

SIXTEENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

5 – 6 August, 1985

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Sixteenth South Pacific Forum was held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 5-6 August, 1985. 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, while Solomon Islands was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Tonga was represented by its Foreign Minister. The Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Hon Sir Thomas Davis, KBE, chaired the meeting.

2. The main issues discussed were as follows:

Decolonisation

New Caledonia

3. The Forum reviewed developments in New Caledonia since its last meeting.
4. The Forum reaffirmed its support for self-determination and the early transition to an independent New Caledonia in accordance with the innate, active rights and aspirations of the indigenous people and in a manner which guaranteed, the rights and interests of all inhabitants of this multi-racial society.
5. The Forum condemned the violence which had and continues to occur in New Caledonia and which has resulted in tragic loss of life, thus seriously jeopardising the process of dialogue. Heads of Government called on all parties to refrain from further violence and to engage in constructive dialogue which, alone, would ensure a peaceful and lasting resolution of New Caledonia's present problems.
6. Referring to the decision on New Caledonia adopted at its last meeting in Tuvalu, the Forum welcomed the fact that France had now publicly agreed to an early act of self-determination with the objective of bringing New Caledonia to independence. The Forum noted with satisfaction that the date for the act of self-determination had been brought forward: the vote was now to take place by the end of 1987 at the latest.
7. The Forum urged the French Government to undertake electoral reforms before the act of self-determination to ensure that the result accurately reflected the wishes of the Kanak people and others who had a long-term residence in and commitment to New Caledonia.
8. The Forum noted with interest the statement made by the French Prime Minister in April 1985 in which he outlined proposals for the administration of New Caledonia in the period leading up to the act of self-determination. The Forum noted that, in accordance with the Prime Minister's announcement, legislation concerning the relationship between New Caledonia and France had recently been adopted by the French Parliament. Heads of

Government expressed the view that the course of action on which the French Government had now embarked contained positive elements which were appropriate in assisting the territory in its evolution to independence. The Forum expressed the strong hope that this plan would be firmly and consistently pursued to its conclusion by 31 December 1987. The Forum called on all parties to work towards the proper conduct of the forthcoming regional elections in a fair, and peaceful manner and to advance diligently the process of decolonisation within New Caledonia.

9. In the light of strong reservations about increased militarisation of the region, the Forum called on France to clarify publicly the nature and extent of its announced intention to upgrade its military facilities in New Caledonia. The Forum also again stressed its view that France should transfer additional political and administrative powers to the territory to ensure that it was 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, administrative and economic structures.

10. The Forum addressed the question of granting Forum observer status to the FLNKS and agreed to set up a working group to review the question of observer status in the Forum. The group should consider the existing guidelines governing the question of observer status, and consider whether any changes were desirable or necessary. The Forum noted that the work of this Group would assist consideration of, but not be confined to, the proposal that the FLNKS be admitted to observer status at Forum meetings.

11. The Forum discussed in some detail the question of possible involvement of the United Nations in the situation in New Caledonia. It was widely acknowledged that keeping the question before the international community was important, and Forum members felt that speeches by Forum members in the United Nations General Assembly's general debate might take up the objectives of the Forum in relation to New Caledonia. However, the Forum reaffirmed that it had a continuing primary role, as a regional body, to continue its consideration of developments in the territory and to respond as and where appropriate. While noting the arguments on the question of re-inscription of New Caledonia on the United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and without accepting re-inscription at this juncture, the Forum would seek information from the appropriate organs of the UN on the applicability of the UN Charter and the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It agreed to give further consideration to this question at its 17th meeting.

12. The Forum noted that the Ministerial Group established at Tuvalu to discuss Forum views on New Caledonia with the Independence Front and the French authorities had fulfilled its original mandate. It expressed appreciation for the reports circulated to all Forum members on the two meetings which members of the Ministerial Group had held at the end of 1984. The Forum agreed, however, that there was a need for all member countries to remain fully informed of developments in future and decided to establish a Standing Committee of officials to report to the Ministerial Group on a continuing basis over the crucial period before the next meeting of the Forum. The Officials Group should alert the Ministerial Group to any developments, including, political developments in France itself which might call for a reaction or a response by the Ministerial Group or by Forum Governments as a whole.

