



PACIFIC
PEACE & SECURITY
DIALOGUE



A CHILD OF 2050: REIMAGINING PACIFIC AGENCY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

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About the author



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Professor Aqorau is a distinguished international lawyer and academic with extensive experience in regional and international fisheries governance. Prior to his appointment at Solomon Islands National University, Professor Aqorau served as the founding Chief Executive Officer of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Office in Majuro, Marshall Islands, where he led transformative reforms in tuna fisheries management in the Pacific.

He was formerly the Deputy Director-General and Legal Counsel at the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and also served as International Legal Adviser at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Earlier in his career, Professor Aqorau held the position of Legal Adviser at the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Professor Aqorau is widely recognised for his leadership in fisheries law and development, and his contributions to regional policy and governance in the Pacific Islands.

About the Pacific Peace and Security Dialogue

Set against the backdrop of the *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, and the *Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration*, the Pacific Peace and Security Dialogue is the region's largest gathering of the security community from across Forum Island Countries. It brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, reflecting the expanded concept of security as defined by the *Boe Declaration*. Presented by 13 organisations, including the Pacific Security College, the conference provides expert updates and insights on key issues shaping the region's future.



Keynote address
Opening night dinner
Pacific Peace and Security Dialogue
Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva
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Lectrum

SAFEGUARDING
A PEACEFUL
BLUE PACIFIC
TOGETHER

A CHILD OF 2050: REIMAGINING PACIFIC AGENCY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD



Bula vinaka.

Tonight, I want to invite us to travel—not by aircraft, not by ship, but by imagination.

Let us travel to a small village somewhere in our Blue Pacific. It could be in Malaita, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, or any of our island homes. The village sits near the sea. The children know the reef by memory. The old people know the winds by name. The church bell, the sound of paddles, the smell of smoke from the cooking fire, the laughter of cousins, the silence of the graves—these are the architecture of belonging.

In that village there are 10-year-old children.

Let us call them Junior and June.

Junior and June are not in this room tonight. They have never heard of the *Boe Declaration*. They have not read the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. They do not yet understand the words ‘geostrategic competition’, ‘rules-based global order’, or ‘regional architecture’.

But they understand the sea.

They know where the shoreline used to be.

They know which breadfruit tree fell during the last king tide.

They know that their grandfather’s grave is now too close to the water.

They know that sometimes the fish are no longer where they used to be.

They know when the adults speak quietly at night, it is usually because something is wrong.

Tonight, as we gather in Suva to discuss Pacific peace and security, I ask us to see the future through June’s and Junior’s eyes.

In 2050, Junior and June will be 34 years old.

They may be parents. They may be a teacher, a fisherman, a nurse, a climate negotiator, a police officer, a pastor, a traditional leader, a scientist, a canoe builder, a coder, a prime minister—or perhaps all of these in different seasons of their lives, because in the Pacific we often carry many titles before breakfast.

What kind of Pacific will they inherit?

Will their village still be there?



Will their language still be spoken?

Will their reef still feed their children?

Will their country still have secure maritime zones?

Will their people still decide their own future?

Will the Pacific still be a place of peace, or will it have become a theatre for other people's anxieties, ambitions, and wars?

We meet at a time when the world feels deeply unsettled. Global warming is no longer a distant warning; it is a lived reality. The rules-based global order, which many assumed would hold, now shows large fissures. Wars and conflicts, including the crisis around Iran and the wider Middle East, remind us that distant fires can send smoke across every ocean. Energy prices rise. Shipping routes shift. Food systems tremble. Misinformation travels faster than wisdom. Artificial intelligence is changing economies, politics, education, and even truth itself.

And yet, in our Pacific villages, children still wake up each morning expecting adults to know what they are doing.

That is perhaps the greatest responsibility of leadership.

So tonight, the question is not simply: what are we worried about?

The question is: what are we building?

The *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* gives us a powerful vision: a resilient Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, where all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives.

That is a noble vision. It is our shared compass.

But if Junior and June were sitting with us tonight, perhaps with a plate of fish and cassava in front of them, they might ask us a very direct question:

"Is it enough?"

Is the 2050 Strategy enough if it remains only a document?

Is it enough if our people do not feel it in their schools, clinics, wharves, fisheries, energy systems, courts, churches, markets, universities and villages?

Is it enough if we speak of a Blue Pacific Continent, but still negotiate as scattered islands?

Is it enough if others know the value of our ocean better than we do?

Is it enough if we ask the world to respect us, but we do not first organise ourselves with discipline, unity and courage?

The 2050 Strategy is necessary. But strategy without agency is only aspiration.

The Pacific does not suffer from a shortage of declarations. We suffer, too often, from a shortage of implementation, institutional stamina, and the courage to make hard collective choices.

This is where the lesson of Honiara matters.

Last year, Solomon Islands hosted the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting under the theme: 'lumi tugea: Act now for an integrated Blue Pacific Continent.'



lumi tageda.

You and me together.

Not you first and me later.

Not my island against your island.

Not my donor against your donor.

Not my flag above our ocean.

lumi tageda.

Honiara reminded us that Pacific regionalism must now move from sentiment to systems; from speeches to shared machinery; from cooperation when convenient to integration where necessary.

It reminded us that the Pacific Islands Forum is our political family. It is our house of regional settlement. It is where we must learn again how to disagree without division, how to act without waiting for permission, and how to insist that partners align with Pacific priorities, not the other way around.

It also gave us the *Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration*.

That idea is not naive. It is not romantic. It is not a slogan for people who do not understand power. It is, in fact, one of the most strategic ideas the Pacific has offered the world.

