

ELEVENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati

14 – 15 July 1980

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Eleventh South Pacific Forum was held in Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati on 14-15 July, following on the celebration of the first anniversary of the Independence of Kiribati on 12 July. The Meeting was attended by Heads of Government from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (as an observer), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Hebrides, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu, while Western Samoa was represented by a senior Minister. The Beretitenti of Kiribati, the Hon Ieremia Tabai, chaired the meeting, which took place in the Maneaba ni Maungatabu (House of Assembly).

The main issues discussed were as follows:

Admission of New Members

(a) Federated States of Micronesia

The Forum welcomed the admission to the Forum in an observer capacity of the Federated States of Micronesia, noting that following a decision of the Tenth Forum in Honiara last year, the FSM had already become a member of the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation. The question of full membership for the FSM was reserved for review at a later stage.

(b) New Hebrides

The Forum, taking note that the New Hebrides was scheduled to achieve Independence on 30 July 1980, welcomed the admission of the New Hebrides to full Forum membership.

A statement was made to the Forum by Fr Walter Lini, Chief Minister of the New Hebrides, drawing attention to the continuing unrest and insurrection on the island of Espiritu Santo and recalling that his Government was freely elected. The Chief Minister thanked Forum Leaders for their earlier statement of support for his Government and the interest they had expressed in developments in his country. The Forum unanimously adopted the following Resolution:

“Recalling its resolution on the New Hebrides and the French Pacific territories at its meeting in 1979,

1. Notes with dismay recent events in the New Hebrides in which the agreed date for independence, the authority of the elected Government and the unity of the territory are being threatened by the illegal actions of a few, especially in the area of Luganville on Santo island;

2. Calls upon and expects Britain and France, the two administering powers, to meet the express wish of the elected Parliament and Government of the New Hebrides to achieve independence on 30 July 1980 in terms of the agreed constitution;
3. Reaffirms its view that it is the particular and immediate responsibility of the two administering powers to effect a smooth and full transfer of authority to the elected Government of a unified and stable independent state;
4. Calls upon the two administering powers to use all means within their authority, in accordance with their responsibility, to restore law and order, including respect for democratic processes, by immediately securing an end to all defiance of the national authority so that independence can be achieved on the agreed date of 30 July and, beyond that date, to promote the stability and integrity of the new state in support of the full authority of the New Hebrides Government;
5. Notes that its members would be watching closely how the two administering powers discharge their responsibilities.

Trade Relations

The Forum considered the text of the South Pacific Regional Trade and Co-operation Agreement (SPARTECA) together with its schedules, which provides progressively for unrestricted and non-reciprocal access to the markets of Australia and New Zealand for a wide range of products from Forum Island countries. The SPARTECA Agreement was opened for signature and was signed, subject to ratification, by the Forum delegation heads from the following countries: Australia, Cook Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Western Samoa. The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea affirmed his support for the Agreement, but for constitutional reasons was unable to sign as yet. Fiji decided not to sign the Agreement at this stage until its concerns on certain items in the schedules, and in particular citrus juice and timber exports were accommodated. The President of Nauru indicated that Nauru would sign the Agreement only if Nauru were included in the definition of "smaller island countries" in Article I of the Agreement.

Review of Regional Institutional Arrangements: Report of Joint SPEC/SPC Committee

The Forum received and considered the Report of the Joint Committee established by the Forum and the South Pacific Conference to examine the SPEC and Canberra Agreements and to examine ways in which to ensure the more effective use of total human and financial resources available to the region. The Forum noted the central recommendation of the Report to the effect that a single comprehensive regional institution should be created in the Pacific by a merger and reorganisation of SPC and SPEC, and concluded that there were aspects of this recommendation which required further study. The Forum was of the opinion that in the course of time this question should resolve itself as more Pacific countries joined the Forum.

Pacific Islands Regional Development Fund

The Forum took note of a paper presented by the Government of Fiji concerning a Pacific Islands Regional Development Fund and agreed that the proposal should be the subject of further study, in consultation between the SPEC Secretariat and the Conference on Pacific Island Development, based at the East-West Center.

Commonwealth Matters

The Australian Prime Minister drew attention to the forthcoming CHOGRM meeting in New Delhi. He felt that in order to draw more international attention to the problems of the Pacific Islands, it would be desirable to host the next meeting of CHOGRM in 1982, somewhere in the Pacific.

Energy Matters

(a) Forum Approach to OPEC

The Forum considered the steps taken by the SPEC Secretariat to prepare the way for a top level delegation of South Pacific Forum members to approach the OPEC States with a view to seeking sympathetic treatment and for concessions for the Forum members in the field of the supply and pricing of petroleum products, in accordance with an earlier directive from the Regional Civil Aviation Council. The Forum noted that there was a need to consider carefully the method of objectives of such an approach, and noting the desirability of bringing to the attention of oil producing countries the difficulties experienced by Forum Island countries through fuel import cost increases, agreed that terms of reference for an approach to OPEC States should be prepared by SPEC in consultation with Forum members before a decision was taken whether or not to proceed with the proposed mission.

(b) Nuclear Waste Disposal

At the recommendation of the Premier of the Cook Islands the Forum considered the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste in the Pacific and adopted the following Resolution:

“Recalling the resolution of the Tenth South Pacific Forum regarding the storage in the Pacific of spent nuclear fuel;

Noting that the USA has invited other countries to join in examining a nuclear waste storage project on Palmyra;

Believing that any proposal for the storage of nuclear waste outside home countries is a matter of international importance and should be examined closely by all countries concerned;

Notes the assurance by the United States that this project would not be an ecological threat to the Pacific waters but urges that the implementation of the proposal be deferred pending further detailed technical examination and report;

Condemns any action which represents further exploitation of the Pacific for nuclear purposes in ways which disadvantage the peoples of the Pacific;

Requests the Chairman of the Eleventh South Pacific Forum to convey this resolution to the Government of the United States.”

Shipping

The Forum considered in detail the situation of the Pacific Forum Line, noting that financial, managerial and operational aspects of the Line would be dealt with in detail at the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Shipping Council to be held in August in Christchurch, New Zealand. There was considerable discussion on the siting of the Line's financial operations. The Forum reviewed the options for the future of the PFL and noted that these would be under consideration at the forthcoming Council meeting.

Regional Fisheries

The Forum recognised the need for Forum members to clearly establish their own research and development objectives with the help of expert consultants. It therefore directed the Forum Fisheries Agency to convene at an early stage a meeting of officials and appropriate technical experts to discuss, identify and plan a research and development programme for the region suited to the needs of its members.

Pacific Regional News Exchange Scheme

The Forum endorsed in principle the proposal for a regional news exchange scheme and agreed that it should be included among the projects to be considered for possible financing from EEC regional aid funds.

Next Forum Session

The Forum agreed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held in New Hebrides (Vanuatu) at a date to be decided in consultation between the Secretariat and the Government of New Hebrides (Vanuatu).