

**NINETEENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM
NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA
20 - 21 SEPTEMBER 1988**

FORUM COMMUNIQUE

The 19th South Pacific Forum was held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, from 20-21 September 1988. The Forum was attended by Heads of Governments of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Nauru was represented by its Minister for Finance; New Zealand, by its Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General; and Tonga, by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Acting Prime Minister of Tonga, Hon Baron Vaea, chaired the meeting.

2. Economic issues were the main focus of the 19th Forum. Regional political and security matters were also discussed, while decisions were made on moves to strengthen the role of SPEC, the Forum Secretariat.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Report of the Committee on Regional Economic Issues

3. The Forum considered the Report prepared at the direction of the 18th Forum. The Report contained a broad range of initiatives for the economic development of Forum Island Countries. These included trade, investment, small business development and enhancement of economic planning capacity, particularly through training. The Forum directed the Secretariat to commence implementation of those recommendations for which it has the capacity; to seek assistance from donors to implement those recommendations for which it did not; to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity for economic analysis and advice; and to raise with relevant member governments those matters which require policy decisions on their part. The Forum also directed the Committee on Regional Economic Issues to meet again before the 1989 Forum meeting.

Dialogue with Japan and Other Donors

4. The Forum expressed appreciation that Canada and Japan in particular had substantially increased the level of their economic assistance to the region in recent years. The Forum urged Japan and other donors to ensure that their procedures for aid delivery take account of the capacities, characteristics and the particular needs of Forum Island Countries.

Regional Civil Aviation

5. The Forum strongly endorsed the South Pacific Regional Civil Aviation Project as a constructive means of improving the efficiency of civil aviation in the South Pacific. It expressed appreciation of Australia's contribution of A\$2.5 million to establish a team

of civil aviation experts to begin implementation of the Project. It noted that substantial additional financial resources were required for the implementation of the Project and expressed the hope that Japan and other donors would provide strong financial support for it.

Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference

6. The Forum decided to explore ways in which Forum Island Countries might become more involved in and benefit from the activities of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference. It noted that one regional member, New Zealand, is to be host to the 1989 PECC, and this should assist cooperation between the Forum and PECC.

Report of the Regional Committee on Trade

7. The Forum endorsed the Report of the Seventh Regional Committee on Trade, which reviewed the operations of SPARTECA and proposals for increased regional trade and economic cooperation.

8. The Forum welcomed the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands participation in SPARTECA. It noted, however, that despite increased access to the Australian and New Zealand markets under that Agreement fundamental problems existed with the productive capacity of some Forum Island Countries, especially the Smaller Island Countries. The Forum agreed to look further at ways of boosting production, including the attraction of overseas investment.

Meeting of Trade and Economic Ministers

9. The Forum welcomed the proposal by New Zealand to host a meeting of Ministers of Trade and Economic Development from Forum countries in Auckland later this year. It was noted that this meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the GATT Uruguay Round and other issues relating to trade and economic cooperation.

Tourism

10. The Forum directed the Secretariat to prepare a paper for the Forum's consideration on institutional options for addressing and coordinating regional tourism issues on a regional basis.

Trade Issues

11. The Forum noted members' dependence on the export of certain agricultural and other commodities. It expressed concern that the proliferation of trade distorting policies that characterise the present international trade regime represent a substantial trade and economic burden, particularly on the economies of the developing countries in the region. The Forum noted the importance of the Uruguay Round in addressing the question of reform of the agricultural and commodity trading systems. It called for participants in the negotiations to take full advantage of the mid-term review of the Round by agreeing to early reform action, particularly in tropical products and agriculture.

Pacific Forum Line Feeder Service

12. The Forum welcomed the assistance of Australia and New Zealand which enabled the Pacific Forum Line Feeder Service to operate to Tuvalu and Kiribati, noting that the future of the PFL Feeder Service to Tuvalu and Kiribati was under review. It also noted that the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands were interested in the extension of the service to their countries.

Regional Petroleum Unit

13. Reflecting members' concern about prices and supply, the Forum agreed to establish within the Forum Secretariat a Regional Petroleum Unit, which would assist members with these matters.

POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES

New Caledonia

14. The Forum reviewed recent developments affecting New Caledonia. It expressed its deep regret at the violence which had taken place in New Caledonia since its last meeting, in particular at the deaths which had resulted, and restated its firm opposition to the use of violence to achieve political aims.

15. The Forum noted developments in French policy towards New Caledonia since the re-election of President Mitterrand in May, 1988, and the subsequent formation of the Government of Prime Minister Rocard. The Forum welcomed the efforts of the French Government to initiate and promote dialogue between the communities in New Caledonia and to reduce tensions in the territory. It noted the results of that process of dialogue, and, in particular, expressed its support for the framework agreement concluded in Paris in August, 1988 on the future of New Caledonia. The Forum urged all parties to work for the successful implementation of the agreement in the spirit of reconciliation which clearly underlies it, and welcomed the adoption by consensus of a resolution on New Caledonia at the August meeting of the United Nations Committee on Decolonisation (C24). It expressed the hope that the approach underlining this resolution would continue to characterise UN consideration of the issue at the 1988 United Nations General Assembly.

16. Encouraged by the new spirit of constructive dialogue which marked relations with France, the Forum declared itself ready to maintain the dialogue thus launched. Forum Governments, collectively and individually, remained ready to contribute positively to the process of reconciliation and co-operative endeavour now underway in New Caledonia. They expressed readiness to assist in the training process the French Government has announced for the Kanaks in the lead up to the act of self-determination in 1998.

17. The Forum restated its strong support for an act of self-determination in New Caledonia consistent with the established decolonisation practices and principles of the United Nations, in which all options, including independence, would be open, and leading to a settlement which would safeguard the rights of all people, including the indigenous

people of New Caledonia. The Forum urged France to ensure that the proposed 1998 act of self-determination would be consistent with these criteria.

