



JOINT HEADS OF PACIFIC SECURITY

Governance Framework for the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS)

Endorsed on **20 March 2025**

Last reviewed: 5 March 2025

JHoPS Governance Framework

About this Governance Framework

This Governance Framework (“the Framework”) sets out the mandate, mission and governance arrangements for the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) community to guide the administrative, strategic, and governance functions of the forum.

It will be reviewed regularly and amended from time to time as the scope and priorities of the JHoPS meeting continue to evolve. Additional elements of the Framework could include an agreed list of priorities or a Forward Work Plan.

The Framework will be maintained by the JHoPS Secretariat.

It includes the following elements:

- Key Operating Principle
- Mission Statement
- Strategic Overview
- JHoPS Terms of Reference
- Annex 1: JHoPS members and observers
- Annex 2: Joint Heads of Pacific Security Intersessional Working Group Terms of Reference (endorsed 29 February 2024).

Key Operating Principle:

The JHoPS community is committed to working the ‘*Pacific Way*’¹ where we recognise and accept our differences, while working to build consensus. Our focus is on translating strategic guidance into operational effects via collective action, while respecting sovereignty. By collaborating the *Pacific Way*, our community of operational practitioners will drive cooperation that enables effective responses to shared security challenges.

Mission Statement:

The Joint Heads of Pacific Security operationalises practical regional initiatives that enable and enhance the effectiveness of Pacific-led responses to regional security challenges.

¹ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. Suva, Fiji : Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022, 9.

Strategic Overview:

The Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) meeting is a unique forum in the Pacific's regional architecture, delivering operational security outcomes. JHoPS drives practical cooperation between Pacific agencies and security forces in support of Pacific-led responses to regional security challenges. At JHoPS meetings, security leaders and experts come together to discuss shared challenges and opportunities, and identify areas for future cooperation and coordination in support of regional security priorities.

JHoPS was formed in 2019 to bring together heads of law enforcement, defence, immigration and customs agencies. It includes representatives from: Australia, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia (France), Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, New Caledonia (France), New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna (France). Japan and the United States of America are observers and invited to send representatives. Regional observer organisations, from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Immigration Development Community, Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Oceania Customs Organisation, Pacific Security College and the Pacific Fusion Centre are also invited to attend.

JHoPS focusses on a range of multidimensional traditional and non-traditional security issues, including, but not limited to: climate change, maritime security, border security, natural disaster response, human security, and information security. Recognising the Pacific's diverse security environment, JHoPS aligns its activities with strategic guidance provided by national governments and regional organisations, including the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, and the *2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security*. As security practitioners, JHoPS representatives are uniquely positioned to translate strategic policy guidance into operational outcomes.

Sovereignty remains paramount. JHoPS members share a commitment to work together to develop operational responses in a way that strengthens national sovereignty and bolsters the Pacific's capacity to meet its own security needs in a peaceful, safe and secure Blue Pacific region.

Terms of Reference:

1. Definitions

For the purposes of this Terms of Reference:

- 1.1. “Delegation” refers to the personnel attending a JHoPS meeting from a JHoPS Member, Observer or Observer Organisation.
- 1.2. “Adviser” means an individual nominated by a Principal to accompany them to a Meeting in a support capacity.
- 1.3. “JHoPS Community” refers to JHoPS Principals, Advisers and the JHoPS Secretariat.
- 1.4. “Meeting” means the JHoPS Annual Meeting outlined in clause 3, attended by JHoPS Principals and Advisers.
- 1.5. “Host” means the JHoPS Member that hosts the JHoPS Meeting.
- 1.6. “Member” means the following:
 - American Samoa
 - Australia
 - Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
 - Cook Islands
 - Federated States of Micronesia
 - Fiji
 - French Polynesia (France)
 - Guam
 - Kiribati
 - Nauru
 - Niue
 - New Caledonia (France)
 - New Zealand
 - Palau
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Republic of the Marshall Islands
 - Samoa
 - Solomon Islands
 - Timor-Leste
 - Tokelau
 - Tonga
 - Tuvalu
 - Vanuatu
 - Wallis and Futuna (France)

