

Pacific ICT Minister's Dialogue - New Zealand country statement

- Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledges the importance of developing resilient digital infrastructure and digital inclusion to ensure everyone has access to affordable, reliable and secure internet, technology and online services.
- Information communication technology is one of the most powerful instruments for 21st century development. Digital transformation has the potential to change economies, livelihoods and quality of life for communities, providing access to information, services and markets. Pacific states and territories, development partners, the private sector, regional and international organisations all have a role to play to support this transformation.
- Our *Digital Strategy for Aotearoa* outlines the vision for our people, communities, economy and environment to be flourishing and prosperous in the digital era. This strategy is built on three pillars - trust, inclusion and growth. In Aotearoa New Zealand, improving rural connectivity is a key priority, this includes improving broadband speeds and quality, and expanding access for rural and remote communities. Work is also underway to ensure all New Zealanders can afford a quality internet connection and internet-enabled device, and involves targeting communities such as seniors and students that are at higher risk of digital exclusion.
- We know in the Pacific about the ongoing challenges to resilience, ranging from natural disasters to the risk of cyberattacks. We should be proactive and vigilant in addressing these risks as a region. Regional digital transformation and cyber resilience requires strong cross-border cooperation to maximise protections and opportunities for Pacific infrastructure and peoples in the digital age.
- The *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* outlines the region's commitment for a well-connected region that ensures access to affordable, safe, reliable ICT infrastructure, while ensuring culturally sensitive user-protection and cybersecurity. This Dialogue is an opportunity to contribute to the technology and connectivity strategic pathway, in line with the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat's ongoing efforts to develop an implementation plan.
- Aotearoa New Zealand currently support Pacific digital transformation in a range of areas, including:
 - International and domestic connectivity infrastructure and technical assistance in Polynesia;
 - Regional cybersecurity capacity building focusing on strategy and governance, information security, cyber safety and cybercrime;
 - Developing the ecosystem of the Pacific digital economy; and
 - Digital services in education and health.
- Connectivity infrastructure, evidence-based strategy and policymaking, structures for implementation, relevant regulations and standards, digital tools and digital literacy are all necessary for a holistic approach to digital transformation.
- In an increasingly crowded space, regional and international coordination remains critical to avoid duplication and improve development impact. Leveraging existing regional architecture is one way we can do this, as well as ensuring new coordination mechanisms complement existing ones.
- We look forward to continuing discussions to understand the opportunities to work together to improve digital transformation in the region.