

Action Plan 2025 -2030 for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Cook Islands and the People's Republic of China

Preamble

In 1997, the Cook Islands and the People's Republic of China (PRC) established signed diplomatic relations. In the 28 years since then, the relationship between our two countries has grown considerably, grounded upon a basis of equality and mutual respect, a shared commitment to safeguarding peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region, upholding international equity and justice, and promoting sustainable and resilient development. Both sides have continued expanding and deepening development cooperation in areas such as infrastructure, people to people exchanges, agriculture and education amongst others.

In 2014, former Prime Minister Henry Puna and President Xi Jinping met in Nadi and agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship through the development in of a strategic partnership. In 2018, the two Leaders met again in Port Moresby and further committed to an enhanced bilateral relationship and agreeing to a Comprehensive Regional Strategic Partnership with other Pacific Leaders. Recalling further various high-level engagements by our leaders since 2014, both sides have reaffirmed the aspiration for further commitment towards a comprehensive strategic partnership.

To mark 28 years of diplomatic relations, and in recognition of the strength of cooperation between the Cook Islands and the People's Republic of China, both countries have agreed to commit to an action plan outlining a comprehensive strategic partnership that clearly identifies a framework of priority areas within the bilateral relationship.

Principles

In this Action Plan 2025-2030, the bilateral relationship between the Cook Islands and China will be guided by the following principles:

- **Partnership – Turanga'oa - 伙伴关系**
Both sides will work together as equal partners and conduct genuine consultation and meaningful dialogue with a sincere desire to promote the well-being of both countries.
- **Respect – Akangateitei - 相互尊重**
Both sides will respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each country, adhere to non-interference of each country's domestic affairs and support each other in safeguarding core interests. The Cook Islands remains committed to the One-China policy, which serves as a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship.

Both sides will respect difference in opinion, recognising that this is often necessary for progress and development. Both sides will respect due process in all formal interactions, establishing practical and viable methods of engagement.

- **Integrity – Ngakau Tau - 讲求诚信**
Both sides will maintain integrity and honesty in our interactions and ensure that all areas of cooperation are navigated by each side in good faith.

- **Resilience – Mana’au - 保持韧性**

In order to maintain a resilient and enduring bilateral relationship, both sides should ensure that we work together to enhance the resilience of each country – environmental, social and economic – through a holistic approach to bilateral cooperation.

Priority Areas

Both sides agree to enhance cooperation within frameworks already articulated by each side, such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, the Belt and Road and Global Development Initiative. With these guiding frameworks, both sides have determined the following priorities for future cooperation:

Economic Resilience – Pu’apinga Mana’au - 经济韧性

In 2020, the Cook Islands graduated to a high-income country under classifications set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However, as a micro-economy, dependent on tourism for its revenue, the Cook Islands is still extremely vulnerable to economic shocks and threats; this was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alignment of Development Strategies

China shall apply its new development philosophy, fostering a new pattern of development, and pursuing high-quality development. The Cook Islands will continue to advance the objectives of *Te Ara Akapapa’anga Nui* National Sustainable Development Agenda (NSDA) 2020+. These strategies will guide development cooperation within this Action Plan.

- We will explore alignment of development strategies, accelerate post-COVID recovery, and implement the UN 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development in line with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent of the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Belt and Road Initiative launched by China.

Economic Cooperation

- Both sides will explore greater trade opportunities, with a view to encouraging trade and investment missions between our two countries in the immediate term. The Cook Islands looks forward to participating in the China-initiated trade and economic cooperation platforms, including International Import Expositions in future years.
- Both sides will promote exchanges and cooperation in tourism, encouraging the tourism industries to explore joint promotion of tourism products.
- We will enhance cooperation in areas of agriculture and promote innovative practice under existing frameworks such as the Nadi Declaration of Agriculture Ministers Meeting between the Pacific and China. The Cook Islands’ looks forward to taking part in agricultural training opportunities such as those provided by Juncao Technology Research Centre.
- We will work together to finalise necessary arrangements for seafood exports from the Cook Islands into China.
- We will explore areas for further cooperation within the seabed minerals sector noting this is a national priority for the Cook Islands.
- We will engage in financial and economic policy dialogues to explore viable ways of promoting economic recovery following COVID-19.