- 1.7. “Observer” means Japan and the United States of America, who are permitted to send representatives to observe JHoPS meetings.
- 1.8. “Observer Organisations” are the regional organisations permitted to observe JHoPS meetings:
- Oceania Customs Organisation Secretariat
 - Pacific Fusion Centre
 - Pacific Immigration Development Community
 - Pacific Islands Chief of Police Secretariat
 - Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
 - Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
 - Pacific Security College
- 1.9. “Official Contact” means one or more persons nominated by a JHoPS Member who will be the official point of contact or contacts on JHoPS matters for that Member, Observer or Observer Organisation.
- 1.10. “Principal” means the heads of immigration, customs, law enforcement and defence organisations (or their alternates nominated in writing to the Secretariat) from each Member.
- 1.11. “Secretariat” means the JHoPS Secretariat based within the Australian Department of Defence responsible for assisting JHoPS and its working groups to fulfil its mission, including by making necessary arrangements to support the delivery of JHoPS meetings, sharing correspondence, developing papers and facilitating virtual and in-person working group meetings.

2. Objectives

- 2.1. In support of the JHoPS Mission Statement, the JHoPS Community will draw on strategic guidance to operationalise practical regional solutions that enable and enhance the effectiveness of Pacific-led responses to regional security challenges by:
- 2.1.1. focussing on a range of multidimensional traditional and non-traditional security issues, including, but not limited to: climate change, maritime security, border security, natural disaster response, human security, and information security.
 - 2.1.2. aligning activities with strategic guidance provided by national governments and regional organisations, including the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, and the *2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security*; and
 - 2.1.3. translating strategic policy guidance into operational outcomes.

3. JHoPS Meeting

- 3.1. The Meeting will ordinarily be held annually and in-person, unless otherwise agreed.
- 3.2. The Meeting provides Principals with an opportunity to, among other things:
 - 3.2.1. deliberate, provide guidance and take decisions on key issues to realise the objectives of JHoPS;
 - 3.2.2. progress topics of mutual interest to Members;
 - 3.2.3. develop Pacific-led operational responses to regional security challenges; and
 - 3.2.4. decide the JHoPS Host for the following year.

4. Decision-making

- 4.1. Decisions by Principals on matters of substance will ordinarily be taken at Meetings by consensus. For the purpose of these Terms of Reference, 'consensus' means the absence of any formal objection made at the time the decision was taken, by those present.
- 4.2. Observers and Observer Organisations are entitled to contribute to discussions, but cannot participate in decision-making.
- 4.3. Where an urgent decision needs to be taken between meetings (ie intersessionally), the Secretariat may propose that a decision be taken by electronic means. When a decision is to be taken by electronic means, the Secretariat will transmit the proposed decision to each Principal, specifying a period to respond. The Secretariat will endeavour to provide sufficient time to enable Principals to respond. If no reply from a Principal is received within the specified period, that Principal will be recorded as not having participated in the decision and not recording a formal objection.

5. Responsibilities of Principals

- 5.1. Principals are to:
 - 5.1.1. participate in the Meeting;
 - 5.1.2. work to achieve the JHoPS Mission Statement;
 - 5.1.3. share JHoPS developments and decisions with relevant domestic ministers, organisations and portfolios; and

- 5.1.4. implement JHoPS decisions consistent with their mandate and domestic or regional responsibilities.

6. Responsibilities of Advisers

- 6.1. JHoPS Advisers are to:
 - 6.1.1. support their Principals to participate in the Meeting;
 - 6.1.2. participate in the Meeting;
 - 6.1.3. liaise with the JHoPS Secretariat and Host to coordinate and support the preparation of the Meeting, including through participation in subsidiary bodies; and
 - 6.1.4. promote the JHoPS' Mission Statement.

7. Responsibilities of Secretariat

- 7.1. Australia will provide secretariat support to the JHoPS. This will be staffed by the Australian Department of Defence. Members may decide to rotate the Secretariat role and functions, should another Member submit a proposal.
- 7.2. The Secretariat will perform the functions delegated to it by JHoPS Members through the JHoPS Governance Framework and will ensure to the best of its ability the effective functioning of the Meeting, and effective implementation of meeting outcomes.
- 7.3. The Secretariat will:
 - 7.3.1. ensure the effective functioning of JHoPS;
 - 7.3.2. ensure JHoPS is achieving its objectives as defined in these Terms of Reference by providing a progress report at Meetings;
 - 7.3.3. maintain appropriate records and appropriately store and share JHoPS records, including personal data as required;
 - 7.3.4. respond to Member information requests; and
 - 7.3.5. support the Meeting and any subsidiary bodies.
- 7.4. In support of the Meeting and the Host, the Secretariat will:
 - 7.4.1. provide administrative and logistical support to the Host to support the preparation for and conduct of Meetings;

