

FIFTEENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

Funafuti, Tuvalu
27 – 28 August 1984

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Fifteenth South Pacific Forum was held in Funafuti, Tuvalu from 27-28 August 1984. The meeting was attended by Heads of Government from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (as an observer), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Solomon Islands was represented by the Minister for National Planning and Development and Tonga by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the Rt Honourable Dr Tomasi Puapua, chaired the meeting and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance assumed the Tuvalu seat.

The main issues discussed were:

Decolonisation

The Forum reviewed developments since its last meeting in relation to New Caledonia and adopted the following decisions:

The Forum took note of the progress made since its last meeting in the process of decolonisation of New Caledonia. It expressed its disappointment that the French Government had not been able to respond to the proposal for a Forum mission but asked France to provide Forum countries with information on a continuing basis.

The Forum reaffirmed its support for the transition of New Caledonia to independence in accordance with the wishes of its people and in a manner which guarantees the innate and active rights of the Kanak people and the rights and interests and aspirations of all its inhabitants. It urged the French Government and all political and community groups, including the Independence Front, to keep talking to ensure that this transition to an independent multi-racial New Caledonia is achieved speedily and peacefully within a shorter time-scale than presently envisaged.

It was the Forum's view that the process of decolonisation would be advanced by a public statement by the French Government that independence was the desirable, logical and acknowledged outcome of the act of self-determination currently planned for 1989, and that this referendum should be brought forward by agreement between all the parties involved.

The Forum believed that France should transfer additional political and administrative powers to the territory to ensure that it is adequately prepared for independence and take the practical steps necessary to guarantee the full and active participation of the Melanesian community in the territory's educational, vocational and administrative institutions.

The Forum decided that the question of seeking reinscription of New Caledonia on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories should be kept under continuing review.

It was further agreed that Forum members might, individually, bring their concern with the situation in New Caledonia to the attention of the United Nations. In this context, a number of Forum Leaders indicated that their missions in New York would circulate this communiqué and that their General Debate statements would make appropriate mention of New Caledonia.

Forum Leaders agreed that a five-member group, at Ministerial level, should discuss these issues with the Independence Front and with the French authorities to ensure Forum views are fully understood.

Regional Nuclear Matters

Following the decision of the previous meeting, the Forum gave further consideration to the concept of a nuclear free zone in the region, and in particular a draft set of principles regarding its establishment submitted by Australia. It also had before it a proposal from Nauru regarding action to amend the London Dumping Convention to prohibit totally the dumping of nuclear waste.

The Forum noted the importance of the initiative for a nuclear free zone in the region in the context of the disappointing lack of progress in international disarmament negotiations. It was felt that efforts should be intensified to encourage the conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which would outlaw all forms of nuclear testing by all states in all environments. The Forum also noted that 1985 was a year of review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Progress towards a nuclear free zone in the region could make a useful contribution to maintaining the momentum of international debate on disarmament and arms control.

Forum members also considered the report of the joint New Zealand, Australian and Papua New Guinea scientific mission that visited the French nuclear testing site on Mururoa Atoll in October 1983 at the invitation of the French Government. They noted that, while the findings of the mission allayed to some degree the concern that had been expressed about the short-term effects of the French nuclear tests, they provided no reassurance about long-term consequences nor in any sense diminished Forum opposition to testing in any environment. They accordingly reiterated their strong opposition to continued nuclear testing in the South Pacific region by France or any other country.

After discussion of the various interrelated aspects of nuclear activity in the region, the Forum agreed on the desirability of establishing a Nuclear Free Zone in the region at the earliest possible opportunity in accordance with the principles set out in the Australian working papers. These principles were: that South Pacific countries should be free to live in peace and independence and to run their own affairs in accordance with the wishes and traditions of their people; South Pacific countries should enjoy peaceful social and economic development free from the threat of environmental pollution; South Pacific countries acknowledge existing international treaties, organisations and regional arrangements, such as the Charter of the United the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and

the Law of the Sea Convention, which contribute to their objectives; there should be no use, testing or stationing of nuclear explosive devices in the South Pacific; no South Pacific country would develop or manufacture, or receive from others, or acquire or test any nuclear explosive device; nuclear activities of South Pacific countries should be in accordance with applicable international principles and treaties, notably the NPT and take into account regional arrangements; and that South Pacific countries retain their unqualified sovereign rights to decide for themselves, consistent with their support for these objectives, their security arrangements, and such questions as the access to their ports and airfields by vessels and aircraft of other countries.

Reference was made to the particular importance of the principle of freedom of navigation and overflight and the treaty obligations of Forum members.

A working group of officials was appointed to meet as often as may be required to undertake an examination of the substantive legal and other issues involved in establishing a nuclear free zone in the region with a view to preparing a draft of a treaty for consideration by the Forum Meeting in 1985. The working group is to be chaired by Australia and would be convened in consultation with the Director of SPEC. All members of the Forum would be entitled to attend.

