

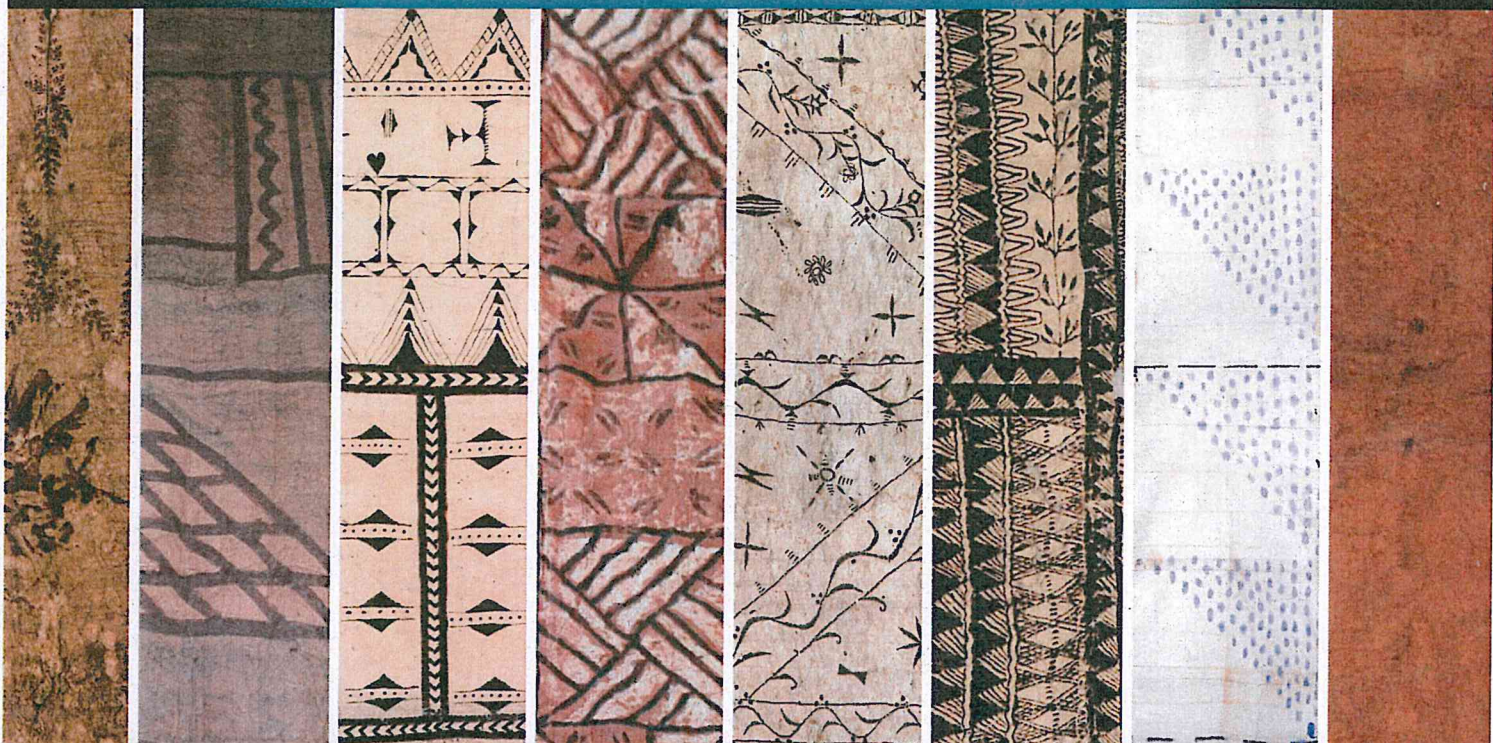
# THE POLYNESIAN P.A.C.T.

Polynesia Against Climate Threats

TAPUTAPUÂTEA DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP

16TH JULY 2015





**- POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP -**  
**POLYNESIA AGAINST CLIMATE THREATS**  
**(P.A.C.T.)**

**Papeete, 16 July 2015**



**POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP**  
**TAPUTAPUĀTEA DECLARATION**

***We are the people of the largest ocean of the world.***

***For us, “the People of the Canoe”, protecting our Ocean and our environment means being resilient to adverse impacts of climate change and remaining steadfast to our Polynesian identity.***

