



*The President*  
*Palikir, Pohnpei*  
*Federated States of Micronesia*

May 20, 2022

T.H. Lemanu Peleti Mauga  
Governor  
American Samoa

T.H. Mark Brown  
Prime Minister  
Cook Islands

H.E. Winfred Edouard Tereori Fritch  
President  
French Polynesia

T.H. David Yutaka Ige  
Governor  
U.S. State of Hawai'i

H.E. Lionel Rouwen Aingimea  
President  
Republic of Nauru

T.H. Jacinda Ardern  
Prime Minister  
New Zealand

T.H. Ralph DLG Torres  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

T.H. James Marape  
Prime Minister  
Independent State of Papua New Guinea

T.H. Afioga Fiaame Naomi Mata'afa  
Prime Minister  
Independent State of Samoa

T.H. Scott John Morrison  
Prime Minister  
Australia

T.H. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama  
Prime Minister  
Republic of Fiji

T.H. Lourdes Aflague Leon Guerrero  
Governor  
U.S. Territory of Guam (Guahan)

H.E. Taneti Maamau  
President  
Republic of Kiribati

H.E. Louis Mapou  
President  
New Caledonia

T.H. Dalton Emani Tagelagi  
Premier  
Niue

H.E. Surangel S. Whipps Jr.  
President  
Republic of Palau

H.E. David Kabua  
President  
Republic of the Marshall Islands

T.H. Manasseh Damukana Sogavare  
Prime Minister  
Solomon Islands



T.H. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni  
Prime Minister  
Kingdom of Tonga

T.H. Kausea Natano  
Prime Minister  
Republic of Tuvalu

T.H. Bob Loughman Weibur  
Prime Minister  
Republic of Vanuatu

T.H. Henry Tuakeu Puna  
Secretary-General  
Pacific Islands Forum

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

I bring you warmest greetings from the Paradise in Our Backyards, the Federated States of Micronesia. At the outset, I wish to emphasize my deepest respect to you, your office, and to your Government and People. The People and Government of the Federated States of Micronesia collectively wish for your People's good health and prosperity, and extends to you all that which we seek: peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity.

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters, I am writing to you today—the Head of Government of each member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Micronesian Presidents Summit, and the Pacific Island Conference of Leaders—as there is a topic of truly regional importance I wish to bring to your attention. I respectfully and humbly solicit your kind attention to what I wish to share with you, which I believe is the single-most game-changing proposed agreement in the Pacific in any of our lifetimes.

Before continuing further, I should begin by confirming why I feel obligated to write to you all on this topic and in this manner. The foreign policy of the Federated States of Micronesia is to be a friend to all, and an enemy to none. We believe that Climate Change represents the single-most existential security risk to our islands, and that geopolitics at large threaten to take away the focus from the greatest challenge of our times. Additionally, my country is the only sovereign Pacific Island Country in the world that has both a Great Friendship with the People's Republic of China as well as an Enduring Partnership, demonstrated by our Compact of Free Association, with the United States of America. We have ceaselessly advocated for joint China-U.S. cooperation on tackling Climate Change; and we have ceaselessly advocated for joint China-U.S. promotion of peace and harmony in our Blue Pacific Continent. My country's unique context, I believe, compels me to speak. Where yesterday I condemned the former U.S. President for his January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, insurrection effort, today I feel obligated to warn you all of what I foresee coming from China tomorrow.

On or around April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, I was informed by our Department of Foreign Affairs of a forthcoming meeting to be held on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, between the People's Republic of China and the ten Pacific Island Countries it has diplomatic relations with, formally titled the 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC-PICS





Foreign Ministers Meeting. It is noteworthy that, for many Pacific Island Countries, the Foreign Minister is also the Prime Minister. It is also noteworthy that the meeting would conclude with the Foreign Minister of China, the Honorable Wang Yi, visiting each country that has diplomatic relations with China. The meeting, to be jointly hosted by the Republic of Fiji, would conclude with the adoption of two documents, which I have appended to my letter for the benefit of Pacific Islands who do not have diplomatic relations with China, such as the Republic of Tuvalu and others.

One of these documents, the China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision, essentially amounts to a pre-written and pre-determined Joint Communiqué or outcomes document of the meeting, and the other is a five-year plan for implementing the outcomes into action.

The language of these documents is a sign that China has faithfully done its homework, as the choice of words are, on their face and at first glance, attractive to many of us—perhaps all of us. They speak of democracy and equity and freedom and justice, and compare and contrast these ideas with concepts that we, as Pacific Islands, would want to align ourselves with, such as sustainable development, tackling Climate Change, and economic growth. Where the problems arise are in the details, and the details suggest that China is seeking to do exactly what I warned of in my September 2020 address at the United Nations General Assembly: to acquire access and control of our region, with the result being the fracturing of regional peace, security, and stability, all while in the name of accomplishing precisely that task.

