



Government of the Cook Islands
Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration

Keynote Address and Official Launch by Hon Henry Puna, Prime Minister
Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Statement of Strategic Intentions, 2019-2024

Kia Orana tatou katoatoa i te aroa maata o te Atua

May I align myself with the warm words of welcome and acknowledgement conveyed by the Chief of Protocol and extend to all of you my heartiest kia orana in this Constitution Week of our 54th year of self-governance.

Tei tao'anga ia i rotopu ia tatou – to te enua, to te evangelia e to te Kavamani. Mei tei maata e tae uatu ki tei iti, kia orana korereka rava tatou katoatoa. To our international guests, welcome and thank you for your participation in this morning's launch.

I'm particularly pleased to be delivering these remarks in this wonderful facility, our national college, Tereora. Because it epitomises this Government's commitment and investment in our future – through investment in our children and their education. Principal Tania Morgan, and our students, thank you for having us.

The vision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is "Taku Ipukarea, kia Rangatira". For me, the essence of that vision is our collective aspiration that our people, our land, our skies and our oceans thrive long into the future in peace and prosperity. MFAI's vision dovetails with our national vision, Te Kaveinga Nui, which is "Te oraanga tu rangatira kia tau ki te anoano o te iti tangata, e kia tau ki ta tatou peu Maori e te aotini taporoporoia o te basileia".

For more than 50 years, our foreign and security policy approaches have been characterized by pragmatism, resilience and innovation. This three pronged approach was best encapsulated in 1965 when through an act of self-determination, our people approved a Constitution ending our dependency status as a territory of New Zealand. That act of self-determination, the very first of its kind observed by the United Nations (UN), was subsequently endorsed by the UN.

As a small and geographically isolated country, we have a realistic view of our limitations and constraints. But like all countries, our interests are eternal and aspirations boundless. Our core national interests in 1965, are as valid today as they were then - to ensure the Cook Islands independence, survival and growth. Those interests require focusing our limited resources and efforts in areas which matter most to us, including in our approaches to international engagement, to meet our evolving national development and security needs.

As articulated in the Cook Islands Government Fiscal Strategy and Economic Update issued in June this year, forward Government Expenditure demonstrate commitment to invest in improving the productive capacity of both the economy and Government over the next four years. Specifically, through investing in infrastructure that will ensure the sustainability of economic growth and the resilience of the economy to climate change;

and investing in the capabilities of government agencies to ensure that they are operating effectively and efficiently.

It is my honour to reveal as part of this morning's launch, the Maori name for the Ministry - ***Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI)***. I will defer to MFAI Secretary Tapaeru Herrmann to elaborate the meaning and significance of this name and congratulate MFAI for its adoption.

Government recognises the need to invest in MFAI to strengthen our influence globally and demonstrate the Cook Islands is a responsible and trustworthy global citizen, capable of protecting its interests and upholding its values on the international stage. Additional funding provided in the 2019/20 Budget will strengthen MFAI's Foreign Service capability and ensure the Cook Islands has the international presence we need to advance our national development and security agenda.

For generations, the Cook Islands New Zealand relationship has been an enduring, evolving and living partnership. The flexibilities inherent in the free association, as have been jointly evolved by successive governments of both countries, have allowed us to pursue our separate and shared policies and interests at both the bilateral and international levels. At the same time, the bonds between our two countries based on citizenship and shared values have endured and strengthened over time. That relationship, which is on firm footing, holds us in good stead for further expansion of co-operation, which at Government to Government levels will continue to be co-ordinated by MFAI.

The opening of a High Commission in Suva will reinforce our influence in the Pacific regional architecture and strengthen economic and trade co-operation with Fiji. Fiji's offering as a regional business, transport and intergovernmental governance hub present further scope for the Cook Islands critical economy diversification and resilience strengthening aspirations. Government welcomes Australia's commitment to opening a diplomatic mission in the Cook Islands within the 2019/20 period. Australia is a significant regional and global player and MFAI will continue to co-ordinate Government's engagement with the Australian Government for expansion of economic and security co-operation and people-to-people links.

Growing trans-border security threats, such as transnational crime, irregular migration, cyber-crime, terrorism, foreign espionage and interference directly affect the Cook Island's security. The recent act of terrorism on Christchurch a brutal jolt of our collective vulnerabilities. The range of traditional and contemporary security threats, as well as the Cook Islands inherent vulnerabilities and capability constraints requires the Cook Islands to broaden and deepen our bilateral, regional and multilateral security cooperation. And it requires us to step up our efforts to advance collective security and defend the rules-based international order through proactive engagement in the Pacific security framework, including the 2018 Boe Declaration and multilateral engagements in global peace, security and disarmament initiatives. The completion by MFAI of the new immigration legislation in the 2019/20 period will support the Ministry strengthen immigration service capabilities. The Ministry led development of the National Security Policy is expected to strengthen domestic security capability and provide guidance for Government's international engagement on security issues.

Government is fully committed to the Pacific regional architecture including the Blue Pacific narrative which captures our stewardship role of Te Moana Nui o Kiva. The Blue Pacific aligns with my long held view of the Cook Islands and our Pacific Islands as large ocean states, not small islands states. We take our ocean stewardship role seriously by balancing our conservation responsibilities with our economic development needs as enshrined in the Marae Moana legislation. MFAI has a critical role to play in promoting and protecting the Cook Islands oceans interests at the international level. The importance of fisheries and oceans governance to the Cook Islands, the region and the broader geo-political considerations that arise, necessitate a diplomatic

presence and expertise in navigating oceans matters that extend beyond technical issues to include foreign policy and security matters. MFAI complements the expertise of the Ministry of Marine Resources, the Marae Moana Secretariat, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Cook Islands Investment Corporation, Sea Bed Minerals Authority and others active in the oceans space by playing an important co-ordinating role in building and maintaining strategic regional and multilateral networks that may include negotiated outcomes to ensure national objectives are met whilst enhancing regional solidarity.

ODA graduation in 2020 provides urgent impetus for the further diversification of the Cook Islands economy. Government's investment in the Manatua submarine cable, a partnership between the Cook Islands, Samoa, French Polynesia and Niue, supported by New Zealand, is expected will have a catalytic effect on diversifying the Cook Islands economy. The Cook Islands was one of the first signatories of the regional trade and economic development focused Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) Agreement. MFAI will continue to lead Government's engagement in PACER Plus activities to ensure they support diversification of our economy, and avail economic opportunities for Cook Islanders long into the future.

Integral to delivery of MFAI's strategic intentions is the leadership and people of MFAI. And in that regard, I am proud to be Minister of an agency that has continued to deliver beyond its resource endowments. Both in the immigration space, and on the international stage. As a country, we are blessed to have in public service, capable, passionate and committed Cook Islanders working in MFAI that work hard to keep us safe while contributing effectively to the broad spectrum of our national development agenda and advocate passionately for our interests internationally.

It is my honour and privilege to launch Te Kauono Tutara e te Mana Tiaki – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2019-2024 Statement of Strategic Intentions. I commit Government's full support to the Ministry's execution of the activities and wish Secretary Herrmann and her team all the best for the work to be done in the months ahead. Kia Orana e kia manuia. Taku Ipukarea, Kia Rangatira.

HON HENRY PUNA, PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION