



**Bi-lateral Meeting Briefing Notes**

**General Delegation of Palestine & DFAT First Assistant Secretary/**

**Pacific Division**

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**Canberra**

**Introduction**

The objective of strategic diplomatic engagement with Pacific states is two-fold.

1. To encourage Pacific states to recognize the State of Palestine and commence full diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine;
2. To commence a developmental cooperation program between the State of Palestine and Pacific states.

**Approach and Strategy**

1. Build on the growing political, developmental and technical relations between the Arab World and Pacific states, as exemplified by the Arab-Pacific Forum conducted in Abu Dhabi on 2010.
2. Utilize Palestinian expertise and technical capacity in specific developmental sectors to enhance relations with Pacific states. Palestine has many highly trained and highly skilled people, particularly in medical and agricultural fields which could provide technical expertise benefiting Pacific states.
3. Encourage mutual official and non-official visits between Palestine and Pacific states.
4. Grow Palestine's diplomatic representation in the Pacific region. Currently, Palestinian representation in the region is limited to the Canberra-based General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. A single office is not sufficient for the entire region. Increased Palestinian representation in the region would foster bilateral relationships and enable consistent promotion of Palestine's interests and partnerships in the region. The development of bilateral relationships can take decades to evolve and can be influenced by personal relationships. These relationships, fostered through collaboration in the areas discussed and other potential areas, could develop alliances providing Palestine with support in the international arena, including the UN.

## Potential Areas for Professional Cooperation

1. Similar to some Pacific states, Palestine receives large amounts of foreign aid and does not have a strong, independent economy. Palestine has extended experience in economic development – particularly the agricultural and medical sectors – without the benefit of a large economy or wealthy Treasury. The Palestinian experience is highly applicable to the Pacific states, thus making Palestinian expertise valuable.
2. There is real potential for the Palestine's medical expertise and training to be brought to Pacific states, particularly in isolated and rural areas. Palestinian health care professionals have very high levels of expertise in high-quality community care and could provide on-the-ground medical care as well as policy advice. This could give immediate benefit to citizens and provide benefits at governmental level.
3. Palestine has a high level of agricultural expertise. Palestine has disseminated agricultural techniques within the Middle East and beyond. For example, Palestine has exported its expertise on controlling the Mediterranean fruit fly and the olive fruit fly, soilless culture techniques, livestock reproductive techniques, and postharvest and conservation techniques to other states e.g. Cyprus. Palestine exchanges agricultural expertise with Jordan and regional states. Expertise in agricultural pest control and other areas of expertise could be of real benefit to Pacific states. The Pacific has significant problems with pests such as the Pacific Fruit Fly and currently the 'Pacific Fruit Fly Project' is being run by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, which could likely benefit from Palestinian expertise. As an example, one of Samoa's most important exports is bananas, a crop which could benefit from Palestinian expertise. Given the importance of the crop to Samoa, the impacts could be substantial.
4. Palestinian agricultural techniques and particularly postharvest expertise and livestock reproductive expertise could be beneficial to farmers in the Pacific states particularly where postharvest techniques would increase agricultural exports. Palestinian expertise could help increase the levels of food available locally, decreasing reliance on imports. Palestinian assistance enabling more efficient production could see farmers with more disposable income. In states such as Samoa where agriculture is the primary employer, increased incomes could have significant social and economic impact.
5. Potential exists for education exchange. Palestine's higher education facilities include An-Najah National University, Birzeit University, Al-Quds University, Bethlehem University and more. There is significant potential for university exchanges to occur between these universities and universities within the Pacific states. Given high levels of literacy and education, students from Pacific states could achieve real gain from educational experiences in Palestine. Students would return home with expanded educational horizons, and further local development while also increasing the positive perception of Palestine and the Palestinian cause.
6. Palestine and the Pacific states enjoy very different geographical locations, providing significant potential for tourism. Government sponsored tourism

programs from Palestine to the Pacific have the potential for success with the more affluent Palestinian demographic. The predominately Christian populations of the Pacific states are a potential market for religiously focused tourism in Palestine. Palestinian government bodies could invest in marketing travel from the Pacific to Palestine, and jointly develop programs to market the Pacific as a tourist destination for Palestinians, particularly given the strengthening of relationships between the Arab world and the Pacific region.

7. Potential exists for Palestinian businesses to invest in Pacific economies, creating sound and stable trade relations between Palestine and the Pacific region. The government of Palestine has indicated interest and willingness to support measures to encourage Pacific region investment. Economic relationships could assist in strengthening and increasing diplomatic relations, to bringing Palestine and Pacific states closer together.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

There is real potential for Palestine to strengthen its presence in the Pacific region and to strengthen bilateral relations with individual Pacific states. Increased Arab League involvement in the region provides a stable platform for Palestine to look towards regional partnership including diplomatic, agricultural, medical, tourism, aid, and trade. The current regional and international context provides supportive conditions for Palestine to engage with Pacific states. These conditions may not be extended indefinitely and Palestine should capitalize proactively on existing opportunities.

- Palestine needs to act responsively to capitalize on the current political context of increased Arab interest and involvement in the Pacific, and before other national interests capitalize fully on the presence
- Palestine should increase its diplomatic representation in the Pacific region. The planned opening of an Arab League office in the Pacific would provide a very beneficial opening. Increased diplomatic representation would impact positively on Palestine's relations with Pacific states.
- Palestine should engage with Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Forum, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group as key stakeholders and institutions, to ensure optimal outcomes for Palestine, from stakeholder policies.
- Palestine could invest in relationships targeting medical expertise and assistance.
- Palestine could invest its agricultural expertise, particularly given similar economic contexts as those existing in Pacific states. Programs such as this could assist in developing local economies, trade and recognition and support for Palestine, within the region.
- Palestine could encourage tourism relationships, particularly the marketing of Palestine as a religious tourism destination.
- Palestine could encourage greater private sector investment in the Pacific Islands, as this would strengthen economic and diplomatic ties. Stronger

economic and diplomatic ties could strengthen recognition of Palestine and support for Palestine in the international arena, including the UN.