Brothers and Sisters,

If you have not already, it is worth reviewing the attached documents before reading the rest of my letter. Presuming that you are familiar with their contents, I shall summarize some of them.

The China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision seeks to fundamentally alter what used to be bilateral relations with China into multilateral relations, which it accomplishes by referring to all of the Pacific countries with diplomatic relations with China as “one side” while, in the same breath, describing how every country is equal, regardless of size.

The Common Development Vision then seeks to ensure Chinese control of “traditional and non-traditional security” of our islands, including through law enforcement training, supplying, and joint enforcement efforts, which can be used for the protection of Chinese assets and citizens. It suggests “cooperation on network governance and cybersecurity” and “equal emphasis on development and security,” and that there shall be “economic development and protection of national security and public interests.”



The Common Development Vision seeks to ensure Chinese influence in Government through “collaborative” policy planning and political exchanges, including diplomatic training, in addition to an increase in Chinese media relationships in the Pacific, and the construction of Confucius Institutes. It describes Chinese-influenced policies and legislation with the explicit intention to align the Belt & Road Initiative (a Chinese strategy) with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (a Pacific strategy).

The Common Development Vision seeks Chinese control and ownership of our communications infrastructure, as well as customs and quarantine infrastructure (hence the terms “smart customs” and “smart quarantine” in the text), for the purpose of biodata collection and mass surveillance of those residing in, entering, and leaving our islands, ostensibly to occur in part through cybersecurity partnership.

The Common Development Vision seeks Chinese economic control of our collective fisheries and extractive resource sectors, including through free trade agreements, marine spatial planning, deep-sea mining, and extensive public and private sector loan-taking through the Belt & Road Initiative via the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Common Development Vision explicitly seeks to undermine the international rules-based order by developing a “new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, equity, justice, and win-win cooperation,” and China seeks to do this vis-à-vis “upholding multilateralism and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter” to its benefit.

While some elements of the Common Development Vision are not necessarily malign in intent, concerns become heightened with the right information. As an example, China correctly describes upholding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the “primary channel for [Climate] negotiations,” and to jointly promote the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. Notably, however, China’s Paris Agreement pledges do not describe when China expects to reach peak CO2 emissions, the level at which their emissions would peak, or how long they would plateau before starting to drop. China has committed to reaching carbon neutrality in 2060, which is beyond the actionable remaining lifetimes of most contemporary adults, including myself and each of us in receipt of this letter, and so a promise whose makers cannot be held to account for if it doesn’t come to pass.

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

I asked every member of my Cabinet, as well as my Nation’s diplomatic corps, what they thought of China’s proposed agreement—which, though not legally binding, is demonstrative of China’s intention to shift Pacific allegiances in their direction.

My Cabinet recommend to me “serious caution” regarding China developing a marine spatial plan on behalf of the Pacific, and that the “vision for a China-PICS free trade area is





disingenuous.” It is suggested that the “FSM should maintain its own bilateral agenda for development and engagement with China,” and that we should “make sure nothing gives China the idea that they can do anything (marine research, security arrangement, business investment in the FSM) at their will and at any time.” It is suggested to me that “it is high time for the FSM to begin resisting” the initiatives within these documents, which are “in support of China’s hidden agenda.” It was noted that “we should be cautious to let China get their feet too far into our Nation.”

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

Before I describe what I believe China’s overall long-term agenda is, and how my country will respond to the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC-PICS Foreign Ministers Meeting and its outcome documents, I wish to offer a few points of information that I am aware of.

I am aware that the bulk of Chinese research vessel activity in the FSM has followed our Nation’s fiber optic cable infrastructures, just as I am aware that the proposed language in this agreement opens our countries up to having our phone calls and emails intercepted and overheard. I am aware of Chinese unilateral patrols in the Mekong River in Asia, just as I am aware of China’s continued militarization of the South China Sea despite the arbitral tribunal under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea concluding that China’s rights over the maritime area has no lawful effect. I am aware that, in February, China’s Consul General in Osaka said on Twitter, regarding Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, that “the biggest lesson of what has happened in Ukraine is that a weak country must obey a strong country. A challenge will lead to a disastrous result,” just as I am aware that the proposed outcomes documents we’ve received describes that we “recognize that all countries, regardless of their size, strength and wealth, are equals,” even though what would otherwise be bilateral agreements are being unilaterally developed by China to become multilateral in their nature.

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

On the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) last year, China said “Solving the Taiwan question and realizing the complete reunification of the motherland are the unswerving historical tasks of the CCP and the common aspiration of all Chinese People. All sons and daughters of China, including compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, must work together and move forward in solidarity, resolutely smashing any ‘Taiwan Independence’ plots.”

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2017, China reaffirmed six of the nine principles that their country has held since the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2002, with “placing hopes on the Taiwan people as a force to help bring about unification” exempted from those reaffirmed principles. In 2018, China said that Taiwan would face “the punishment of history” for any attempts at separatism. In 2019,



China said “We make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means.”

