

TWELFTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

Port Vila, Vanuatu
10 – 11 August 1981

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Twelfth South Pacific Forum was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, from 10-11 August 1981. The meeting was attended by Heads of Government from the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (as an observer), Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa, while Australia and Tonga were represented by Deputy Heads of Government and Nauru by a senior Minister. The Prime Minister of Vanuatu, the Hon. Father W.H. Lini, CBE, chaired the meeting.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

Decolonisation

The Forum adopted the following resolution:

“The Governments comprising the South Pacific Forum:

Reaffirming their belief in the principles of self-determination and independence applying to non self-governing Pacific Island countries, including the French territories;

Decide to send a delegation, led by a Forum Head of Government to Paris to meet with President Mitterrand of the French Republic to discuss with him the question of the evolution of the French Government's policies with respect to the progress towards decolonisation of the people of the French Pacific territories. The question of the composition of the delegation and its timing and other details should be at the discretion of the Leader of the delegation, who would report to the 13th South Pacific Forum on the delegation's discussions with the President of France.”

Nuclear Testing and Waste Disposal

The Forum considered a paper presented by the Government of Tuvalu concerning the dangers of nuclear testing and dumping in the Pacific. The Forum adopted the following resolution:

“The Governments comprising the South Pacific Forum,

Recalling the resolution passed at previous South Pacific Forum meetings condemning any actions representing further exploitation of the Pacific for nuclear purposes in ways which disadvantage the peoples of the Pacific;

Reaffirms its strong condemnation of testing of nuclear weapons or dumping or storage of nuclear wastes in the Pacific by any government as having deleterious effects on the people and environment of the region;

Urges France immediately to cease its nuclear weapons testing programme and provide full details of the effects of its past testing activities on Pacific people and the environment;

Urges the United States and Japan to store or dump their nuclear waste in their home countries rather than storing or dumping them in the Pacific;

Calls on all Governments to recognise that Pacific Heads of Government meeting as the South Pacific Forum, are united in their grave concern for the protection of the people and environment of the region, and that any attempt to deal differently with each on the matter is unacceptable; and

Requests the Chairman of the Twelfth South Pacific Forum to convey this Resolution to the Governments of France, Japan and the United States.”

Commonwealth Matters

The Forum discussed the forthcoming meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) to be held in Melbourne. It was agreed that this meeting would address a number of major international issues, both political and economic, and would provide an important opportunity for the discussion of issues of concern to the Pacific region.

Regional Security

At the suggestion of the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea the Forum discussed a resolution on the question of regional security. After an amendment by Solomon Islands, the Forum adopted the following resolution:

"The Forum noted the importance of the maintenance of peace and stability (security) in the region and called on member Governments to give their attention to this important issue."

CCOP/SOPAC - Marine Survey

The Forum discussed the concerns expressed by the Government of the Solomon Islands that the USSR intended to proceed with a marine survey cruise in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu waters, contrary to the expressed stand of the Solomon Islands Government. The Forum expressed its support for the Solomon Islands' position not to allow the Soviet vessel R.V. Callisto to conduct a geophysical and oceanographic survey and research in Solomon Islands waters as part of the CCOP/SOPAC programme, and for the Solomon Islands decision not to accord the Soviet vessel assistance and facilities.

The Forum further welcomed the acceptable alternative offer made by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United States to undertake a geophysical and oceanographic survey and research programme in the South Pacific in close collaboration with CCOP/SOPAC, and requested the Director of SPEC to inform the Executive Secretary of ESCAP accordingly. The Forum expressed its satisfaction that the

initial project under the intended programme of research, to be undertaken in the waters of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, would thereby begin in the near future.

Developments in Regional Co-operation

The Forum welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a Pacific Islands Fund in particular the emphasis placed on assisting smaller Island countries. The Forum agreed that the matter be referred back to Governments for detailed consideration, and that it be taken up at the Thirteenth Forum meeting.

The Forum considered a Commonwealth Secretariat report on a proposed Pacific Regional Advisory Service and agreed that the Director of SPEC should undertake an analysis of the administrative and financial aspects of implementation of the proposed service.

The Prime Minister of Fiji informed the Forum of progress made by the Pacific Islands Development Program. The Forum noted that there had been close co-operation between the Pacific Islands Development Program and that duplication of effort had been avoided.

The Forum also discussed Pacific Regional Projects under the Lomé II Convention.

Energy Matters

The Forum discussed a paper presented by the Government of Western Samoa on the problems created for small economies by rising oil prices, and agreed that these problems, along with the question of an approach by the Island countries of the Pacific to the OPEC states, be deferred for further consideration at the Melbourne CHOGM meeting. The Forum also agreed to accept the recommendations of the Report on Energy Co-ordination and Energy Information Dissemination in the South Pacific Region, including SPEC's assumption of the role of regional co-ordinator on energy matters.

Regional Institutional Arrangements

The Forum agreed to the convening of a special SPEC Committee session to assess the desirability or otherwise of their members continuing to participate in both SPEC and SPC and to make recommendations to the Thirteenth South Pacific Forum on the political, economic, financial, administrative and functional implications of a single effective regional organisation.

Regional Transport

The Forum acknowledged recent assistance to the Pacific Forum Line provided by Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Kiribati and welcomed the financial contribution announced at the Forum by Australia. There was also discussion on other possible sources of assistance. It was noted that the recently received consultant's report on the Pacific Forum Line appeared to provide a basis for a continuation of recent improvements in the Line's management and operations.

SPARTECA

The Forum noted the report of the first meeting of the Regional Committee on Trade, and in particular that agreement had now been reached that Nauru would be included in the definition of smaller Island countries.

Fisheries

The Forum noted the Report of the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency and discussed the proposed Fisheries Regional Research and Development Programme. The following resolution was adopted:

The South Pacific Forum -

- (a) Recalling that the Eleventh South Pacific Forum directed the Forum Fisheries Agency

“... to convene at an early stage a meeting of officials and experts to discuss, identify and plan a research and development programme for the region suited to the needs of its Members.”

Noting that such a research and development programme has now been prepared, and having considered the matter,

Endorses the programme.

- (b) On considering how best to proceed with the implementation of the research and development programme and noting that some progress has already been made in this respect, the Forum -

Directs the FFA Secretariat to convene a Steering Committee of officials from Forum countries and to liaise with appropriate regional and international institutions with a view to holding a meeting of regional and distant water fishing nations and other interested organisations.

The purpose of this meeting would be to –

- discuss the further elaboration of the research and development programme;
- determine how best to acquire the financial and technical assistance needed to implement the programme;
- examine the feasibility of combining the programme with the research and development programmes of other Pacific nations and organisations; and
- consider whether the establishment of a broadly based organisation to co-ordinate and conduct such research and development programmes on a Pacific wide basis would be desirable.

Commemorative Activities

The Forum noted that 1981 was the Tenth Anniversary of the Forum. It was agreed that SPEC would produce a booklet to mark the occasion, and that member countries might consider the issue of special commemorative postage stamps.

Next Forum Session

The Forum accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister of Tuvalu to host the next Forum in Tuvalu with the dates to be decided in consultation with the Government of Tuvalu.