Because to declare an Ocean of Peace is not to say that we live in a peaceful world.

It is to say that precisely because the world is not peaceful, the Pacific must define the terms by which peace is protected in our ocean.

It is to say that we will not be passive water between competing powers.

It is to say that our ocean is not empty space. It is not a corridor. It is not a weapons platform. It is not a bargaining chip.



It is home.

And home must be defended—not always by weapons, but by law, diplomacy, solidarity, culture, science, education and self-respect.

This brings me to a story close to my heart: the Parties to the Nauru Agreement.

Now, the PNA did not begin with glamour. It did not begin with grand buildings, large budgets or perfect conditions. In its early days, the office was modest—very modest. Let us just say that if regional empowerment could grow from humble facilities, then the PNA is proof that transformation does not require marble floors.

But what did the PNA have?

It had clarity.

It had courage.

It had countries that understood that the tuna swimming through their waters represented not charity, but sovereign wealth.

It had leaders and officials who asked a simple but revolutionary question: why should others determine the value of what belongs to us?

From that question came one of the greatest Pacific success stories of modern regionalism. The PNA changed the economics of tuna. It showed that Pacific Island Countries, acting together, could shift the terms of engagement with distant water fishing nations and global markets. It showed that small island states are not small when they organise around what they own.

The PNA was not only a fisheries arrangement. It was a declaration of self-reliance.

It was self-determination in practice.

It was Pacific agency with teeth.



So tonight, at this Pacific Peace and Security Dialogue, perhaps the gentle challenge is this:

What is the next PNA?

What is the next great act of Pacific self-reliance?

Is it in renewable energy, so that our economies are no longer held hostage by distant conflicts and fuel shocks?

Is it in climate finance, so that we stop begging for access to funds designed in rooms far from the communities most affected?

Is it in ocean governance, so that our maritime zones, biodiversity, fisheries, seabed resources and traditional knowledge are protected for future generations?

Is it in digital sovereignty, so that our data, identities and information spaces are not colonised before we even understand the map?

Is it in education, so that our universities become engines of Pacific thought, Pacific innovation and Pacific diplomacy?

Is it in security cooperation, so that we address transnational crime, drugs, cyber threats, gender-based violence and social fragmentation in ways rooted in community, culture and justice?

Or is the next PNA not one thing, but a new habit of mind—a refusal to outsource our future?

We must design Pacific agency deliberately.

Agency is not simply having a seat at the table. Sometimes the table itself has been built by others, the menu prepared by others, and the bill quietly left for us.

Pacific agency means asking: who frames the question?

Who owns the resource?

Who holds the data?

Who benefits from the agreement?

Who carries the risk?

Who speaks for the village?

Who speaks for the child not yet born?

If Junior and June are to inherit a secure Pacific in 2050, then our agency must be designed around them and millions like them.

It must be village-centred and regionally coordinated.

It must be culturally grounded and technologically capable.

It must be legally sophisticated and spiritually anchored.

It must be open to partners, but never captured by them.

It must be peaceful, but never weak.

It must be generous, but never naive.

Above all, it must be confident.



For too long, our region has been described by others through the language of vulnerability. Small. Remote. Fragile. Aid-dependent. Exposed.

Yes, we face vulnerabilities. But we are also custodians of the largest ocean continent on earth. We are guardians of immense biodiversity. We are stewards of some of the world's most important fisheries. We are moral leaders on climate change. We are innovators in regional diplomacy. We are peoples of memory, navigation, resilience, faith and humour.

Let us not teach Junior and June that they come from a place of lack.

Let us teach them that they come from a place of inheritance.

But inheritance must be protected.

By 2050, Junior and June should not have to choose between culture and modernity.

They should not have to choose between staying and moving.

They should not have to choose between feeding their family and protecting their reef.

They should not have to choose between being a Pacific Islander and being a citizen of the world.

They should be able to stand with both feet firmly planted: one in the wisdom of their ancestors, the other in the possibilities of the future.

That is the Pacific security we must build.

Not merely the security of borders, but the security of belonging.

Not merely the security of states, but the security of peoples.

Not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of dignity.

Not merely an Ocean of Peace in declaration, but an Ocean of Peace in the daily life of a child.

So tonight, I offer three questions for our *talanoa*.

First, what must we stop doing because it weakens Pacific agency?

Second, what must we start doing together because no single Pacific country can do it alone?

Third, what must we build now so that a 10-year-old child in a Pacific village today can look back in 2050 and say: they did not fail us?

Friends, the future is not waiting politely for our communiques.

The tide is moving.

The world is shifting.

The children are growing.

By 2050, Junior and June will know whether we meant what we said.

They will know whether '*umi tugeda*' was a slogan or a covenant.

They will know whether the Blue Pacific was an idea we admired, or a continent we organised.

They will know whether the Ocean of Peace was a declaration we launched, or a destiny we defended.



And perhaps, if we are faithful to the task before us, they will stand one day in a village still alive with language, laughter, reef, church bell, canoe, school, dignity and hope.

Perhaps they will tell their own children:

There was a time when the world was uncertain.

There was a time when the seas were rising and the powerful were restless.

There was a time when the Pacific could have been divided, distracted and diminished.

But our leaders remembered who they were.

They acted together.

They trusted their own wisdom.

They built from the village to the region.

They turned vulnerability into agency.

They turned the ocean into peace.

They turned 2050 from a date into a promise.

That is the future worthy of Junior and June.

That is the future worthy of our ancestors.

That is the future worthy of the Blue Pacific.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.









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