*The Pacific Ocean is a vital regulator of climate for the whole world and needs a voice. We, the Polynesian Leaders Group, are the voice for the Pacific Ocean, and wish to carry our strategic vision to deal with the adverse effects of climate change by limiting global warming below 1.5°C and having access to tools and means to adapt to the adverse impacts caused by climate change.*

*We want the voice of the Polynesians to be heard at the COP21 in Paris with regards to the intensification of extreme weather events, the loss of territorial integrity, the displacements of populations, the deterioration of our natural and cultural heritage and the management of our common ocean.*

*We, the Polynesian Leaders Group, state that our islands and peoples are at the frontline of devastation from climate change. We are victims of climate change. We must be heard. We call for justice and our right of survival.*

*We urge the international community not only to know but to feel our suffering, stand with us on this issue and support us in the implementation of practical solutions to ensure our survival.*

*We, the Polynesian Leaders Group, reaffirm our intimate historic and cultural relationship with our ocean and nature. Today, largely due to human activities and increasing greenhouse gas emissions, our ocean is getting warmer, more acidic and its level rising. We are suffering the progressive decrease in coral vitality, the contamination of our marine life, the erosion of our shorelines, the intensification of cyclones and frequent swell, the new outbreaks of infectious diseases and the threat to our habitats.*

*Climate change and its adverse impacts are poisoning our sea, making our lands infertile and threatening the foundation of our identity as Polynesian peoples. Our children's future is in doubt if the cause of climate change is not addressed and if we are unable to adapt to its impacts.*



*Our islands are scattered over 10 million square kilometers and one third of the world's low lying atolls are located in our jurisdictions. We are extremely vulnerable. Therefore, we express our grave concern of the devastating impacts of climate change and its linkages to the erosion of biodiversity, the affront to social justice and the resulting economic damages. We state our fear that climate change could result in the forced displacement of our populations and the loss of territories with their unique natural and cultural heritage.*

*We, the People of the Canoe, have managed to withstand the test of time and deal with the many challenges to adapt ourselves, build resilience and continue to exist. We are proud of being Polynesian and of our maritime heritage.*

*On Thursday 16 July 2015, we, the Polynesian Leaders Group, gathered on the sacred site of Marae Taputapuātea, in French Polynesia, to jointly decide on our common course and express commitment for P.A.C.T. (Polynesia Against Climate Threats) out of love for our peoples, lands and our ocean, united by the feeling and value of 'Aroha' that we all share.*

1. Although collectively, our contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions are negligible, we in Polynesia face extreme weather and environmental threats that are exacerbated by climate change which is increasingly endangering our livelihoods and lives.
2. We state that for justice among and across generations of peoples with a shared history, it is our responsibility to preserve our cultures, to manage our ocean and to protect our lands. Recognising that we do not own nature, and that we are but custodians of our environment, we commit to ensuring that our development is sustainable. Given that our development is primarily based on tourism, fisheries, aquaculture and agriculture, we emphasise the importance of a healthy environment and stable climate. Therefore, we consider 'no regrets' measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change and its impacts as new opportunities for the sustainable development of our societies.
3. We strongly urge the international community to recognize and accept our specific vulnerabilities and the special case for SIDS as referred to in the SAMOA Pathway, outcome document of the Third International Conference on SIDS, adopted on 4 September 2014 in Apia.

Our obligation to adapt to these multiple vulnerabilities leads us to pay particular attention to three crucial points that will be raised during COP21:

- The objective to limit global warming to below 1.5°C by 2100: we reaffirm the call for urgency and the commitment of the international community to a legally binding framework reflecting this objective.
- Green Climate Fund: in the face of the urgency of the fight against climate change, we ask the international community to have the political courage and to provide the financial tools so that our ability to adapt may express itself. Consequently, we welcome the efforts of France to make sure that priority be given to Oceania in regard to its funding dedicated to the Green Climate Fund as stated during the High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change in Noumea, New Caledonia, on 17 November 2014. The PLG calls for Oceania to receive its fair share of climate resources from all available sources of funding to address capacity building and technology transfer relating to climate change and its adverse impacts.
- Recognise that loss and damage is a critical element for building resilience against climate change and that this is reflected in the legally binding agreement.



4. Our ability and potential to mitigate against and adapt to climate change need to be acknowledged and recognized by all the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change who will meet at the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in Paris in December 2015. Therefore, we the Polynesian Leaders Group call upon all State Parties to the UNFCCC to:

**With regards to the intensification of extreme weather events:**

- Acknowledge the real vulnerabilities of our territories, and admit that the intensification of extreme weather events is caused by human induced climate change.
- Continue to strengthen synergies between actions aiming at supporting Small Island States and Territories in terms of climate change and natural disaster adaptations through the creation of emergency assistance and early warning mechanisms.

