A Regional Strategy to where?

The Pacific's Regional E-commerce Strategy and Pacific led development

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Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy

- "The Strategy proposes a vision of a transformative Blue Pacific economy where all businesses and consumers actively engage in domestic and cross-border electronic commerce."
- The Strategy's principles are inspired by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These are: (1) Regionalism; (2) Putting the private sector at the core; (3) Sovereignty; and (4) Partnership.
- Gender empowerment

7 Priority areas

1. E-commerce Readiness and Strategy Formulation
2. ICT Infrastructure and Services
3. Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation
4. Legal and Regulatory Framework
5. Electronic Payment Solutions
6. E-Commerce Skill Development-driven
7. Access to Finance for E-Commerce

7 Priority areas

1 - E-commerce Readiness and Strategy Formulation

- National strategies inspired by regional strategy
- Regional and national committees modelled on regional

2- ICT Infrastructure and Services

- PPPs are problematic especially when it comes to such essential infrastructure

3 - Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation

- Often these streamlined and digitalised services benefit the exporting party

7 - Access to Finance and E-Commerce

- More information about fintech and digital marketplaces in PANG/Dr Kelsey report

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

- Adopting other laws to build business confidence (include data localisation, tech neutrality, IP etc)
- A "challenge" facing the FICs is absence of e-commerce content in the legal text of their FTAs.
- International agreements on E-commerce benefittings FICs are negotiated and concluded
- Negotiate regional agreement on E-comm
- A regional agreement on E-commerce. (USD$1.2m suggested, 2026 target concluded and implemented by 7 FICs)
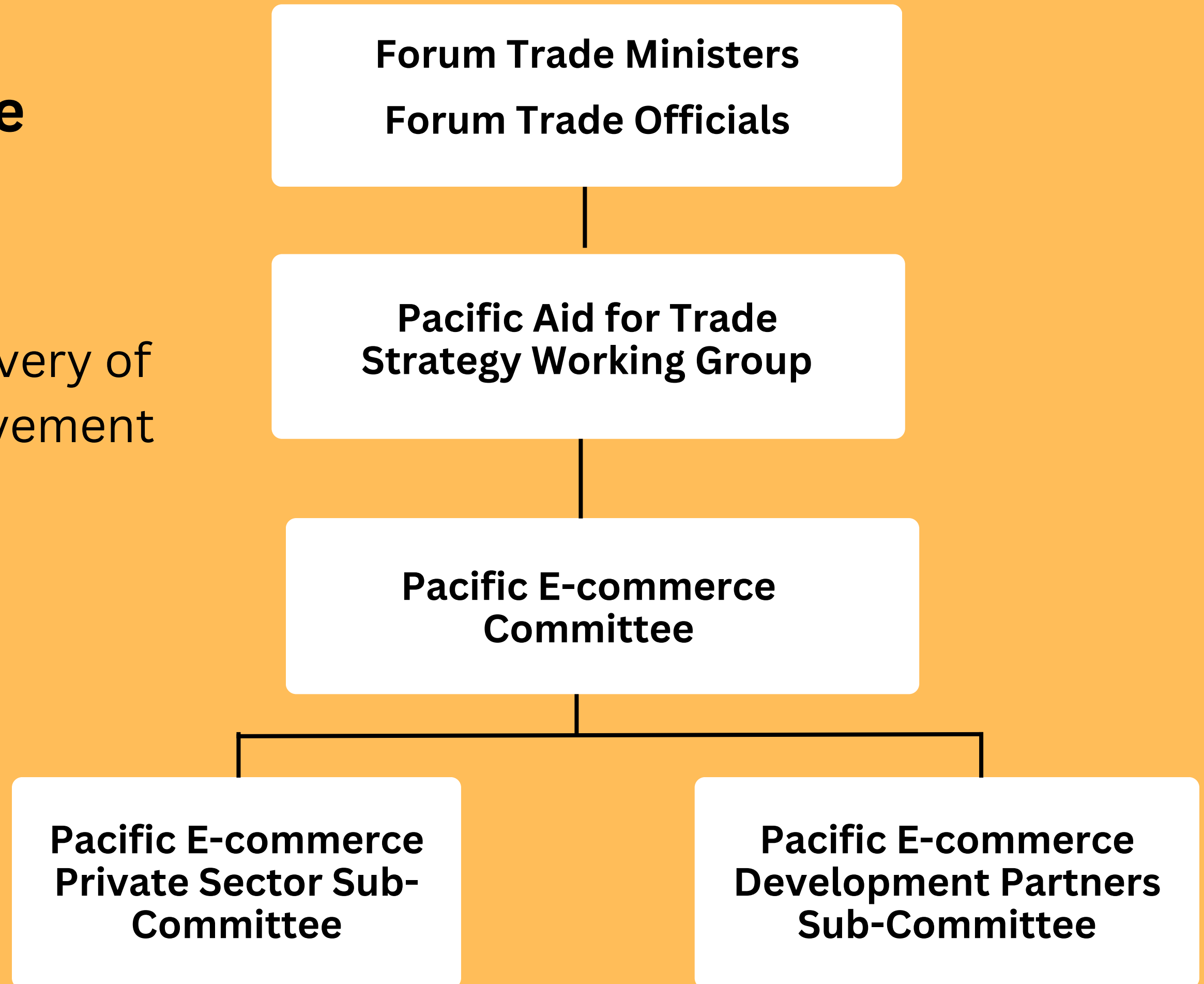
Geopolitical Competition

Geopolitical competition playing out through getting PICs to sign up to binding rules for their preferred digital trade regime through FTAs.


