

**SEVENTEENTH SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM
SUVA, FIJI
8-11 August 1986**

FORUM COMMUNIQUE

The Seventeenth South Pacific Forum was held in Suva, Fiji from 8-11 August 1986. The Forum was attended by Heads of Government of Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia [as an observer], Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa, while Australia was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Papua New Guinea and Tonga were represented by Foreign Ministers. The Prime Minister of Fiji, Rt Honourable Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, GCMG, KBE, KStJ, chaired the meeting.

2. The main issues discussed and on which the Forum made decisions were as follows:

NEW CALEDONIA

3. The Forum reviewed developments affecting New Caledonia since its last meeting.

4. The Forum reaffirmed its support for the peaceful 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. Heads of Government called on all parties to engage in constructive dialogue to bring about a peaceful and lasting resolution of New Caledonia's present problems. To this end they welcomed the recent move by France to talk to individual Forum members, and expressed the hope that this would be undertaken.

5. The Forum recalled its discussion of New Caledonia at its meeting in Rarotonga in August 1985. It had there expressed the view that the course of action on which the then French Government was embarked had contained positive elements which were appropriate in assisting the territory in its evolution to independence. The Forum had expressed the hope that the positive elements of the Fabius Plan would be firmly and consistently pursued to its conclusion.

6. The Forum noted that following the change of Government in France in March 1986 there had been significant changes in France's approach to the situation in New Caledonia. It noted in particular the statement made by M Pons, the French Minister for Overseas Territories, in Noumea on 29 April which outlined the policy of the new Government. It noted that this had been reflected in an interim statute for New Caledonia and that further details of the longer term statute were to be elaborated in consultation with the various parties involved in New Caledonia.

7. In discussing these changes the Forum concluded that some of the key elements which had led it to support the Fabius Plan were absent from the policy of the new French Government. While the Forum acknowledged that there were some positive aspects to the approach of the new French Government they did not, in its view, adequately recognise the aspirations of the Kanak people. In particular it noted that whereas the previous Government had appeared committed to a form of independence for New Caledonia the new Government appeared committed to New Caledonia remaining a territory of France.

8. The Forum expressed disappointment that the hope it had expressed at its previous meeting that the positive elements of the Fabius Plan would be firmly and consistently pursued to its conclusion had not materialised. It concluded that the change in French policy towards New Caledonia over the previous year was a significant backward step.

9. Recognising that the territory was non-self-governing in terms of UN precedent and practice and bearing in mind the positive role which the UN has played in the decolonisation area including the South Pacific, the Forum decided to request the reinscription of New Caledonia on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories through the Committee on Decolonisation (Committee of Twenty Four). New Caledonia's inclusion on that list would ensure that the United Nations regularly reviewed the territory's progress towards self-government and independence. Forum leaders noted that their decision to bring the question of New Caledonia before the United Nations reflected a consistently expressed desire to see New Caledonia move to independence by peaceful means.

10. After full discussion Forum members agreed to act together in pursuing the objective of reinscription and to use their influence in the various international groupings to which they belong. The Forum requested Fiji, as Chairman of the Forum, and as the only Forum member that is a member of the Committee of Twenty Four, to convey the Forum's decision on reinscription to that Committee at its present session and to request the Committee to recommend reinscription to the General Assembly. The Forum requested Vanuatu, as the only Forum member which was also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, similarly to convey the Forum's decision on reinscription to the Movement's forthcoming meeting in Harare and to seek the Movement's support for the Forum's decision.

11. The Forum noted that the French Government remained committed to an early plebiscite in New Caledonia. It concluded that if the results of that plebiscite ruled out the prospect of independence, this was likely to exacerbate rather than resolve problems in the territory. It urged the French Government to give careful attention to the question of those eligible to vote, so that the result accurately reflected the aspirations of the Kanak and other peoples who had a long-term residence in and commitment to New Caledonia. It strongly urged that appropriate measures be introduced to protect the land rights of the indigenous people.

12. Forum members reaffirmed their wish to build on earlier efforts to pursue dialogue with all parties involved in the New Caledonia question, including France. They noted that the period before reinscription was considered by the General Assembly offered opportunities for constructive dialogue with all parties concerned on this issue so that this

course of action did not jeopardise or aggravate the political situation for the people of New Caledonia.

