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EU Signs Financing Agreement with PIFS to tackle root causes of gender inequality and violence against women and girls in the Pacific

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For immediate release

Apia, Samoa - The Director for Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and the Pacific at the European Commission's Department for International Cooperation and Development, Pierre Amilhat and the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat, Dame Meg Taylor, today signed a Financing Agreement worth EUR 13 million to tackle the root causes of gender **inequality** and violence against women and girls in the Pacific. The agreement was signed in the margins of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in Apia.

Australia will provide an additional EUR 5 million (AUD 6.5 million) to this program, which will further strengthen the EU-Australia cooperation to support Pacific responses to gender inequality in the region. The program will support activities at the regional level as well as in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Director Amilhat reaffirmed the role of the EU as a reliable partner of the Pacific and highlighted its commitment to jointly tackling gender inequality in the Pacific region.

"The EU is committed to working alongside its partners in the Pacific region to improve gender equality. Pacific leaders have acknowledged that gender inequality is imposing a high personal, social and economic cost - the time to act is now! Together, we must work to enhance awareness and practice of respectful relationships, ensure equal opportunities in life for women, men, girls and boys, and increase access to relevant services for women and girls who have suffered violence," said Director Amilhat.

PIFS Secretary General and PACP Regional Authorising Officer Dame Meg Taylor acknowledged the EU's recognition of the importance of tackling the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women and girls in the Pacific region and commended the EU for supporting the 2012 Forum Leaders Gender Equality Declaration which was adopted in the Cook Islands.

The project is co-financed through the 11th European Development Fund (EUR 13 million), the Government of Australia (AUD 6.5 million) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women - USD 750 000).

It will be implemented over six years by UN Women, the PIF Secretariat and the Pacific Community (SPC). The Australian Government will co-fund the UN Women component of the project.

EU-Pacific Gender Conference

Following the signing ceremony, the EU and the Independent State of Samoa hosted the Pacific-EU Gender Conference.

The Conference, co-hosted by Paola Pampaloni, European External Action Service (EEAS), Deputy Managing Director Asia and the Pacific and the Prime Minister of Samoa, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, was an opportunity for PIF leaders, cooperation partners and civil society to reflect on the roles of women in Pacific societies, including on issues such as political and decision-making processes, responding to violence against women, women's empowerment and the role of governments, private sector and civil society.

(ENDS)

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