PACIFIC ISLANDS STATEMENT ON EYE HEALTH

For the 2026 Global Summit for Eye Health

We, the Ministers and representatives of Pacific Island Countries and Territories, reaffirm our shared commitment to the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our Peoples, and to advancing sustainable, climate-resilient, and inclusive development across the Pacific.

We anchor this commitment in the Pacific Islands Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and in the Pacific Leaders' vision "*for a resilient Pacific Region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, that ensures all Pacific peoples can lead free, healthy and productive lives.*"

As Small Island Developing States, Pacific Island Countries and Territories face unique and compounding challenges, including geographic isolation, small and dispersed populations, constrained fiscal space, workforce limitations, and high vulnerability to climate change and disasters. These structural realities place additional pressure on health systems and limit access to essential services, particularly in remote and outer island communities.

In this context, we recognise that eye health is not only a health issue, but a critical development, economic, and equity issue. It is fundamental to the achievement of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to health, education, gender equality, and economic growth. Sight loss and blindness impact education outcomes, workforce participation, productivity, mental health, and quality of life, with disproportionate effects on older persons, those living with disabilities, and those living in remote and outer island communities.

We further recognise that women and girls are disproportionately affected by sight loss and blindness, with economic, cultural and climate impacts compounding existing gender inequities. In the Pacific context, where climate change, geographic isolation, and constrained resources place increasing pressure on health systems, advancing eye health is not only a health priority, but a matter of resilience, justice, and economic participation for our communities. Addressing eye health is therefore integral to achieving our national development priorities and regional ambitions.

Pacific Island Countries and Territories have long demonstrated global leadership in advancing eye health through collective action, regional coordination, and deep partnerships with non-governmental organisations, development partners, and regional institutions. Working together across the Pacific, we have delivered meaningful and sustained results. These include building a strong evidence base, strengthened national eye health programmes, growing our

eye care workforce, mounting efforts to address diabetic retinopathy, and the elimination of trachoma as a public health problem in several countries.

We continue to demonstrate that, despite geographic, resource, and climate-related challenges, regional solidarity, coordination, and partnership can deliver lasting impact for our people.

Building on this leadership, we commit to advancing equitable, gender-responsive and climate-resilient eye health systems across the Pacific, aligned with regional frameworks and national priorities, and spanning the full continuum of care.

We will strengthen the availability, distribution, and mobility of the eye health workforce; intensify action on noncommunicable diseases, particularly diabetes and diabetic retinopathy; continue to improve access to affordable, high-quality assistive technology, including spectacles and through stronger supply chains; and reach the last mile of trachoma elimination. We will ensure eye health services are accessible, of high quality, sustainable, and inclusive, to reach people disproportionately impacted by sigh loss and blindness including women and girls.

We further commit to integrating eye health within national health systems and broader development agendas, recognising its contribution to universal health coverage, economic participation, and social inclusion. This integration will span the entire continuum of care, including health promotion, prevention, early identification, treatment, assistive technology, and rehabilitation. We will do so in ways that strengthen climate-resilient health systems, ensuring services can respond to the increasing environmental, social, and economic pressures facing Pacific communities.

We call on partners, including the international community, development agencies, and the private sector, to support Pacific-led priorities through sustained financing, technical cooperation, and innovation that responds to the unique context of small island developing states.

We recognise the importance of elevating eye health within regional and global platforms, including through its inclusion on the health agenda of the Pacific Islands and Territories Leaders, and as part of ongoing regional cooperation efforts.

Together, as stewards of the Blue Pacific Continent, we stand committed to continued leadership, partnership, and collective action to advance eye health, so that all Pacific people can see, thrive, and fully participate in the social, cultural, and economic life of our region.