13. The Forum thanked the Chairman of the Ministerial Group on New Caledonia for arranging the work of the Standing Committee of Officials which had been established at Rarotonga, and for circulating its useful information papers to all Forum members. It extended the mandate of the Standing Committee and requested the Committee, through the Chairman of the Forum, to keep Forum members advised of developments affecting New Caledonia and of the progress of the reinscription initiative.

SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR FREE ZONE

14. The Forum recalled that it had endorsed the text of the Treaty and opened it for signature on 6 August 1985 in Rarotonga. It was noted that ten Forum members had now signed the Treaty and four had already ratified it. The Forum was pleased with the favourable international reaction to the conclusion of the Treaty and looked forward to the Treaty coming into force in the near future when eight instruments of ratification had been lodged. The Forum reiterated its view that the Treaty was a significant addition to the existing arms control and disarmament regime and would make an important contribution to protecting the region's favourable security environment.

15. The Forum finalised the Protocols to the Treaty and agreed that they should be opened for signature when the Treaty came into force or on 1 December 1986, whichever came first. It further agreed that if at any future time the Forum decided to amend the Treaty in ways that might affect the obligations of States that had signed the Protocols the Forum would, at the appropriate time, consult with the States concerned. The Forum also agreed to the inclusion of a specific withdrawal clause to enable signatories to the Protocols to withdraw in the event of any unforeseen circumstances arising which would jeopardise their national interests.

16. The Forum agreed that the deeply-felt concerns and aspirations of all its members in regard to the acquisition, stationing and testing of nuclear weapons and the dumping at sea of nuclear waste were addressed in the Treaty of Rarotonga. It expressed the strong hope that the States eligible to sign the Protocols would acknowledge these concerns and aspirations and adhere to the Protocols when they were opened for signature. The Forum noted with pleasure that some States eligible to sign the Protocols had already indicated that signature would receive prompt and favourable consideration.

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (SPREP)

17. The Forum reaffirmed its strong opposition to the dumping of all radio-active waste at sea and all nuclear testing. The Forum examined progress on the negotiation of a SPREP Convention and reaffirmed its commitment to early conclusion.

18. The Forum directed officials, in addition to working for a total prohibition of dumping of radio-active waste, to deal with the question of testing in the SPREP Convention as follows:

- (a) They should ensure that SPREP Convention Meetings made clear that the opposition of Forum countries to testing continues unchanged.
- (b) They should endeavour to negotiate general agreement, including the agreement from France, that the SPREP Convention will prohibit environmental pollution from nuclear testing.
- (c) If (b) is not acceptable to all, officials should revert to pressing for a complete ban on testing as such.

19. The Forum noted that once that Convention was adopted and entered into force it would complement Article 7 of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty which would prohibit sea dumping in areas not covered by the SPREP Convention.

FISHERIES

20. Recognising the vital importance of fisheries resources to the region, the Forum expressed its disappointment and concern that the multilateral fisheries treaty with the United States had not, as yet, been concluded despite the best efforts of Pacific Island States. In this regard the Forum called on the United States and the other parties to the negotiations to renew their efforts to reach agreement so that the Treaty could be ratified and put in place as soon as possible.

PETROLEUM

21. The Forum received and discussed the report of the Regional Petroleum Meeting of Ministers and agreed that:

- the consolidation of the petroleum requirements of Forum Island Countries into a regional tender should not proceed at this time;
- the administration of the existing supply and pricing arrangements should be improved and strengthened; and
- the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) should investigate other cost reduction opportunities.

22. The Forum decided that SPEC should provide specialist assistance to Governments to help improve and strengthen existing supply and pricing arrangements on an on-going basis. In arriving at this decision the Forum noted with appreciation the Australian offer to fund a workshop on petroleum supply and marketing to assist the Forum Island Countries in these essential areas.

SHIPPING

23. The Forum decided to:

- establish a South Pacific Maritime Development Programme (SPMDP) located within SPEC and utilising the resources of that organisation;

- place the SPMDP under the direction of a Management Group consisting of representatives of all Forum member Governments;
- appoint a Programme Controller for the SPMDP funded from extra-budgetary resources; and
- endorse an initial work programme for the SPMDP.

24. In noting that additional funds would be required to implement this important new regional programme the Forum expressed its gratitude for the New Zealand offer of NZ\$50,000 in the first year and NZ\$100,000 in the two following years to support the Programme Controller position.

25. The Forum noted with pleasure that the Pacific Forum Line had made a trading profit of approximately US\$1.6 million in 1985 and that there were favourable prospects for continuing profit in 1986.

