



PIANGO

Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
Association des ONGs des Iles du Pacifique

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MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

STEERING A NEW COURSE: PACIFIC ISLAND NGO LEADERS ENDORSE NEW DIRECTION FOR PIANGO

Nadi, Fiji Islands (5 February, 2010) – Prominent Pacific Island leaders and activists from Non Government Organisations (NGOs) met in Nadi this week and re-stated their commitment and support for the region’s peak NGO coordinating body, the Pacific Islands Association of Non Governmental Organisations (PIANGO).

The PIANGO Board convened a Special Council meeting from 3-5 February to openly and constructively discuss the way forward, nine months after the 25 year-old organisation was affected by a financial and management crisis which almost brought it to its knees and resulted in a withdrawal of funding by its major donor NZAID and a suspension of its funding agreement with AusAID.

At this week’s Special Council meeting, representatives of PIANGO’s National Liaison Units (NLU) from Australia, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu expressed solidarity and full support for PIANGO. The NLU funded themselves to the Special Council meeting as an illustration of their commitment to the role of PIANGO as the peak NGO coordinating body in the Pacific. They acknowledged the goodwill and commitment of its Chairperson, the Board, the interim Executive Director and her team for successfully managing to steer PIANGO through turbulent waters over the past nine months without funding or infrastructural support.

In mid 2009, PIANGO commissioned chartered accountants Ernst and Young to conduct a standard audit of its 2008 accounts. The audit process was brought forward following allegations by NZAID of financial unaccountability and ‘maladministration’. The accounting firm presented its audit findings to the Special Council meeting this week and the transparency of its findings were received with appreciation by representatives of PIANGO’s National Liaison Units (NLU). In addition, the organisation’s interim Executive Director, Ms Emele Duituturaga, tabled PIANGO’s Financial Acquittal Report from 18 June 2009-31 December, 2010. The PIANGO Board appointed Ms Duituturaga to the position of interim Executive Director on 2 February, 2010.

Full Members					
Aotearoa/New Zealand	ANGO	Nauru	NIANGO	Vanuatu	VANGO
Aotearoa/New Zealand	CID	Niue	NIUANGO	Interim Members	
Australia	ACFID	Papua New Guinea	MNCL (Interim)	Bougainville	Nikana Ma’atara
Cook Islands	CIANGO	Samoa	SUNGO	East Timor	CSCBF
Fiji	FCOSS	Solomon Islands	DSE	Guam	Sanctuary Inc.
Kanaky/New Caledonia	UTLN	Tahiti	Hiti Tau	Palau	PCAA
Kiribati	KANGO	Tonga	CSO Forum	Wallis & Futuna	ASCV
FSM	FANGO	Tuvalu	TANGO	West Papua	West Papua

All correspondence to be addressed to Executive Director

NZAID, together with AusAID, had commissioned an audit of PIANGO in April 2008. The audit, conducted by KPMG (NZ), identified what NZAID termed “five suspect transactions”. Following this, NZAID, in a letter to the PIANGO Chairperson Mr Drew Havea, dated 2 November, 2009 confirmed: [Quote] *There is no evidence to suggest that any of these five transactions were the result of fraud. Maladministration, as opposed to deliberate dishonesty, appears to be the cause of four of the five payments that were processed incorrectly.* [Unquote].

Based on PIANGO’s own internal investigations over the past nine months and the findings of the Ernst and Young report, PIANGO Chairperson Mr Havea, in an official statement made to the Special Council meeting this week stated: “The PIANGO Board accepts full and final responsibility for the governance of PIANGO, including responsibility for what has happened. We understood the severity (of the situation), released staff and commissioned a full audit to get the full picture and dialogue with membership.”

“PIANGO has had to rebuild itself from the crisis and we are grateful to the Fiji Council of Social Services for hosting us at their premises. We would also like to formally acknowledge Coordination Sud and the Commonwealth Foundation for displaying donor confidence in PIANGO towards the end of 2009 as the organisation embarks on a new journey, albeit on a tight budget, but every bit as committed to the NGOs and people of the Pacific as we have been these past 25 years,” Mr Havea said.

Key priority areas for the restructured regional umbrella NGO include advancing PIANGO’s role as a global gateway for Pacific NGOs on thematic issues, refocusing the Pasifika Indigenous Management Initiative (PIMI), devolving delivery of the Graduate Diploma Programme (GDP), leaner operational structures which include tight financial mechanisms, sustainability, development of an organisational communications strategy and rebuilding donor relationships.

In addition, the Council welcomed the very effective special sessions on climate change and feedback from the climate change meeting held in Copenhagen in December 2009. The special session on climate change was financed by Coordination Sud and resourced by the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) and the Tuvalu Climate Action Network (TUCAN). The Council also held a special session on the global open forum on CSO development effectiveness at which PIANGO recently participated in Mexico City. (ENDS)

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