**With regards to the loss of territorial integrity:**

- Accept that climate change and its adverse impacts are a threat to territorial integrity, security and sovereignty, and in some cases to the very existence of some of our islands because of the submersion of existing land and the regression of our maritime heritage.
- Acknowledge, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the importance of the Exclusive Economic Zones for Polynesian Island States and Territories whose area is calculated according to emerged lands and permanently establish the baselines in accordance with the UNCLOS, without taking into account sea level rise.

**With regards to population displacements:**

- Fully understand the risks of population displacements, exacerbated by poverty, which may result in moral, intellectual, physical, psychological and cultural distress.
- Consider the establishment of an international protection regime for populations displaced due to climate change.

**With regards to our natural and cultural heritage:**

- Take full account of the provisions of the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Respect the message of Hōkūle'a of 22 June 2014, regarding *'the treasures of our unique biodiversity and marine ecosystems: reefs, turtles, whales, sharks, fish and seabirds. This natural Heritage is also the symbol of our culture and the foundation of our economy through tourism, sustainable fishing and pearl farming.'*
- Understand that it is essential to mitigate the impact of climate change on our natural and cultural heritage, and give paramount consideration to losses in development opportunities because potential future uses of our biodiversity have been compromised.
- Establish an international support mechanism to compensate the impacts resulting from the deterioration or the loss of natural resources and ecosystems.



- Foster the development of a circular and low carbon economy that is more respectful of traditional ways of living, of our environment and resources.

**With regards to the management of our common oceanic space:**

- Acknowledge that we are Large Oceanic States and Territories.
- Respect the request of the Large Oceanic States and Territories of the PLG asking that the continuous Polynesian space of our Exclusive Economic Zones, totalling an area of 10 million km<sup>2</sup>, be named 'Te Moana o Hiva' and to recognize 'Te Moana o Hiva' as one of the biggest carbon sinks in the world, like the largest forests.
- Acknowledge the rights and obligations of the Large Oceanic States and Territories of the PLG to actively enforce the protection of the ecological, human and economic interests of their Exclusive Economic Zones.
- Recall that on 3 October 2014, the Pacific Island Ministers responsible for the environment, made a Declaration recognising the vital importance of the Pacific Ocean to the livelihoods and sustainable economic development of the people of the Pacific, including through providing sustenance, protecting marine biodiversity and in regulating climate.
- Allocate sufficient funding for the establishment of a regional cooperation strategy and its implementation for the conservation, management and monitoring of marine areas and ecosystems, in order to enhance their resilience to climate change.
- Acknowledge the ecological, educational, human and economic interests of protected areas but also the high management costs involved for all Oceania communities.

**With regard to our dependency on imported hydrocarbons:**

- Help us come out of our energy dependency through the provision of technical and financial means for energy transition and prioritise investments in energy saving, energy efficiency and renewable energy production, noting the progress already made by some of the PLG members.
- Encourage our wish to co-operate on environmentally sound initiatives in accordance with the precautionary principle enhancing deep-sea resources for energy development.

5. We, the Polynesian Leaders Group, hereby voice our determination and that of our communities to unite our efforts against the human causes of climate change that jeopardise our future and sustainable development prospects. In this regard, we reiterate the Polynesian Leaders Group Declaration on Climate Change and Coral Reefs adopted in September 2012 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, urging the Parties to the UNFCCC that emit greenhouse gas to implement ambitious mitigation measures urgently.

Our Ocean, 'Te Moana o Hiva' holds many riches. We strongly affirm that our collaboration with the world's most industrialised countries can only be possible if they make their best efforts to mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions.