13. The Forum agreed that its views should be conveyed formally to the French Government.

French Polynesia

14. The Forum considered an application by French Polynesia to the Forum for observer status. While acknowledging French Polynesia's ties with some of its island neighbours, the Forum was unable to agree to granting the territory observer status under its existing guidelines for membership, in particular, the need for a definite date to have been set for independence. These guidelines would be reviewed by a working group.

Regional Nuclear Matters

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty

15. The Forum considered the Report of the Chairman of the Working Group of Officials on a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone and the agreed text of a draft South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty annexed to the Report. It was noted that the draft Treaty incorporated all the principles of a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone adopted by the Fifteenth Forum in Tuvalu. The Forum endorsed the text of the Treaty produced by the Working Group and opened it for signature at the Forum by those countries in a position to do so, it being understood by the Forum that some countries would not be in a position to sign the Treaty, at least until they had subjected it to their normal constitutional processes. Heads of Government of Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Tuvalu and Western Samoa signed the Treaty.

16. The Forum also considered the three draft Protocols to the SPFNZ Treaty. Since the Protocols involved countries outside the region, it was agreed that consultations should be held with all the countries eligible to sign the Protocols before they were finalised. The Forum commissioned the Working Group on a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone to organise these consultations and to make recommendations to Forum Leaders concerning the adoption of the Protocols at the next meeting of the Forum in 1986 or earlier if practicable.

17. The Forum observed that endorsement of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which would establish only the second nuclear weapons free zone in a permanently inhabited area, reflected the deep concern of all Forum members at the continuing nuclear arms race and the risk of nuclear war. In this context, the Forum welcomed the resumption of arms control talks between the superpowers and expressed its hope that these talks would achieve their declared objective of a reduction in nuclear weapons and to their eventual elimination as well as to the prevention of an arms race in space. The Forum also noted that the Third Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons would be held in Geneva from 27 August to 24 September 1985, and that the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty was in accordance with Article VII of the NPT concerning regional arrangements to ensure the absence of nuclear weapons. The Forum agreed that the Review Conference be informed of the progress made on the establishment of the Zone.

18. The Forum expressed support for Australia's initiative at the Review Conference to require the application of fullscope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards to all nuclear exports to non-nuclear weapons States and noted that the initiative was fully consistent with Article 4 of the SPNFZ Treaty. The Forum affirmed its support for the NPT as the most important means of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries.

19. Forum Leaders noted that the southern boundary to which the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone would apply was the area governed by the Antarctic Treaty which provided for the Antarctic to remain demilitarised, free of nuclear weapons, and for there to be a ban on nuclear testing and the disposal of nuclear wastes. Interest was expressed in the continued viability of the Antarctic Treaty system which complemented in an adjacent area their own efforts to establish a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone.

French Nuclear Testing

20. The Forum reaffirmed its total opposition to French nuclear testing in the South Pacific in defiance of the view of all the independent and self-governing countries of the region. The Forum urged France to cease immediately its nuclear testing programme at Mururoa Atoll and noted that one of the principal reasons for adopting a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty was the deep wish of all Forum members that no nuclear tests be conducted anywhere within the region. The Forum also reaffirmed its support for the early conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which would ban all nuclear tests by all States in all environments.

Dumping of Radioactive Waste

21. The Forum reaffirmed its strong opposition to the dumping of radioactive waste in the oceans of the region. Forum members were committed to the early conclusion of the Convention and Protocols being negotiated under the auspices of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) which would, among other things, preclude the dumping at sea of radioactive waste in the region. The Forum noted that this commitment was also enshrined in the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

22. The Forum welcomed the statement by the Prime Minister of Japan that Japan had no intention of dumping radioactive waste in the Pacific Ocean in disregard of the concern expressed by the communities of the region.

