

6<sup>th</sup> September, Apia, Samoa

*Partnerships for a Blue Pacific – an exploration of the role and contribution of Civil Society*

## **Position Paper: People at the Heart of a Secure and Peaceful Blue Pacific**

Good governance is established as a regional value in The Framework for Pacific Regionalism, and is regarded as a prerequisite for sustainable development and economic growth. In order to build sustainable peace in the region we must find a balance between short-term financial stability and longer-term equitable growth. Spates of violence, instability and insecurity will escalate in the Pacific unless governance structures and frameworks are transformed to ensure equitable, sustainable and people-centred development. Conflicts fuelled by the chronic lack of economic opportunities for young people, tensions around ethnic belonging versus national identity, dysfunctional and weak states, availability of firearms, soaring crime rates and large scale natural resource extraction, continue to plague Pacific governments efforts for stability and peace and thus the realisation of the real development potential of the Blue Pacific.<sup>1</sup> In the heart of these states of conflict and in these shifting landscapes and change; the vulnerable and the weak who nearly always involve women, children, ethnic minorities and sexual minorities bear the highest cost and continue to represent the most at-risk in the region.

**Regional policy spaces and decision-makers need to rethink interventions for peace and security.** We must consistently target critical areas for sustainable change at all levels - from the Personal, Relational, Cultural to Structural. The PIF's Human Security Framework articulates the leaders' commitment to providing space, and demonstrating political will, for discussions and learning on addressing the root causes of conflict, monitoring conflict escalation and strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms in the region. CSOs urge Forum Leaders to:

1. **Create multi-stakeholder forums**, that include investment in young people as the next generation leadership, on Pacific peace, security and development that allows for an exploration of structural conditions of conflict and armed violence and its impact on development; and **invite multi stakeholder recommendations** and shared action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding for the long-term stability of the region.

CSOs would like to highlight and urge leaders to build on the recommendations of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015), Pacific Forum Principles on Security Sector Governance (2012) and to continue its implementation of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga). CSOs call on Forum Leaders to:

2. **Implement** the UN Arms Trade Treaty on disarmament.

### Self-determination in Peace and Security

The issue of self-determination is important for the regional security agenda. CSOs are concerned that well into the 21st Century, of the sixteen territories remaining on the UN list of non-self-governing territories, six are from the Pacific: New Caledonia and French Polynesia; Tokelau; Pitcairn; Guam and American Samoa. Further, we are concerned that other 'second order' self-

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam New Zealand, 2016

*These papers were produced by civil society representatives that attended the Regional Civil Society Organisations Forum organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat with support from the European Union. The contents present the views of the civil society representatives and can in no way be reflected as views of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat or the European Union.*

determination struggles in post-colonial states – such as Bougainville, Rapanui and West Papua – do not fall under the mandate of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation.

2018 promises to be significant for the region's security as New Caledonia and Bougainville are expected to conduct referenda on a new political status. These pose important political implications for members of the Pacific Islands Forum, but also security challenges if the right to self-determination is once again deferred. The role of the Forum and other Pacific regional organisations in supporting Pacific colonies in their transition to a new political status is key and must be sustained throughout this period. **CSOs commend the Forum Leaders** for facilitating the participation of Pacific island leaders from the US, French and New Zealand territories into activities of the Pacific Islands Forum, as observers or associate members over the last 15 years. However, members of Pacific civil society are apprehensive that the policies of Forum members have constrained a more active role in supporting the needs and dignity of Pacific Island communities struggling for self-determination.

Pacific CSOs continue to applaud the leaders' courage to recognise with deep concern the ongoing violence and loss of life in West Papua. We also acknowledge the wisdom by which leaders have recognised the political sensitivities of the issue of West Papua on their agenda and their affirmation of the importance of an open and constructive dialogue with Indonesia. Pacific CSOs therefore wholeheartedly support the participation of the PIF secretariat, as invited by the Indonesian Government, to observe the 2019 elections and call on Leaders to:

3. **Include** civil society representatives in the Election Observer Mission.
4. **Develop systematic programs of democratic transition support** for Bougainville, New Caledonia and West Papua, in areas such as training, scholarships, development funding and political education.

### Indigenous Peoples Human Rights

Many indigenous peoples share legacies of removal from traditional lands, destruction of their cultures, discrimination and widespread violations of their human rights. They are commonly excluded from decision-making processes and from economic power; they suffer lower education and health outcomes; their cultures and languages are under threat; and they continue to be dispossessed of their traditional lands. All indigenous peoples in the Pacific region are entitled to full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. Pacific CSOs call on Leaders to:

5. **Reaffirm** the compliance to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) as stipulated in the UNDRIP for inclusion of indigenous peoples' voices.
6. **Recognize** the dignity and human rights of our indigenous peoples by facilitating and supporting indigenous communities' full and effective participation in decision making that concerns development of their communities, natural resources particularly the Pacific Ocean and people.
7. **Acknowledge, revitalise and inculcate** time-tested Pacific traditional methodologies and approaches to conflict resolution, resilience and peacebuilding in regional policymaking and programmes.