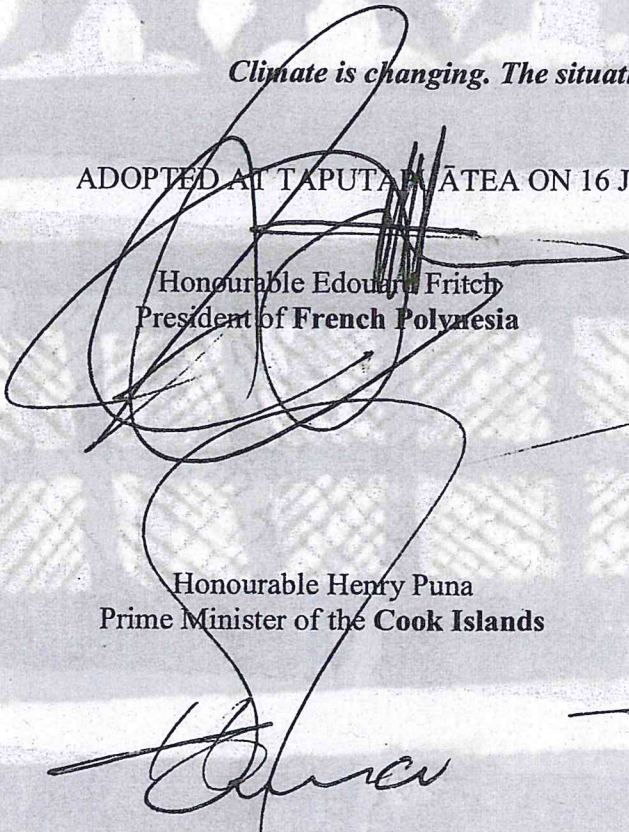


6. We, the Polynesian Leaders Group, with the support of the international community, commit ourselves to make every effort to preserve the natural and cultural Polynesian heritage and thus become the world's showcase for sustainable development.

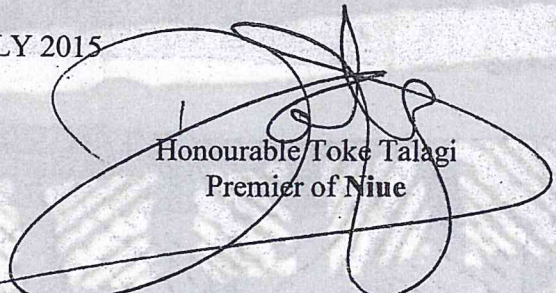
The current Chair of the Polynesian Leaders Group, Honourable Toke Talagi, and the President of French Polynesia, Honourable Edouard Fritch, are responsible for bringing the Taputapuātea Declaration to the 2015 Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Summit, the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Pacific Community, the 4<sup>th</sup> France-Oceania Summit and to the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

*Climate is changing. The situation is serious. It is now time for action.*

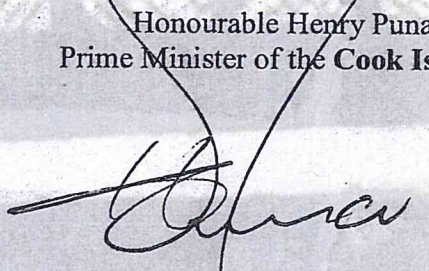
ADOPTED AT TAPUTAPUĀTEA ON 16 JULY 2015



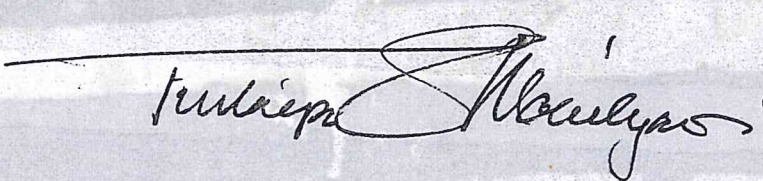
Honourable Edouard Fritch  
President of French Polynesia



Honourable Toke Talagi  
Premier of Niue



Honourable Henry Puna  
Prime Minister of the Cook Islands



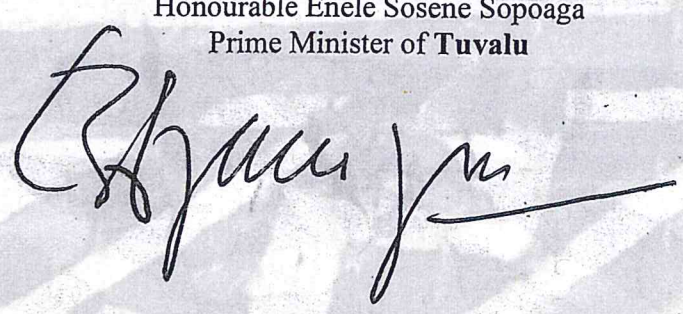
Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi  
Prime Minister of Samoa



Honourable Alikali Faipule Siopili Perez  
Ulu-o-Tokelau



Honourable Akilisi Pohiva  
Prime Minister of Tonga



Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoaga  
Prime Minister of Tuvalu