23. The Forum considered further the proposal, made by Nauru at the Fifteenth Forum at Tuvalu, to strengthen the London Dumping Convention (LDC), including the Report of the Chairman of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Working Group recording the Working Group's consideration of the Nauru proposal.

24. The Forum noted that the next meeting of parties would take place from 23 to 27 September 1985. In the light of their shared opposition to radioactive waste dumping at sea, it was agreed that those Forum members participating in the LDC Meeting would consult closely about approaches to this issue at that meeting. It was recognised that it would be desirable to achieve a common approach. The advantages were noted of having

additional Forum members adhere to the LDC, so as to increase the number of LDC parties which shared South Pacific regional concerns.

Smaller Island Countries

25. The Forum received and adopted the Report of the Committee on Smaller Island Countries prepared under a mandate from the Tuvalu Forum. It also adopted the following statement on Smaller Island Countries:

“The South Pacific Forum contains a diversity of membership, culturally, ethnically and in terms of the size, natural resources and population of its member countries. All Pacific Island states are small in global terms and many are very isolated, widely scattered and vulnerable.

The characteristics of smallness, isolation, severe lack of resources and vulnerability are particularly acute for the Smaller Island Countries of the Forum, namely, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue and Tuvalu. Many of these characteristics are shared by the outer island communities of the larger countries. They give rise to particularly severe problems in terms of

- limited agricultural and manufacturing potential;
- diseconomies of scale and weak bargaining power;
- expensive and irregular transport links;
- inadequate communications.

The cumulative effect of these problems is that Smaller Island Country economies face great difficulties in generating self-sustaining economic activity and are therefore heavily dependent on a continuing flow of external assistance.

The Forum is founded on the recognition that regional co-operation offers benefits to individual countries through tackling common problems together. In the Pacific way, the smallest and most vulnerable members of the family deserve special attention. The Forum therefore recognises that special emphasis on meeting the needs of the Smaller Island Countries should be given through support of their national development strategies and through preferential treatment in regional programmes.

To this end, the Forum considered a series of proposals to put that special emphasis into effect, both through existing regional programmes and through new initiatives. These proposals address action in the fields of fisheries, transport, tourism, agriculture, external employment, energy, water, culture, minerals, manufacturing, communications and education. The Forum noted the critical need for whatever economic potential exists in the SICs to be explored and developed to the full. This is more critical for these countries than for other Forum members whose greater economic resources allow a greater range of development options.

In order to ensure the effective inter-relationship of sectoral efforts, due attention is also required in the areas of national planning capabilities and the improvement of development assistance procedures and co-ordination.

The Forum recognises that given the special characteristics and problems of the SICs, the objective of economic independence may not be practicable in some cases, even in the longer term. In these cases, provision for development and recurrent budgetary aid must be considered. For those SICs whose declared goal is economic self-reliance, every effort should be extended to assist in this endeavour. The Forum recognises that calling for further additional financial and technical assistance in order to achieve the objective of self-reliance may appear paradoxical. Yet in order to ignite a self-generating process of economic development in very small economies, additional fuel is needed. The Forum therefore invites aid donors to the region, be they traditional friends or new ones, to join in recognising the special needs of the Smaller Forum Island Country members, and to extend to them additional and concessional assistance in their programmes."

26. The Forum welcomed the response by Australia, Fiji and New Zealand in particular who offered a range of additional benefits and trade concessions to the Smaller Island Countries to assist them with their special developmental problems.

27. Australia circulated to the Forum a paper on assistance it could make available to Smaller Island Countries in respect of the recommendations in the Committee's Report.

28. In addition to providing assistance in manpower development, Fiji announced that a special concessional duty rate had been introduced and was in place for imports of handcraft from Smaller Island Countries into Fiji.

29. Appreciation was expressed for a grant of NZ\$250,000 from the New Zealand Government to fund follow-up to the Report. The Forum agreed that representatives of the Smaller Island Countries should meet to decide on the application of these and other funds which might become available.