- We will utilise the Memorandum of Understanding on Deepening Blue Economy Cooperation and other such arrangements to deepen practical cooperation in the field of blue economy, and promote high-quality investment cooperation for a mutually-beneficial outcome.

Infrastructure

The Cook Islands and China have a long history of cooperation on infrastructure projects, with China assisting in the build of the national courthouse, police headquarters, indoor stadium, Apii Nikao, as well as the trilateral Te Mato Vai project.

- Learning from past experiences, both sides will explore future cooperation in infrastructure projects, through alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative and regional initiatives including the Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative, upholding the pre-eminence of the Cook Islands National Infrastructure Investment Plan, in line with the needs and priorities, and the legal & regulating requirements of both countries.

Environment – Taporoporo Aorangi - 环境

Recognising the interdependence between access to, and impact upon resources, particularly in the context of vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change, both countries agree that:

Climate Change

- We will support each other, where appropriate, to realise our own nationally determined contributions, adaptation to climate change impacts, and building resilience.
- Noting China's ambition of carbon neutrality by 2060, as well as the Cook Island's efforts towards 100% renewable energy, we will work together bilaterally, regionally and in multilateral fora to promote the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.
- We will encourage green and low-carbon development for all countries in accordance with the principle of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.
- We commit to exploring, and advocating for, simplified access to climate finance for small island states, who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- We will utilise existing mechanisms, such as the *China – Pacific Island Countries Climate Change Cooperation Centre*, to enhance the capabilities of the Cook Islands to respond to the threats posed by climate change, and to encourage training opportunities, as well as the sharing of up-to-date climate science and technology.

Maritime Cooperation

- We will work together, where appropriate, to build a climate resilient blue ocean economy in line with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and the MOU on China-Pacific Island Countries of Blue Economy Cooperation.
- We will explore enhanced cooperation in the maritime and oceans sector, including but not limited to the following areas: hydrography, geospatial and foreshore protection, maritime transport and attendant infrastructure, upholding our joint consensus in the Blue Economy MoU. The Cook Islands looks forward to exploring enhanced cooperation arrangements with technical maritime and oceanic agencies and institutes, such as the Second Institute of Oceanography.
- We will continue to cooperate in fisheries and ocean management, respecting the work already being done in this space at the national and regional levels, utilising existing

mechanisms such as the *Pacific Islands – China Fisheries Forum* to promote discussion on this topic.

Disaster Management

- We will explore and enhance exchanges and information sharing on disaster preparedness, mitigation and relief, and jointly build the capacity of disaster management agencies to respond effectively to risks and losses caused by natural disasters in the two countries.
- We will explore joint disaster management training to enhance the capacity of disaster relief teams.
- We will provide, to the extent possible, humanitarian support in the event of major natural disasters.
- We will promote the establishment of a China-Pacific Island Countries disaster management cooperation mechanism and support the Belt and Road International Cooperation Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management.
- The China-Pacific Island Countries Reserve of Emergency Supplies will continue to provide supplies for the Cook Islands in the event of a natural disaster.

Cultural Exchanges – Apii’anga peu - 人文交流

Both sides acknowledge the role of cultural exchanges in improving relations through understanding and gaining respect of each other’s values and context. Both sides commit to deepening and strengthening our cultural links on the existing basis of cooperation.

- We will promote cultural exchanges between our creative industries, including through training and capacity building for the Cook Islands in film making and creative industries.
- We will encourage exchanges and cooperation between youth, women and academic communities in such areas as sports, arts, cuisine and traditional medicines.
- We will continue to build on our relationship and sister-city links with China’s local administrations, such as Zhuhai in the Guangdong Province. We will continue to explore support and cooperation for the bilateral relationship, through clear channels of communication and processes with oversight by central government agencies, facilitated via the two countries Missions in Wellington. We will explore the establishment of diplomatic and consular institutions in each country to elevate and strengthen our bilateral relationship.

Social well-being – Ora’anga Tangata -社会福祉

Both countries place heavy emphasis on social well-being and sustainable livelihoods for our people. Using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide, we will work together to raise the living standard in each country, with an emphasis on SDG 3 – Health, and SDG 4 – Education.