Security Issues

18. The Forum noted the increasingly complex international and regional security environment in which it was meeting. It endorsed the proposal of the Committee on Regional Security Information Exchange to establish a system for an enhanced and timely exchange of information among Forum members on a wide range of issues affecting their political and economic security.

19. It noted that the South Pacific is no longer isolated from the unwelcome international phenomena of terrorism and the illegal trade in arms, and approved the recommendations of the Working Group on Terrorism and Hijacking, designed to improve the region's capacity to prevent and deal with incidents of terrorism and hijacking.

INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Regional institutional Arrangements

20. The Forum strongly supported the proposed new institutional arrangements drawn up by the Committee on Regional Institutional Arrangements (CRIA) after extensive consultations with interested non-Forum governments and organisations. In order to improve cooperation and coordination among institutions of the region it was agreed to establish the South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC). The Forum also agreed to strengthen the political and economic capacities of SPEC. SPEC is henceforth to be known as the Forum Secretariat. The Forum agreed to invite selected countries and organisations which had an active and constructive involvement in the region to participate at an appropriate level in a dialogue with the Forum after each session, beginning with the 20th Forum. SPEC was directed to monitor the implementation of the new regional institutional arrangements and to report as necessary to the Forum.

NUCLEAR MATTERS

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty

21. The Forum welcomed the announced decision of the Peoples Republic of China to accede to Protocols 2 and 3 of the Treaty and the decision by the USSR to ratify those Protocols without any reservations or statement of interpretation.

22. The Forum continued to express its disappointment that France, the United Kingdom and the United States have yet to sign and ratify Protocols 1, 2 and 3 of the Treaty.

23. The Forum also expressed its deep concern at continued French nuclear testing in the South Pacific in disregard of the views of the peoples of the South Pacific as

unanimously stated by the Heads of Governments of the Pacific countries, and called for tests to cease.

South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

24. The Forum expressed its concern with the slow implementation of the SPREP Action Plan and the financial difficulties faced by the Programme. The Forum agreed that there was a need to place SPREP on a more secure financial foundation and to consider whether there was a need for governments to play a stronger role in the direction of the Programme. It urged member governments to address the matter expeditiously. It noted that the future of the Programme would be addressed by the South Pacific Conference at its meeting at Rarotonga in October. It further agreed that the Secretariat maintain a continuing and active participation in SPREP and the Action Plan.

SPREP Convention

25. The Forum urged countries eligible to accede to the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and its Protocols to do so at the earliest opportunity.

SPEC/OPANAL Cooperation

26. The Forum declared its support for the common aims and aspirations held by the peoples of the Pacific and Latin America for a nuclear weapons free environment as advanced by the Treaties of Rarotonga and Tlatelolco, and requested the Director to seek information on ways by which the Forum might cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Nuclear Arms in Latin America (OPANAL) for the achievement of those aims.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

South Pacific Regional and Domestic Satellite System

27. The Forum endorsed the proposal to establish a South Pacific Regional and Domestic Satellite System. The Forum considered that the system was a technologically feasible means of extending telecommunications services to rural areas of South Pacific Island Countries. It urged member countries to consider participation in the service in terms of their national interests and preferences. The Forum welcomed an offer by Australia to provide A\$2.6 million to facilitate further extension of telecommunications services to the region.

ITU/UNDP

28. The Forum expressed its concern at the decision by UNDP to withdraw its funding for the SPEC/ITU Development and Training Projects in 1989, and called upon the UNDP to reconsider its decision, in consultation with the Secretariat.

FISHERIES

29. The Forum expressed its concern that Japan has been hesitant to enter into formal discussions with the Forum Fisheries Agency and its members on a multilateral fisheries arrangement between Japan and FFA members. The Forum stressed that it attached high priority to the development of fisheries in the region and renewed the mandate of the Director of FFA to continue to seek active dialogue with Japan to achieve improved multilateral fisheries arrangements. The Forum further directed the Director to include in the dialogue cooperation in fisheries conservation and management, and to increase fisheries-related aid to the region.

30. The Forum welcomed the multilateral Fisheries Treaty with the United States, which had come into force during the year, the benefits of which were already being received by the countries party to the Treaty.

CLIMATIC CHANGES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

31. The Forum expressed concern about climatic changes in the South Pacific and their potential for serious social and economic disruption in countries of the region. The Forum welcomed the initiative taken by the Prime Minister of Australia for a feasibility study into establishing a network of stations to monitor the effect of climatic changes in the region and, in the light of the outcome of the study, to fund the establishment of such a network.

CCOP/SOPAC

32. The Forum noted the Report by the Director of CCOP/SOPAC, which stressed the importance of early ratification of, or accession to, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in order to protect jurisdiction of Forum members' marine resources within national exclusive economic zones. It urged member countries that have yet not done so to ratify or accede to the Convention.

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

33. The Forum noted the Vice Chancellor's report and the important role played by the University in the life of the region. It welcomed the fact that the University had been able to continue to operate during the difficulties in Fiji, and welcomed the assurances given to the University by the Fiji authorities that it would continue to be able to operate freely as an institute of learning.

REGIONAL PANEL OF APPELLATE JUDGES

34. The Forum endorsed the establishment of a Regional Panel of Appellate Judges. This reflected the shortage in Forum Island Countries of sufficient judicial personnel for Appellate Courts.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF SPEC

35. The Forum reappointed Mr Henry Naisali of Tuvalu for a further 3 year term as Director of SPEC.

20TH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

36. The Forum accepted with pleasure the invitation by the Beretitenti of Kiribati to host the 20th Forum in 1989.

Nuku'alofa, Tonga
21 September 1988