- **MSGFTA3** – Has E-commerce rules that include flexibilities however this is undercut by the inclusion of commitments on related service sectors
- **PACER-Plus** - No E-commerce section but exceptionally broad commitments in future areas of importance (computer and related services, air transport sales, advertising services etc) application of technological neutrality
- **JSIs** – Strategy wants PICs to join, legal issues with implementation at WTO, implications of powerful nations deciding on own rules and getting others to join

National Assessments

National strategies are now largely done by PIFS and include the same group who did the Regional strategy

Mixed inclusion of need to negotiate, little priority yet feature of Regional Strategy

See the assessments here
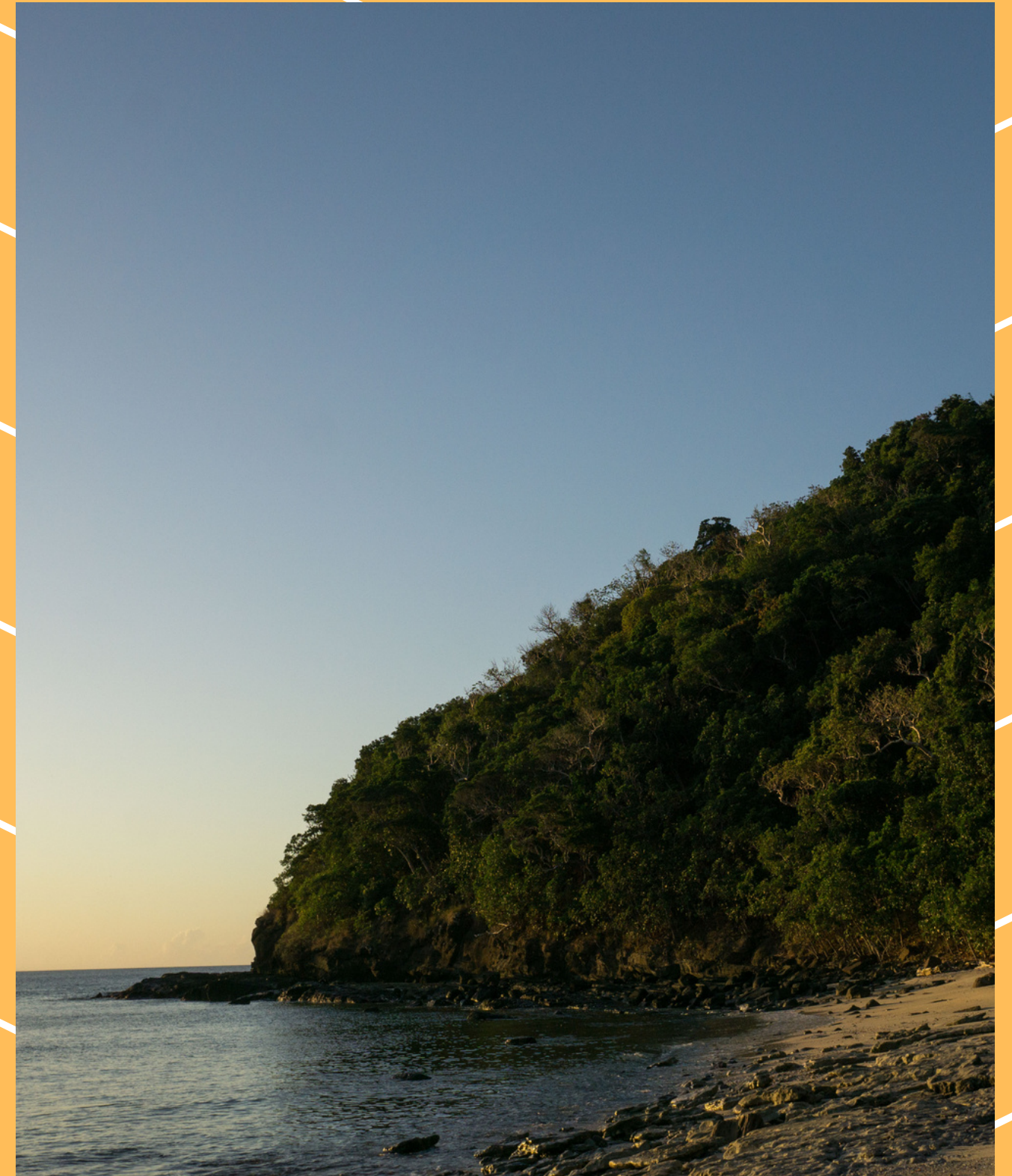
Is the strategy fit for purpose?

○ Strategy focused on E-commerce as solely about online commercial transactions and not as part of an integrated digital ecosystem

○ Fails the Framework for Pacific Regionalism's incorporation of holistic approaches

○ Promotes model of regional integration using e-commerce platforms, technologies and services controlled by big tech,

○ assumes the benefits will materialise from trade agreements

What's Next?

Revisit the strategy, it must deliver on needs of Pacific peoples;

Given the position of the PICs push for an alternate approach that incorporates regional, South-South cooperation, and trilateral South-South-North cooperation

- ASEAN and African Union (flexible regional strategies), Rwanda and India (Data regimes and digital infrastructure), Switzerland (Data spaces)

Regional agreement would be necessary if undertaking pooling data, share servers and platforms and develop a coherent regulatory platform

A scoping study for a genuine regional digital development path