China has often publicly described its intention to ensure CCP control of what is otherwise a *de facto* independent Taiwan.

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

We are all acutely aware of the renewed and increasing intensity of competition for access and influence in our Pacific Region. These activities and efforts have resulted in varying levels of benefit for our communities, but they also potentially threaten to fracture long-standing alliances within our Pacific Family, and could become counterproductive to our collective desire for regional solidarity, security, stability, and the hard-won efforts, often through sweat and blood, in achieving sovereignty for our respective island nations.

What we are seeing with the proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC-PICs Foreign Ministers Meeting and its accompanying outcome documents are an intent to shift those of us with diplomatic relations with China very close into Beijing’s orbit, intrinsically tying the whole of our economies and societies to them. The practical impacts, however, of Chinese control over our communications infrastructure, our ocean territory and the resources within them, and our security space, aside from impacts on our sovereignty, is that it increases the chances of China getting into conflict with Australia, Japan, the United States, and New Zealand, on the day when Beijing decides to invade Taiwan.

To be clear, that’s China’s long-term goal: to take Taiwan. Peacefully, if possible; through war, if necessary.

It is here that I should re-emphasize that the Common Development Vision contains the line: “Pacific Island Countries reaffirmed that they abide by the One-China principle and stressed the importance of upholding the principle of non-interference of internal affairs in international relations.” Because China considers the otherwise *de facto* independent Taiwan a part of itself, then it follows that an invasion of Taiwan is not a matter of our concern.

This is demonstrably false, however. Any war in the Indo-Pacific would be our concern, to include that a war for Taiwan is equivalent to a war between China and the United States. Whoever wins in such a conflict, we will once again be the collateral damage as we become stuck in the crossfire of the bigger countries who ought to be benevolent hegemons for our Pacific Region and for humanity as a whole. This very plausible, realistic, and terrifying scenario I describe is made all the more sobering as we continue to see the ongoing events in Ukraine, where an authoritarian government, Russia—which bestowed upon itself a mandate to take what





it views to be its historical lands—engages in a brutal and unjustified war against a country that has already achieved sovereignty, and practices democracy and the rule of law.

My dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters,

The Common Development Vision stemming from the 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC-PICs Foreign Ministers Meeting is a smokescreen for a larger agenda. Despite our ceaseless and accurate howls that Climate Change represents the single-most existential security threat to our islands, the Common Development Vision threatens to bring a new Cold War era at best, and a World War at worst.

The Federated States of Micronesia will attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC-PICs Foreign Ministers Meeting, and our country will reject the Common Development Vision and five-year plan on the premise that we believe the proposed agreement needlessly heightens geopolitical tensions, and that the agreement threatens regional stability and security, including both my country's Great Friendship with China and my country's Enduring Partnership with the United States. The only way for the Federated States of Micronesia to maintain our Great Friendship with China is if our relationship with them is exclusively focused on economic and technical cooperation. I intend to maintain our Great Friendship, while also remaining committed to a Free & Open Indo-Pacific, which I believe is essential for the Blue Pacific Continent's stability. Despite being offered attractive economic assistance from China now, including donations into our sovereign Trust Fund, our Pacific well-being, security, peace and harmony, and our values and principals and sovereignty, are treasures with greater value than any amount of silver and gold.

Geopolitics like these are the kind of game where the only winning move is not to play. My hope, my dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters, is that by informing you of these developments, and of our country's intended course of action, we can collectively take the steps necessary to prevent any intensified conflict, and possible breakout of war, from ever happening in the first place.

I conclude my lengthy letter by acknowledging that I am cognizant that some of our historical partners need to show up more often, with more sincerity, and, to quote another dear brother and Pacific leader, His Excellency Surangel S. Whipps Jr., "to care about us for real and not for a day." I believe that Australia needs to take Climate Change more seriously and urgently. I believe that the United States should have a diplomatic presence in all sovereign Pacific Island Countries, and step-up its assistance to all islands, to include its own states and territories in the Pacific.



However, it is my view that the shortcomings of our allies are not a justification for condemning the leaders who succeed us in having to accept a war that we failed to recognize was coming and failed to prevent from occurring. We can only reassert the rightful focus on Climate Change as our region's most existential security threat by taking every single possible action to promote peace and harmony across our Blue Pacific Continent.

Thank you, my dear Pacific Brothers & Sisters, for your kind attention to my lengthy letter. I say again, with honesty and humility, and the hope that our islands remain friends to all and enemies to none forevermore, that the People & Government of the Federated States of Micronesia extend to you peace, friendship, cooperation, and love in our common humanity.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David W. Panuelo", is written over a series of horizontal blue scribbles.

David W. Panuelo  
President

Federated States of Micronesia

Enclosures:

China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision  
China-Pacific Island Countries Five-Year Action Plan on Common Development