

## **PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Opening Session:**

#### **Summit Overview: Petero Manufoalau, Chairman SPTO Board of Directors**

Mr. Manufoalau acknowledged the Cook Islands as the host country for the warmth and hospitality extended to all delegates. He also noted that the rationale behind the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit (PSTLS) is to reinvigorate the annual convening of the Council of Tourism Ministers, to strengthen high-level engagement and to create a much stronger purpose. Mr. Manufoalau further noted that this is underpinned by the long term vision of transforming SPTO into a global leader in sustainable tourism, so as to uplift the consolidated quality assurance of the region and promote a sustainable tourism sector. Mr. Manufoalau acknowledged the leadership of the 11 SPTO Member Countries who have already signed the Sustainable Tourism Statement of Commitment and noted that they would be joined by two more signatories over the course of the summit. In closing, he emphasized that SPTO's membership are at different levels of sustainable tourism development but acknowledged that the PSTLS provides an important platform to communicate a shared vision, to not only lobby for donor support but to shine a light on Pacific communities that are combatting climate change through tourism.

#### **Official Opening Address: Hon. Tingika Elikana, Associate Minister of Tourism, Cook Islands**

On behalf of the Cook Islands government and people, Hon. Elikana welcomed his fellow Honourable Ministers and distinguished delegates. He acknowledged the timeliness of the PSTLS, against the backdrop of COVID-19 and tourism recovery across the region. He, also acknowledged the summit theme of *'Partnering for a resilient, prosperous, and inclusive Pacific through sustainable tourism'* and reflected on its importance for tourism leadership in the region, in support of the tourism sector, industry stakeholders, communities, destinations and partners. Hon. Elikana was emphatic in acknowledging the opportunities presented by the PSTLS, particularly the chance to reconnect, *talanoa*, learn and reimagine the ways in which tourism is planned, developed and managed. Conclusively, Hon. Elikana urged high-level cooperation to ensure that we rebuild an industry that is more resilient, inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

### **Keynote Address: Mr. Randy Durband, Chief Executive Officer, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)**

Mr. Durband greeted the summit participants and noted that GSTC is enthusiastic about continuing to work in partnership with SPTO in order to benefit all of SPTO's member countries throughout the Pacific. Mr. Durband noted the recent establishment of GSTCs Asia-Pacific office in South Korea, which serves as an indication of their commitment to enhanced engagement throughout the region. He noted GSTCs Industry and Destination criteria's which guide GSTC's public and private sector engagement, across a range of members spanning from international agencies to small organizations. In closing, Mr. Durband explained that GSTC strives for harmonization of systems, underpinned by SDG 17 on partnerships. On that note, he emphasized the importance of GSTC's role in helping countries and businesses develop and manage systematic standards for tourism stakeholders, so as to make sense of the many components of sustainable tourism development.

### **Ministerial Panel 1: Country-led solutions for regional progress towards 2030**

- Prosperous economies requires collaboration across stakeholder groups and sectors of the economy. Through recognising the importance of value-adding experiences and actively identifying opportunities for community engagement, we can provide a pathway for shared benefits at all levels.
- Inclusive tourism calls for improved cohesiveness and partnerships that will support sustainable development and sharing of benefits from tourism in the region. With focused strategies and action, the Pacific can be better placed to improve the equality in tourism benefit distribution.
- Culture is at the center of the tourism offering in the Pacific and remains the determining point of difference for our destinations. Therefore, the protection and promotion of Pacific culture needs to be supported by effective policies, capacity development, awareness and ongoing community engagement.
- As custodians of our islands, oceans and ecosystems, the protection and conservation of our natural resources calls for inward reflection that will first and foremost commit to ensuring that we take responsibility for looking after our resources for our own benefit.

### **Ministerial Panel 2: Enhancing Pacific Resilience and Competitiveness through Sustainable Tourism**

- Sustainable or regenerative tourism demands a reconciliation and harmonization between governance, development, local community participation and ever- changing global tourism trends.

- The challenge is to find a balance between the economic urgency of recovery for local providers, the preservation of our unspoiled environment and the authenticity of our cultures. The current global environment is now more favorable than ever to regulate industries, reverse old trends and set up new rules of conduct, that have an authentically local voice. Sustainability must be the rule not the exception.
- In order to future-proof our industry and secure our livelihoods, we require accessible and effective climate financing options and commitments that adequately address the impacts of climate change in our Blue Pacific, particularly for our most vulnerable countries that have suffered loss and damage.
- Development partners and Pacific carriers have an important role to play in ensuring that tourism's benefits are equally dispersed throughout our region, particularly for Small Island States and Territories that have unique but important considerations in relation to improving and maintaining air connectivity and access.

### **Stakeholder Panel: Partnerships for Strengthening Climate and Disaster Resilience in Tourism**

- Like many other industries, tourism is falling short in terms of aligning action and implementation across core issues. However, mechanisms like the Glasgow Declaration provide us with an opportunity to align on the very important issue of Climate Action.
- Climate change is a challenge too big for any one country. As such, partnerships across the board are critical, both for development partners and Pacific Island countries alike. Collaboration under the guidance of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework is an ideal pathway to transition Pacific Tourism to a more sustainable footing.
- Knowledge is power and governments and the private sector have a significant role to play in this regard. Sharing of information on successes and mistakes and cooperation and coordination of efforts, sets the tone for sound preventative action and the long-term viability of sustainable tourism services and benefits.
- Nature based solutions have long existed in our traditional knowledge systems. The Pacific needs to take ownership of this knowledge to drive the action needed in our region, for our people.

- Access to climate finance continues to be an area of concern. Not only is the Pacific disadvantaged by access at the global level but at the national level, our internal systems often present numerous challenges in terms of enabling access and dispersing benefits to local communities.
- Tourism has always been a people- centric sector. However, that focus needs to become more inward looking and holistic in nature. We must put the well-being, empowerment and resourcing of our people first in order to ensure that Pacific tourism can withstand future shocks.
- We must re-design the narrative, so as to reflect our shared perspective that all people matter but when we discuss Pacific Tourism we must ensure that our people matter the most.

**END**