

**EIGHTEENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM
APIA, WESTERN SAMOA
29 - 30 MAY, 1987**

FORUM COMMUNIQUE

The 18th South Pacific Forum was held in Apia, Western Samoa from 29-30 May 1987. The Forum was attended by Heads of Government of Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Western Samoa, while Vanuatu was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Tonga was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Prime Minister of Western Samoa, Hon Va'ai Kolone chaired the meeting.

2. The Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands were welcomed as full members of the South Pacific Forum.

3. Heads of Government noted and endorsed the expression by the Chairman in his opening statement of the deep concern and anguish which they felt over recent events involving the overthrow of the elected Government in Fiji. Recognising the complexity of the problems in Fiji they fully shared the hopes expressed by the Chairman, reflecting as they did the same hopes expressed by the Governor General of Fiji, for a peaceful and satisfactory solution to the current problems. They associated themselves with his expression of willingness to provide whatever help they might be able to lend.

4. It was agreed that the Chairman would convey to the Governor General of Fiji, the Forum's willingness to help and to request the Governor General to indicate to the Forum the forms of assistance he considered most appropriate.

5. As one form of such help, after detailed informal discussion, and contact with Fiji in the course of the meeting, Heads of Government decided that, should the Governor General of Fiji indicate that such a Forum initiative would be constructive and of assistance, the Forum would send a mission to Fiji. The Mission would be led by the Prime Minister of Australia and comprise the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and the Director of SPEC. Should the Governor General of Fiji deem such a course of action desirable the mission would hold discussions with all parties in Fiji with a view to attempting to facilitate processes leading to a resolution of current problems.

6. Should the Governor General of Fiji respond with a request for assistance additional to that contingently provided by the Forum or different therefrom, then the Chairman shall have the responsibility to communicate that request to Heads of Government and the Director will co-ordinate the response.

7. Heads of Government noted the increasingly complex environment in which the Forum was meeting and accordingly gave particular attention to how it might react most effectively, as the paramount regional organisation, to the challenges now before it and those still to come.

8. It considered there was urgent need to strengthen the Forum and SPEC in regard to the recognition accorded to both institutions by other Governments and Organisations. After seventeen years the South Pacific Forum had developed as the paramount political institution in the South Pacific and steps would be taken to consolidate its position. The Forum as part of its response to these needs decided to establish a Committee on Regional Institutional Arrangements which would, amongst other things, look at ways to increase international recognition of the Forum and examine the concept of a Single Regional Organisation and develop ways to strengthen the Forum and its Secretariat (SPEC).

NEW CALEDONIA

9. The Forum reviewed developments affecting New Caledonia since the Ministerial Committee Meeting on New Caledonia which was held in Auckland in March 1987.

10. The Forum once again expressed its firm support for an early and peaceful transition to an independent New Caledonia in accordance with the innate and active rights of the indigenous people and in a manner which guaranteed the rights and interests of all inhabitants of this multi-racial society. The Forum adopted the conclusions of the Auckland Ministerial meeting which sought an act of self-determination offering:

- (a) a free, honest and genuine choice;
- (b) inclusion in the franchise of only those who can demonstrate long term residence in and commitment to New Caledonia. It should ensure that the rights and interests of all inhabitants are guaranteed, with special recognition of Kanak rights;
- (c) all options being open; including status quo, integration, internal self-government associated independence, or unqualified independence;
- (d) political education for the people so that all options are understood and in particular no options are seen to carry punitive consequences.

11. The Forum was particularly encouraged by the breadth and depth of support it received at the 8th Conference of Heads of State or Governments of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries and at the United Nations where New Caledonia was successfully reinscribed on the List of Non Self-Governing Territories. The Forum expressed its gratitude to those UN member states which had supported UNGA Resolution 41/41A and particularly to the 30 member states co-sponsors of the resolution for reinscription.