The Forum agreed that the proposals by Nauru to strengthen the London Dumping Convention would also be examined by the group. The dumping and disposal of nuclear waste in the region was intolerable and unacceptable and Forum Governments were strongly committed to this aspect of the Convention and Protocols being negotiated under the auspices of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

The Forum also supported a suggestion that Governments continue to protest individually, as well as collectively, to France over its persistent nuclear testing and to Japan over proposals to dump nuclear waste in the Pacific.

The Forum also welcomed the declaration on French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll made by member states of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (PCSP) on 6 July 1984. They regarded the declaration as a further expression of the united opposition by countries of the Pacific to French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. The Forum was also of the view that it would be useful for SPEC and the PCSP secretariat (representing Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) to maintain contact on the question of French nuclear testing.

Single Regional Organisation

The Forum received an Interim Report from the Committee of Foreign Ministers established by the Fourteenth Forum to examine the implications of establishing a single regional organisation.

The Committee had not been able to complete its consultations with metropolitan countries and their Pacific territories or completely assess all the implications of an SRO. A number of members of the Forum expressed the view that while an SRO may be a desirable goal in principle in the longer-term, the benefits received from the existing regional institutional arrangements should be safeguarded. The consensus reached was that

the Committee should complete its work and report back so that the matter could then be properly considered.

Regional Cooperation as it Affects Smaller Forum Members

The Forum discussed a proposal from the Government of Kiribati that special attention be accorded the problems faced by smaller Forum members. The Forum recognised the seriousness of the issue raised and the need to identify practical solutions to problems in the areas of transportation, trade, food and water supply communications and energy among others. The Forum decided to set up a committee of officials to examine the problems, recommend solutions and report to the Sixteenth Forum. The Governments of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Tuvalu and Western Samoa would be represented on the committee.

Regional Trade

The Forum received the report of the Fourth Meeting of the Regional Committee on Trade, held in Kiribati in July 1984. It noted that while total trade under the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) had increased during its three years of operation, exports from most of the larger island countries had grown while exports from some smaller island countries had actually decreased. The Forum noted the relevance of this situation to its decision on the question of regional co-operation as it affects smaller Forum members. It also welcomed moves initiated by the Regional Committee on Trade with regard to modifying the Rules of Origin and increasing Forum Island Countries' apparel exports to Australia. The Forum noted the relevance of discussions at the political level to solving difficult trade problems which might arise between its members.

The Forum agreed in principle to promoting duty free and unrestricted access for handcrafts traded between Forum Island Countries, to be implemented on a bilateral basis.

Pacific Forum Line

The Forum received a progress report on the Pacific Forum Line and noted with satisfaction the continuing improvement in its trading and financial situation. The Forum reaffirmed its strong support for the regionally-owned shipping line as a key vehicle for providing regular reliable and economic shipping services to its shareholders. Appreciation was expressed for the services rendered by the retiring Chairman of the Line, Mr H L Julian.

Energy

The Forum received a report presenting in broad terms potential options for improvement in the terms of petroleum pricing and supply arrangements to Pacific island countries. It agreed that exploration of the options be continued and the results presented for consideration at its next meeting.

Trade Embargoes in Fisheries Products

The Forum noted a paper presented by Solomon Islands regarding events arising from the arrest of the purse seiner, "Jeanette Diana" which was fishing illegally in Solomon Islands' EEZ. The Forum expressed its continuing concern at the failure of the United States to recognise the applicability of 200-mile EEZ to tuna and at the fact that that country endeavoured to enforce its position on this issue through embargo legislation.

The Forum considered that the satisfactory long-term solution to this problem lay in the conclusion of a multilateral agreement with the United States, and called for a prompt and successful outcome to negotiation to that end scheduled to begin in Suva next month.

Law of the Sea

The Forum reaffirmed the importance of the Law of the Sea Convention for the orderly and rational use of the world's oceans and their resources and its significance to the countries of the South Pacific. Note was taken of the fact that the Convention remains open for signature until 9 December 1984. The Forum urged all countries to sign the Convention and take active steps towards its ratification.

Reports

The Forum accepted the reports of the pre-Forum SPEC Committee, the Director of SPEC's Annual Report for 1983/84, the Report of the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Report of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific.

Federated States of Micronesia

The President of the Federated States of Micronesia reported to the Forum on progress in negotiations with the United States on a Compact of Free Association. Negotiations, which had extended over fourteen years, had been pursued in a spirit of cooperation. Following the establishment of a Compact, which is expected to take place early next year, his country would enjoy sovereignty over its foreign policy, internal matters and rights over its 200-mile economic zone. The President observed that the principle of the proposed nuclear free zone (NFZ) concept were consistent with the provisions of the Compact.

Next Forum Session

The Sixteenth Forum will be hosted by the Government of the Cook Islands from 4-6 August 1985.