

2. FIPIC – International Relations

EAM S. Jaishankar Hosts FIPIC Foreign Ministers Meeting in New York. The Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) is India's key initiative to engage with 14 Pacific Island nations on strategic and developmental issues. Through a 12-point plan, India provides support in healthcare, clean energy, and capacity building, expanding its diplomatic presence in the Pacific.

Introduction to FIPIC

The Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) is a multinational grouping developed to enhance partnership between India and the 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The External Affairs Minister of India recently hosted a FIPIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York, highlighting the continued importance of this forum.

Launch – FIPIC was officially launched in November 2014 during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Fiji.

Purpose and Objectives

Geostrategic Expansion – To enhance and deepen India's engagement in the Pacific region, extending its diplomatic and strategic footprint beyond its traditional focus on the Indian Ocean.

Multifaceted Cooperation – To foster active collaboration across a wide range of critical areas, including –

1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation.
2. Development of clean and renewable energy.
3. Enhancing digital connectivity.
4. Boosting trade and investment.
5. Cooperation in space technology and its applications.
6. Comprehensive capacity building and skill development.

Membership and Economic Cooperation

Participants – The forum includes India and 14 Pacific Island Countries – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Economic Profile – The annual trade between India and the Pacific Island countries is approximately USD 300 million. This comprises around USD 200 million in exports from India and USD 100 million in imports. To boost this trade relationship, a FIPIC Trade Office has been established at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi.

Key Initiatives and Action Plans

India has launched several initiatives under the FIPIC framework to support the developmental goals of the Pacific Island nations.

Development and Climate Action – A USD 1 million fund was established specifically for climate change adaptation projects and the promotion of clean energy. Enhanced grant-in-aid is provided for community development projects.

Connectivity and People-to-People Ties – A Pan-Pacific Islands e-network is being developed to improve digital connectivity across the region. Visa-on-arrival facility is provided for all Pacific Island nationals at Indian airports to promote tourism and business travel. Specialized training programs for diplomats and a dedicated visitors' program have been initiated.

12-Point Action Plan (Announced at FIPIC III Summit, 2023) – This plan outlines a comprehensive, people-centric development agenda.

1. **Healthcare** – Establishment of a super-specialty cardiology hospital in Fiji, setting up dialysis units and providing sea ambulances across all 14 PICs, and opening Jan Aushadhi Centres to supply affordable and quality generic medicines.
2. **Technology and Energy** – Support for developing cyberspace, clean energy solutions, and ensuring water security.

3. **Economic Growth** – A project to support and develop the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector in the Pacific Islands.

Significance of the FIPIC Forum

Strategic – It significantly expands India's strategic influence into the Pacific Ocean, complementing its "Act East" policy and its established focus on the Indian Ocean.

Economic – The partnership opens up new avenues for trade and investment, particularly with nations that control vast Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) rich in marine and mineral resources.

Developmental – FIPIC positions India as a key development partner for the island states, providing crucial support in health, technology, climate resilience, and human resource development.

Diplomatic – The forum reinforces India's role as a leading voice of the Global South, promoting a people-centric, demand-driven, and sustainable model of development cooperation.

Source – <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/eam-s-jaishankar-hosts-fipic-foreign-ministers-meeting-in-new-york/#-~-text=External%20Affairs%20Minister%2C%20Dr%20S,United%20Nations%20General%20Assembly%20yesterday>.