- 7.4.2. support the Host to produce a communique after each JHoPS Meeting and keep a record of agreed outcomes;
 - 7.4.3. facilitate an effective, well-coordinated Meeting, that synchronises with the regional calendar of events;
 - 7.4.4. issue Meeting invitations and communications to the JHoPS Community;
 - 7.4.5. support strategic communications associated with the JHoPS Meeting;
 - 7.4.6. prepare certain meeting materials including agenda, papers, exercises and scenario planning; and
 - 7.4.7. promote JHoPS Meeting outcomes.
- 7.5. The Secretariat is funded to a fixed annual limit by the Australian Department of Defence to deliver JHoPS meetings, support attendance of certain Members and other engagements, as required.
- 7.6. The Secretariat has funds available to facilitate the participation of some Members in the Meeting. At the request of a Member, the Secretariat will fund the attendance of all nominated Principals and one Adviser per Principal from the following Members: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This includes all flights, accommodation, meals during the JHoPS Meeting schedule and transit accommodation as required. Travel will be economy class via the most economical means possible. Transit meals and incidental allowances are not funded by the Secretariat.
- 7.7. Members may decide to explore alternative funding sources, including the possibility of some or all members providing financial or in-kind support.

8. Responsibilities of Host

- 8.1. The Host will be responsible for the following:
- 8.1.1. providing a Chair for the Meeting;
 - 8.1.2. identifying a conference venue or virtual platform;

- 8.1.3. obtaining relevant approvals to support the successful delivery of the Meeting, including providing security and escorting attendees, immigration support and airport facilitation;
- 8.1.4. providing advice on protocol, visas, security and coordinating with relevant national agencies;
- 8.1.5. preparing an agenda and theme that is to be considered by the Intersessional Working Group in the lead up to the Meeting;
- 8.1.6. approving meeting invitations and certain communications to the JHoPS Community (associated with Host responsibilities); and
- 8.1.7. leading strategic communications, including the release of information to local media concerning the JHoPS event, as appropriate.

9. Subsidiary bodies

- 9.1. Principals may establish other subsidiary bodies as required or requested. These bodies may be established on a permanent or temporary basis taking into account cost implications.
- 9.2. Members have established the following subsidiary body:
 - 9.2.1. the JHoPS Intersessional Working Group (established at 2023 JHoPS in Palau). Its agreed Terms of Reference are at Annex 2.

10. Coordination with other regional organisations

- 10.1. The Secretariat will liaise closely with other relevant bodies (such as the Pacific Islands Forum) and provide written and verbal briefings on JHoPS outcomes as necessary.
- 10.2. Members may agree to add or remove regional organisations from the list of Observer Organisations.
- 10.3. Members may ask the Secretariat to invite representatives from a regional organisation to brief Members at the Meeting on a relevant topic or to attend a Meeting as a guest.

11. Legal Status of the Governance Framework

- 11.1. These Terms of Reference are not legally binding and do not create any legal rights or obligations between Members, Observers, Observer Organisations or the Secretariat.

12. Disputes

- 12.1. Any disputes or disagreements concerning the interpretation or implementation of this Governance Framework will be settled amicably through consultations or negotiations.
- 12.2. Disputes will not be referred to any dispute resolution or tribunal.

13. Amendments and Review

- 13.1. Review of this Governance Framework may be initiated by a Member. Any proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference will be approved by consensus.

14. Withdrawal

- 14.1. Any Member may withdraw from this Governance Framework by providing written notice of one or more Principals, through the Secretariat. Withdrawal from the Governance Framework constitutes withdrawal from the JHoPS community.

15. Effective Date

- 15.1. These Terms of Reference will come into effect on the date of endorsement by Members at a Meeting.

JHoPS Community – Members, Observers and Observer Organisations

JHoPS meeting attendees are heads of security agencies and their senior advisors from Defence, Police, Immigration and Customs from the following JHoPS member/observer countries. Each JHoPS member is invited to send the heads of their military (where relevant), police, customs and immigration agencies. These are Principals. Each Principal is entitled to bring one adviser.

