

NINTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

Alofi, Niue

16 - 20 September 1978

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Ninth South Pacific Forum was held in the Fale Fono, Alofi, Niue 16-20 September 1978. The following Heads of Government participated: Rt Hon J M Fraser, CH, MP, Prime Minister of Australia; Hon Dr T R A H Davis, Premier of the Cook Islands; Rt Hon Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, KBE, Prime Minister of Fiji; Hon Ieremia Tabai, Chief Minister of the Gilbert Islands; H E Hammer DeRoburt, OBE, MP, President of Nauru; Rt Hon R D Muldoon, PC, MP, Prime Minister of New Zealand; Hon R R Rex, CMG, OBE, Premier of Niue; Rt Hon M T Somare, CH, MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; H R H Prince Tu'ipelehake, KBE, Prime Minister of Tonga; Hon Tupuola Efi, Prime Minister of Western Samoa; Hon P Tovua represented his Prime Minister on behalf of Solomon Islands and Hon T Sione represented his Chief Minister on behalf of Tuvalu.

The Forum was officially opened by His Excellency Sir Keith Holyoake, GCMG, CH, Governor General of Niue on the occasion of the formal opening of the Niue Fale Fono and the Niue Constitution celebrations on 16 September 1978.

The Forum admitted two new members, Solomon Island and Tuvalu, as full members of the Forum. Both Solomon Islands and Tuvalu have participated in earlier Forums as observers.

The Forum sent congratulatory messages to the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands in New York on the admission of Solomon Islands to the United Nations and to the Chief Minister of Tuvalu on the forthcoming independence of Tuvalu. Both new members expressed their firm support for the future work of the Forum and SPEC. The Premier of the Cook Islands on behalf of the Cook Islands also outlined the new government's policy towards regional co-operation which included continued support to the Forum.

The Forum had before it a draft Convention to establish a South Pacific Regional Fisheries organisation. The draft Convention had been negotiated at meetings in 1977 and 1978. Participants in those meetings included in addition to the Forum countries; Chile, France, United Kingdom and United States. After a full consideration of Forum countries' reasons for wanting a fisheries organisation, the Forum decided that the organisation envisaged in the draft Convention was not the organisation which Forum countries wanted in the immediate future. The Forum accordingly decided to set up forthwith a South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency comprising Forum countries and to examine further the more broadly based organisation proposed in the draft Convention.

Looking at problems of regional shipping the Forum confirmed its support for the Pacific Forum Line and noted that in the initial period of its operations PFL was facing more severe financial problems than had been expected. In order to keep the Line afloat for a reasonable period governments agreed to consider a number of proposals for both short and long term relief. New Zealand offered a further overdraft guarantee of \$150,000 for short term relief. The Forum also endorsed a decision that governments, through a

committee established for that purpose, would work towards the setting of uniform maritime standards for the training and certification of officers and seamen and examination of ships. The Committee will hold its first meeting in Honiara, Solomon Islands in November 1978.

After reviewing progress on civil aviation in the region the Forum endorsed a recommendation to airlines operating in and through the South Pacific to form a South Pacific Regional Airlines Association to deal with questions such as routes and scheduling, joint marketing, pooling of spares and equipment, standardisation of equipment and so forth.

The Forum considered a report on industrialisation and trade prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat and SPEC and financed by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. In addition to reviewing the potential industrial development of Pacific Island countries the study had made a number of recommendations aimed at revising the current pattern of trade relationships between New Zealand, Australia and Island countries.

The Forum decided to focus more attention on trade matters in the future and to this end requested the Director of SPEC to call a meeting of senior trade officials to consider the report and make recommendations on the possibility of a preferential non-reciprocal arrangement between Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries as well as other measures aimed at improving trade and industrial development in the region.

The Forum also decided to ask Ministers of Trade or Economic Affairs to meet to consider the report and to make recommendations on whether a ministerial trade council should be set up to keep trade matters under continuing review.

The Forum welcomed the offer of the Australian Government to establish and fund in Australia for an initial period of five years a Trade Commission for the Pacific Islands, one of whose main tasks would be to explore markets in Australia for Island products.

The Forum Leaders considered the question of membership of the Forum and SPEC and agreed on broad guidelines which the Forum would follow in handling applications for membership. It also noted that many of the members of the SPC were now members of SPEC and decided to commence looking at the relationship between SPEC and the SPC with a view to rationalising the regional institutions at an appropriate time.

Environmental problems in the South Pacific were also discussed and the Forum supported the continued development of a South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme on the basis of the decision it had taken at the Forum in Port Moresby. It asked the Director of SPEC to work with other organisations involved in environmental questions with a view to making the Port Moresby decision more effective.

Other matters considered by the Forum included relations between Forum countries and the Association of the South East Asian countries (ASEAN), the role of the

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in the region and the relationship between SPEC and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Forum requested Hon Mahe Tupouniua and the Government of Tonga to extend his term of appointment as Director of SPEC for a limited period until a new Director is appointed.

It welcomed the offer of Solomon Islands to host the next Forum in Honiara in 1979.