ASEAN/Forum Dialogue

30. Heads of Government agreed on the desirability of continuing to develop relations between the Forum and ASEAN, and to this end considered that there should be a further consolidation of links between SPEC and the ASEAN Secretariat.

SINGLE REGIONAL ORGANISATION

31. The Forum noted the interim report of the Committee of Foreign Ministers which had been established to look into the question of a Single Regional Organisation. It commended the Ministers for their work to date and requested them to continue their review.

Increased Inter-Parliamentary Contact

32. The Forum received a proposal for developing increased inter-parliamentary contact in the region and agreed to the preparation by New Zealand of a more detailed paper to be presented to the next Forum.

Regional Trade: SPARTECA

33. The Forum received the Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Regional Committee on Trade, held in Nauru in June 1985. It noted with satisfaction that trade under the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) continued to grow and that Australia and New Zealand were continuing efforts through SPARTECA to assist the development of Forum Island Countries. The Forum welcomed the announcement by Australia that across-the-board duty-free unrestricted access was to be granted to all exports from Forum Island Countries other than products to which Australian sectoral policies apply. It also welcomed moves by Australia and New Zealand to liberalise the rules of origin for imports under SPARTECA. The Forum acknowledged the concerns of Smaller Island Countries that the provisions of SPARTECA were not particularly relevant to their needs: their export-oriented base was so small that they could not take advantage of the concessionary terms of trade that were available under the Agreement and special arrangements might be necessary in their case. The Forum welcomed the offer of Australia and New Zealand to enter into discussions, without obligation, of whether there would be an advantage for other Forum countries to enter a broadened ANZCER. The Forum requested the Regional Committee on Trade to be held in Wellington next year to report on this matter.

34. In the context of trade and investment, the Forum welcomed an announcement by New Zealand of extensions to the PIIDS which should increase the effectiveness of the Scheme in attracting soundly-based investment to the Forum Island Countries.

The Pacific Forum Line (PFL)

35. The Forum was pleased to note that the Pacific Forum Line had made very real progress in its development as an economically viable service. In 1985 it was expected that the PFL would for the first time achieve close to a break-even point in its operations. The Forum was appreciative of a recent grant from the EEC of 3.2 million ECUs for containers for the PFL and also welcomed a matching grant from New Zealand of approximately NZ\$5 million for the Line. The Forum endorsed a pre-feasibility study of the proposed extension of the PFL feeder service from Fiji-Tuvalu-Kiribati to Micronesia.

Forum Fisheries Agency

36. The Forum took note of the FFA Director's Report and expressed great satisfaction with the Agency's performance. The Forum also expressed satisfaction that the FFA had now been fully recognised by the major foreign fishing nations. It called for the speedy conclusion of a multilateral treaty with the United States, which was of major importance to the countries in the Pacific.

Micronesia

37. Heads of Government noted that the Peoples of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands had exercised their right to self-determination in free and fair plebiscites observed by the United Nations. They looked forward to early approval of the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement over these territories by the United Nations in accordance

with the express wishes of their Peoples. They also looked forward to the conclusion of arrangements for the termination of the Trusteeship over the Republic of Palau.

38. The Forum welcomed and approved the application by Palau to become a full member of the Forum Fisheries Agency.

39. The Forum expressed its sincere condolences to the family, the people and the Government of Palau over the tragic death of its late President, Haruo I. Remelilk. It wished to record its appreciation of the late President's interest in and contribution to regional affairs in the South Pacific.

China and Japan

40. Forum Leaders noted that the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party had recently made a successful visit to a number of regional member states, and had again emphasised China's strong interest in playing a helpful and constructive role in the region. The Forum noted Australia's offer to facilitate productive contacts between China and those FICs which might wish to develop their relations with China.

41. The Forum, taking into account Prime Minister Nakasone's visit to the region and the current level of Japanese aid to Forum States, requested SPEC to explore the establishment of dialogue with Japan with a view to obtaining further assistance for the Smaller Islands Countries in particular.

42. The Forum unanimously welcomed Fiji's offer to host the Seventeenth South Pacific Forum at a time to be decided in 1986.