

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SPECIAL LEADERS' RETREAT

**Auckland
6 April 2004**

The Auckland Declaration

Leaders of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated states of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand (Chair), Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu met in Auckland, New Zealand on 6 April 2004 to consider the Forum Eminent Persons' Group review of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Recalling their decision at the 34th Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland to task an Eminent Persons Group to carry out a review of the Forum and its Secretariat, and their direction that the review propose a refreshed mandate and vision for the Pacific Islands Forum, as well as an improved capacity allowing the Forum to provide leadership on regional cooperation and integration;

recalling their agreement that the serious challenges facing countries of the region warranted serious and careful examination of the pooling of scarce regional resources to strengthen national capabilities;

noting that the peoples of the Pacific are the custodians of the largest, most peaceful and abundant ocean, its many islands and its rich diversity of cultures;

believing that the strengthening of Pacific cultures and languages in the face of external pressures should be a central concern for Forum Leaders;

paying tribute to and reaffirming the wisdom of the Forum founders in recognition the advantages to all Pacific people of close cooperation and shared purpose;

recognising the substantial and many achievements of the Forum and its associated agencies over the last 33 years since it first met in Wellington in 1971, its contribution to the development of a Pacific regional consciousness and endeavour, and consolidating its position as the pre-eminent political grouping in the region;

recognising that in a fast changing, complex and unpredictable global environment, it is timely to refresh the Forum to preserve relevance and allow it to continue to provide leadership to the region.

Leaders adopted the following vision

Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.

Leaders agreed to give effect to this vision through:

- i. development of the Pacific Plan. This would create stronger and deeper links between the sovereign countries of the region and identify the sectors where the region could gain the most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies. It would provide a strategy for implementation;
- ii agreement that the key goals of the Forum are economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security and that these goals should form the principal focus of the Forum and its Secretariat;
- iii recognition that a fundamental role of the Forum is to support the particular needs of Small Island States and to advocate their interests, especially in regard to their limited capacity and protecting their fragile environment, including from climate change;
- iv recognition that the Forum has to exist for the practical benefit of Pacific people, and of the importance of cultural identity, regional inclusiveness, sub-regional representation, human rights, women and gender, youth, and civil society and invited the Secretary General, in preparing the Pacific Plan, to consult, assess and make proposals on how cultural identity could be best strengthened through the work of the Forum and CROP agencies, in particular the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC);
- v Improvement of the way the Forum communicates its work to member countries and the wider world;
- vi reform of the Forum's procedures, its meetings, and the role of Leaders, the Chair, Ministers and officials.

Leaders recognized that the work required on taking forward these commitments to achieve the Pacific vision will form the heart of Forum work over the next decade.

Leaders agreed that it would be appropriate from time to time for the Forum Leaders' Meeting to revisit the vision and assess progress towards its achievement.