challenges needed to be addressed

- defining core business and strengthening priority setting processes
- Need for long term sustainable financing
- Strengthening governance processes including the structure for governing the organisations and internal processes for leadership and management of organisations
- Improve coordination/minimise overlaps and duplication
- Recruiting and retaining the right people

Role of the Private Sector

- The private sector is a vital partner in the development of the economies of Pacific island countries
- It creates employment, produces goods& services, contributes to public revenues, economic growth and poverty alleviation
- Also formally contributes to public policy formulation and dialogue with ministers and senior government officials
- In many PICs however, this partnership is often weak and ineffective mainly because the private sector does not have the capacity to meaningfully contribute to public policy discussions.
- At regional level, PIPSO was established in 2007 as the peak body for the region's private sector for 14 FICs.
- A key focus is building capacity of national private sector organisations to improve dialogue with their governments.

Conclusions

- There is a compelling argument for the pursuit of greater regional cooperation and economic integration across the Pacific
- The Pacific Plan Review has presented a sound framework for going forward
- It rightly emphasises that Pacific regionalism must be a political agenda driven by Forum Leaders
- Regionalism will be a challenging process requiring strong political will and commitment, patience, ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders including with the private sector and civil society, and flexibility to make adjustments on the way.
- The capacity of regional organisations to effectively support regionalism needs to be reviewed along the way