12. The Forum expressed grave disquiet about the current policies of the Government of France with regard to New Caledonia. It noted that France was pressing

ahead with a referendum on French terms in which a significant proportion of the indigenous population had proclaimed, through its representative organisation, the FLNKS, that it would take no part. The Forum completely rejected the referendum. In the circumstances such a referendum would be divisive, futile and a recipe for disaster. The Forum called upon France to abandon its referendum.

13. Noting that the current French Government has based its policies for the future of New Caledonia on the referendum and that that referendum would now be an empty exercise, the Forum questioned what steps France then intended to pursue.

14. Stating that New Caledonia represented a continuing and compelling concern for the South Pacific region, the Forum emphasised its commitment to dialogue and expressed its wish to send a Forum delegation to New Caledonia to discuss the situation with all parties. It also indicated its strong interest in discussing the issue with France in Paris and stood ready to despatch a delegation for that purpose should France be genuinely interested in a dialogue to achieve a peaceful resolution. The Forum reaffirmed its 1986 decision that the Forum Chairman was authorised to enter into a dialogue on its behalf with the FLNKS to further that process.

15. The Forum also called upon the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation to recommend to the 1987 United Nations General Assembly, a UN sponsored referendum in New Caledonia consistent with the universally accepted principles and practices of self-determination and independence.

16. The Forum called upon the South Pacific Games Council to change the venue of the South Pacific Games scheduled to be held in New Caledonia in December 1987, in the interests of the safety and welfare of participating athletes.

REGIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS

Exchange of Information on International Developments Affecting the Security of the Region

17. The Forum agreed to establish a system of information exchange to improve the volume, the relevance and the timeliness of such exchanges between Forum countries on international developments affecting regional security. In addition to covering matters affecting national security and defence, the Forum also decided that developments affecting the economic security of the region should be monitored and included in the system for increased exchange of information. It recognised that economic deprivation was inimical to security, particularly in small states. As part of the system for enhancing information exchange an initial meeting of officials will be held in late 1987.

Terrorism and Hijacking

18. In light of the recent attempted hijacking of an Air New Zealand aircraft, the Forum agreed that a regional response to terrorism was appropriate to counter this emerging threat. It decided to establish a working group to examine the issue and develop ways to enhance the capacity of the Forum states to counter terrorism and hijacking.

NUCLEAR ISSUES

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty

19. The Forum welcomed Solomon Islands as the eleventh signatory to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty when its Prime Minister, Hon. Ezekiel Alebua signed the Treaty during the Forum meeting. It noted that the Treaty had entered into force on 11 December 1986 and the number of Parties to the Treaty now totalled nine.

20. Whilst deeply appreciating that the Peoples Republic of China and the U.S.S.R. had signed Protocols 2 and 3 of the Treaty, the Forum expressed disappointment that the Soviet Union had made an imprecise statement concerning its interpretation of the Treaty. It called upon the U.S.S.R. not to enter any reservations or statement of interpretation when it ratified the Protocols.

21. The Forum also expressed disappointment that while both the United States and the United Kingdom had indicated their willingness to informally abide by the Provisions of the Treaty and its Protocols they had nevertheless refrained from signing them. The Forum called upon both these nuclear weapon states and France to sign the Protocols.

22. The Forum expressed its profound concern that France continued to test nuclear devices in the South Pacific and called for this to cease.

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION CONVENTION

23. The Forum welcomed the conclusion of the SPREP Convention in Noumea in November 1986. It noted that by the time of the Forum, nine countries had signed and one had ratified the Convention and its Protocols. It called upon all countries eligible to join the Convention to do so as early as possible.

REGIONAL FISHERIES

24. The Forum welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the Multilateral Fisheries Treaty with the United States and the signing of that Treaty by countries in Port Moresby on 2nd April 1987. The Forum noted with satisfaction that Niue and Vanuatu became the 13th and 14th signatories during the course of the Forum meeting. It enjoined signatories to ratify the Treaty as early as possible to enable the substantial benefits arising from the implementation of the Treaty to become available to Forum countries.

