



## **Hillary Clinton at Pacific forum**

By Online Editor

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The U.S Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will join Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard at next week's Pacific Islands Forum summit in the Cook Islands.

Clinton's attendance at the annual meeting of the peak regional body - the first for any secretary of state - underlines US President Barack Obama's announcement in Canberra last November of Washington's "pivot" towards the Asia-Pacific region.

She will lead a roundtable discussion with the 15 Pacific leaders. Fiji, the 16th member, will not be represented since it was suspended from the organisation in 2009.

It was confirmed Thursday that while in the Cook Islands, the Prime Minister would hold bilateral talks with Papua New Guinea's newly re-elected Prime Minister Peter O'Neill and Nauru's President Sprent Dabwido about the re-establishment of asylum-seeker processing centres on Manus Island in PNG and on Nauru.

Despite recent warming of ties between Australia, New Zealand and Fiji - the countries' foreign ministers agreed last month to redeploy high commissioners - Canberra wants to wait until an election is held in Fiji, probably in 2014, before backing its return to the forum.

Gillard's chief initiative at the summit will be an initiative - backed by substantial new AusAID funding - to improve gender equality in the Pacific islands.

This will involve moves to improve education and employment opportunities for women, and to support the emergence of more women leaders.

The region has the lowest representation of women in parliaments in the world.

SOURCE: THE AUSTRALIAN/PACNEWS