SPARTECA

26. The Forum received the report of the Chairman of the 6th Regional Committee on Trade and noted the following:

- (i) Over the past year, there has been significant progress with regard to access. Considerable liberalisation has been effected.
- (ii) A shift of emphasis will now take place whereby greater attention will be given to investment and increased production capability. To give effect to this shift additional resources would be required.
- (iii) Special provisions have been made by New Zealand for assisting the smaller Forum Island Countries and for involving the private sector.
- (iv) While pursuing the opportunities available through SPARTECA, Forum Island Countries, possibly with assistance from an independent consultant who would be required to consult member Governments closely, would give further consideration to the advantages of moving towards an ANZCER type of relationship. This would be considered again at the 1987 meeting of the RCT.
- (v) The Sixth Meeting of the RCT noted the request from Forum Island Countries that Australia and New Zealand make provision for separate funds for Smaller Island Countries' assistance under Article IX of SPARTECA.

FORUM DIALOGUE

27. The Forum strongly endorsed the efforts of the Director in developing the dialogue with Japan and others which was called for at the Rarotonga Forum. It noted the

increasing significance of Japan in helping to meet the development requirements of the Forum Island Countries and encouraged continuation of efforts to secure greater Japanese assistance particularly in the areas of telecommunications, regional shipping and assistance to the Smaller Island Countries' development.

SINGLE REGIONAL ORGANISATION

28. The Forum decided that the issue of a single regional organisation should continue to be a matter for its attention as there was a need for some kind of rationalisation in the regional organisations in the Pacific. The Forum considered that appropriate further information was required to allow it to make decisions. The Forum mandated the Committee of Foreign Ministers on a Single Regional Organisation to proceed without delay with its work and report to the Eighteenth Forum.

OBSERVER STATUS

29. The Forum considered the question of Observer Status at its meetings and adopted the following guideline:

"A Pacific Island Government on the verge of achieving self-government or independence may be eligible for observer status at the Forum subject to the approval of the Forum Leaders."

30. The Forum also directed the SPEC Committee to develop modalities for interaction with other governments and organisations not eligible for observer status at the Forum.

TELEVISION

31. The Forum considered a paper presented by New Zealand relating to a proposed regional television service. It agreed that this proposal should be further considered at the forthcoming SPECTEL meeting to be held later this year.

SOUTH AFRICA

32. The Forum received an oral report from Australia on the outcome of the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Review Meeting on South Africa which was held in London on 4 August.

33. Members of the Forum expressed their deep concern at the deteriorating situation in South Africa and their dismay that the South African Government has shown no willingness to undertake fundamental reforms or to initiate genuine negotiations with blacks about South Africa's future. Members commended the efforts of the Commonwealth to find solutions to the problem in recent months, especially the work of the Eminent Persons Group. They acknowledged that the recent London Meeting of seven Commonwealth Leaders had given a strong lead to the whole international community in its efforts to put pressure on the South African Government and called on all countries, especially South Africa's major trading partners, to implement the measures recommended by the Commonwealth.

MICRONESIA

34. Forum Heads of Government, noting that peoples of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau and the Northern Marianas have exercised their right to self-determination in plebiscites observed by the United Nations, welcomed the resolution of the United Nations Trusteeship Council of 28 May 1986 which concluded that it is appropriate for the Trusteeship Agreement to be terminated. Representatives of the Micronesian people and all Forum States members of the United Nations had addressed the Trusteeship Council urging termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, consistent with the freely expressed wishes of the people of the Territory.

35. The Forum called on governments and regional and other inter-governmental bodies to join South Pacific countries in welcoming this further important step forward in the continuing process of decolonisation and political development in the South Pacific region.

36. The Forum urged prompt termination of the Trusteeship Agreement over Micronesia, in accordance with the resolution of the Trusteeship Council of 28 May.

37. The Forum Heads of Government noted the interest and desire of the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands to become members of the Forum, recognising that this would assist these states in playing an active and positive role in the affairs of the region and more widely. Forum members have valued the participation of the Federated States of Micronesia for several years as an observer member of the Forum and will welcome its attainment of full membership in 1987 along with the Marshall Islands which has also expressed a desire for Forum membership.

38. The Forum welcomed and approved the application of Marshall Islands for full membership of the Forum Fisheries Agency.

EIGHTEENTH FORUM

39. The Forum welcomed with pleasure the offer of Western Samoa to host the Eighteenth Forum in 1987.