25. The Forum also endorsed Forum states adopting a regional or sub-regional approach to fisheries negotiations with the Government of Japan as a matter of priority. It requested the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency to pursue this issue.

26. The Forum condemned in the strongest possible terms the continued illegal fishing activities of United States purse seiners and other foreign fishing vessels within the 200 mile EEZs of its member states. In this context it welcomed new initiatives by Australia and New Zealand in association with the FFA to improve regional surveillance capabilities.

27. It congratulated the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency, Mr Philipp Muller, on his reappointment.

JAPAN

28. The Forum welcomed progress in the dialogue with Japan including the visit by the Japanese Foreign Minister to the South Pacific in January 1987 and his announcement of a \$2 million Special Fund for Pacific Islands. The Forum also requested Japan to regard SPEC as a conduit for regional funds and to adapt its aid procedures to meet the special needs of the South Pacific. The Forum also expressed its hope that Japan would be able to substantially expand its development assistance to the region.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

29. The Forum reviewed regional economic issues. Due to the fragility of the economies of some of its member states it decided that economic issues required regular consideration at Heads of Government level. It noted that the Secretariat was examining the concept of Pacific closer economic relations which would enable a wide range of options for regional economic co-operation to be evaluated. It decided to consider these issues further at the 1988 Forum.

Smaller Island Countries

30. The Forum reaffirmed its support for the special measures to be taken to assist in the development of those of its member states classified as Smaller Island Countries. It welcomed the establishment of a Smaller Island Countries Funding Facility to be administered by SPEC, noting contributions by New Zealand and Australia and in particular New Zealand's contribution of NZ\$250,000 per year for the next three years. It also recognised that special support to SICs went beyond an increased availability of funds. A reappraisal and change in approach and attitude, by other countries and organisations in all aspects of their relationship with SICs, was required. It urged all aid donors to bear in mind the very special needs of its most disadvantaged members.

Trade in Agricultural Commodities

31. The Forum expressed concern at foreshadowed trade restrictions on vegetable oil imports from ACP countries by the EEC. It called upon the EEC not to impose restrictions particularly since coconut products played such a vital role in the economies of the Forum Island Countries. It supported the representations of the Cairns Group of Fair Traders to achieve more equitable international trading practices in agricultural products and called upon the majors to accept that their international trading practices and protectionist policies had highly dangerous political as well as economic ramifications that could lead to instability.

32. The Forum also recognised the need for a regional approach to the identification of long term uses of the coconut tree given the likelihood that the price for copra is likely to continue to be weak for the foreseeable future.

Telecommunications

33. The Forum expressed its disappointment that the World Bank appeared unwilling to provide funds to all Forum Island Countries to assist in the implementation of the South Pacific Telecommunications Development Programme. It called upon the World Bank to review its decision in cognizance of the extremely valuable contribution it could make to funding infrastructural telecommunications development in the region.

SOUTH AFRICA

34. The Forum noted the unprecedented turmoil in South Africa arising directly out of the abhorrent policies of apartheid, and the elections of the 6th of May which moved South Africa to an even more extreme position, and expressed its unanimous concern at the worsening situation. It voiced its support for the frontline states in South Africa. Noting that the South African Government's refusal to enter into a dialogue was the primary obstacle to a peaceful future for all the people of South Africa, the Forum hoped that it was still not too late for a just solution to be found.

AUSTRALIAN BICENTENNIAL

35. The Forum noted that 1988 would mark the Australian Bicentennial and the invitation by the Australian Prime Minister to Forum countries to participate in these celebrations, including in EXPO 88, as well as in other events in Australia, for example the Festival of South Pacific Arts.

19TH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

36. The Forum welcomed with pleasure the offer of the Kingdom of Tonga to host the 19th Forum in 1988.

30 May 1987