Health

- Learning from the experiences of COVID-19, we commit to working together in the face of global pandemics and any severe disease outbreaks.
- We will enhance mutual support for each other through the provision of timely medical supplies and other assistance as, and when, needed.

- We will explore, where appropriate, opportunities for medical personnel training and exchanges, including sharing of up-to-date information regarding any health-related risks being faced by either country.
- We will work toward joint technological and medical research and transfer, taking into account the respective capabilities of each country.
- We will work toward extending Chinese traditional medicine and acupuncture, in the Cook Islands and Cook Islands traditional medicine in China.

Education

- China will continue to provide scholarship opportunities to the Cook Islands, and the Cook Islands will make every effort to ensure that these opportunities are taken up by Cook Islands students.
- The Cook Islands will identify gaps and priorities for further education and scholarships, and China will do its best to provide relevant opportunities in these areas to ensure that any education programme between the two countries is fit for purpose.
- The Cook Islands will seek to identify other priority areas for training and capability building, and both sides will work together to explore ways to meet these priorities. We will explore opportunities for student exchange programmes between our two countries on a regular basis.
- China will continue to support promotion of the Chinese language in the Cook Islands by providing teaching resources to the Confucius Classroom and the promotion of bilateral language exchanges.

Regional Cooperation – Ta’okota’ianga Moana Nui o Kiva - 地区合作

Regionalism is a cornerstone of the Pacific with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) serving as the premier political institution under which Pacific Regionalism is coordinated. China is a valued Dialogue Partner within the PIF, and has gone to great lengths to deepen its engagement within the region in the past decade.

In 2022, Pacific Leaders endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. This serves as the Pacific’s overarching blueprint to advance Pacific regionalism for the next three decades, articulating the region’s long-term vision, values, and key thematic areas and strategic pathways.

- With the priorities outlined in the 2050 Strategy as a guide, the Cook Islands will work with China to identify ways in which China can support the realisation of the 2050 Strategy’s aspirations.
- The Cook Islands notes that China has existing bilateral channels of cooperation with various countries in the Pacific. Taking this into account, we commit to identifying and supporting processes and platforms in which China and the Pacific can dialogue regularly regarding regional cooperation, such as the annual Foreign Minister’s meeting, Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, the China-Pacific Fisheries Forum, the China-Pacific Agricultural Ministers Meeting. We will work together to ensure these meetings are held in a way that respects genuine consultation and dialogue and treats the views of all participants equally.
- We will work together to create and implement processes that guide the participation, timing, and consultations leading into all China-Pacific regional meetings.
- The Cook Islands acknowledges China as a long-standing Dialogue Partner of the PIF and we look forward to engaging via the annual Forum Dialogue Partners meeting to deepen cooperation.

- We will engage in advance discussions prior to the Cook Islands’ hosting of any regional meetings that China ordinarily attends in any capacity (such as the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ Meeting) to identify ways in which we can support each other as both hosts and participants, to advance our collective regional interests.

Multilateral Cooperation – Ta’okota’ianga aotini - 多边合作

Both countries are committed to promoting multilateralism, and to upholding the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law.

- We will follow a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, so as to promote regional peace and security. In the world as well as in the region, we will uphold the international non-proliferation regime with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as its cornerstone and support the development of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone. We will combat transnational crime including cyber-crime, and jointly tackle non-traditional security threats.
- We commit to supporting each other in multilateral forums, where our priorities align, and to the fullest extent possible.
- Where possible, we will continue to provide support to the candidates of each of the two countries during the elections of the various boards and committees of the organisations to which we both belong.
- We will work together as current UNESCO Executive Board Members to progress the educational, scientific and cultural aspirations of both countries, as well as to help shape progress in these areas at the global level.
- Given China’s strong presence in multilateral forums, China will support the Cook Islands’ aspirations to expand its membership of international organisations.
- Learning from past experience, the two sides will continue exploring opportunities for trilateral cooperation.

Conclusion

The outlined principles and priority areas for cooperation will serve as a roadmap for future collaboration between the two countries. This Action Plan 2025 – 2030 for Comprehensive Strategic Partnership will come into force upon signing, it will last for a term of 5 years, whereby it will be subject to review by both Parties.

Signed by:

Signed by:

For the Cook Islands

For the People’s Republic of China