JHoPS Members

- American Samoa
- Australia
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Cook Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- French Polynesia (France)
- Guam
- Kiribati
- Nauru
- Niue
- New Caledonia (France)
- New Zealand
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Republic of the Marshall Islands
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Timor-Leste
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Wallis and Futuna (France)

In addition, there are two observer countries and seven regional observer organisations. They are entitled to send one Principal and one Advisor.

Observer Countries

- Japan
- United States of America

Observer Organisations

- Oceania Customs Organisation Secretariat
- Pacific Fusion Centre
- Pacific Immigration Development Community
- Pacific Islands Chief of Police
- Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- Pacific Security College



JOINT HEADS OF PACIFIC SECURITY
INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP
Terms of Reference

ENDORSED: 29 February 2024

Purpose

1. This Terms of Reference (TOR) establishes the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) Intersessional Working Group (IWG). The purpose of the IWG is to strengthen relationships, solidify trust and reciprocity, and progress outcomes for ratification at each JHoPS meeting.

Background

2. The first JHoPS meeting was held in 2019 to bring together heads of law enforcement, defence, immigration and customs agencies from all Pacific island countries and territories plus observer organisations and states. It draws together regional security leaders to deliver integrated operational solutions to shared security challenges, enabling operational leaders to collectively discuss and respond to strategic priorities set through existing regional forums, including the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). The PIF's *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific* and the *2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security* inform JHoPS planning and implementation.

3. At the 2023 JHoPS meeting, Members reiterated their commitment to the 2022 Denarau Outcomes and agreed to establish the IWG to drive implementation.

Objectives

4. The primary objective of the IWG will be to progress the 2022 Denarau Outcomes and the outcomes of JHoPS meetings as agreed by the JHoPS Membership. As outlined in the 2023 Joint Communique, these outcomes may include:

- a. support for the JHoPS Chair's engagement with the Pacific Islands Forum;
- b. development of a terms of reference or memorandum of understanding to clarify the JHoPS mandate, mission, and governance framework (Outcome 16);
- c. consideration of a regional treaty framework to enable and enhance the collective ability of security agencies to respond quickly and effectively to regional security challenges (Outcome 15); and
- d. Develop recommendations for JHoPS delegates on the key areas of focus coming out of the tabletop exercise focusing on regional security challenges, national capacities, and capability gaps.

5. The IWG may also develop proposals for potential endorsement at future JHoPS meetings and progress matters deemed relevant to the future success of JHoPS.

6. The IWG may support the Secretariat with the design of the JHoPS meeting agenda and the execution of any inter-sessional activities as required.

7. The IWG will prepare a report for submission and presentation at each JHoPS meeting.

Membership

8. The IWG is an informal committee of self-nominated participants representing relevant agencies from across the JHoPS membership and observership. While regular attendance is encouraged, it is not compulsory.
9. Wherever possible, participants representing agencies from within the one jurisdiction are encouraged to collaborate in advance of each IWG to develop common country positions on the agenda.
10. Requests to participate should be made in writing to the JHoPS Secretariat (email jhops.secretariat@defence.gov.au). Contact lists are available by contacting the JHoPS Secretariat also.

Timing and format

11. Meetings will be held approximately bi-monthly to ensure momentum and regular engagement. The next meeting date will be set at the meeting prior based on the availability of the majority of participants.
12. The IWG will be held virtually, with the option of in person meetings as required.

Secretariat

13. The Secretariat will act as chair of IWG meetings, unless otherwise determined.
14. The Secretariat will circulate a draft agenda to the contact list in advance of each IWG for comment and amendment as required.
15. The Secretariat will share minutes and action items from each meeting with the contact list as soon as practicable after each meeting.

Amendment and Review

16. Review of this TOR may be initiated at any time at the request of a participant in writing to the JHoPS Secretariat or via written request and decision at a JHoPS meeting. Proposed amendments will be circulated to participants for consideration in advance of the next IWG. To take effect, amendments must be approved by consensus by the participants at an IWG.

Termination

17. The IWG and its TOR can only be dissolved at the written request of the IWG Chair for a consensus decision of the JHoPS Membership at a JHoPS meeting.

Effective Date

18. This TOR will come into effect when approved by consensus by the participants at an IWG.