



Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

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PRESS STATEMENT 56-04

THIRTY-FIFTH PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Apia, Samoa
5 - 7 August 2004

FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

The Thirty-Fifth Pacific Islands Forum was held in Apia, Samoa, from 5-7 August 2004 and was attended by Heads of State and Governments of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu and representatives of Palau and Vanuatu. New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Timor-Leste also attended the formal session as observers. The Forum Retreat was held at Sinalei Reef Resort, Siumu.

2. The Forum Leaders expressed their deep appreciation to the Government and people of Samoa for hosting the 2004 meeting, for the warm and generous manner in which they and all delegations to the Forum and related meetings have been welcomed and for the arrangements made for the meetings.

THE PACIFIC PLAN

3. Leaders again expressed the wish that the Pacific Plan, intended to be the main instrument for promoting their new Pacific vision, deliver real benefits for the Pacific peoples by proposing concrete plans for the enhancement of economic growth and sustainable development. Leaders approved the Terms of Reference for the preparation of the Pacific Plan noting the extensive but necessary consultation process outlined therein. The Plan Taskforce, managed by the Secretary General, is to be made up of senior officials of member countries and key regional organisations.

4. Leaders commended the overview paper on the results of the assessment of regional mechanisms and processes undertaken by the Secretariat, and directed that the practical suggestions contained in the paper be advanced by the Taskforce in the context of the Pacific Plan. The Secretary General was also asked to progress some of the suggestions as a matter of priority.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Pacific Regional Transport Study (PRTS)

5. Leaders considered the results of the PRTS, which was requested by the Pacific Island Forum Leaders in 2003 because of the serious challenges facing the Forum Island Countries in the transport sector. Appreciation was expressed for the study and for the offer by the Australian Government to provide additional funds (AUD2 million) to progress the principles and recommendations highlighted in the Summary Overview of the PRTS.

6. Support was expressed for the need to develop practical solutions that also links the improvements in the transport sector to other key economic areas, such as fisheries, that are essential to a viable transport system.

7. With respect to the recommendations of the Summary Overview paper, Leaders:

- (a) agreed to adopt the Forum Principles on Regional Transport Services (attached at Annex A);
- (b) encouraged donors to provide additional funds to provide policy advice and short-term technical support to help implement the agreed principles;
- (c) noted that the Pacific Island Air Services Agreement (PIASA), which has been signed by four members, remains open for the signature of those countries that are ready to sign, and that Samoa will sign the Agreement during the Forum;
- (d) noted that the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) Treaty for Aviation Safety and Security Cooperation is open for signing by those countries that are ready to do so, and that some members will do so at this Forum;
- (e) agreed that Forum Island Countries that could benefit from more services and greater competition in shipping should allow regional cabotage; and
- (f) agreed that Forum Island Countries undertake an audit of and rationalise existing regional maritime training institutions with a view to a smaller number of stronger, better-equipped institutions, with coordinated programs linked to the Australian Maritime College.

8. Leaders agreed that the Pacific Plan Taskforce should identify areas of specific actions and recommendations arising from the PRTS and develop these further in the context of the Pacific Plan.

Fisheries

9. Leaders, recognising the importance of fisheries to the Pacific island economies and people, agreed to seek increased sustainable returns from fisheries resources including through the increased participation of resource owners in the fishing industry. Domestic industry development was seen as an important means of increasing returns to Pacific Island Countries. Leaders directed that Forum Fisheries Ministers and the Forum Fisheries Committee meet to review these matters and the need to change the FFA Convention to allow for Ministerial oversight of regional fisheries matters, while enhancing the role of FFA vis-a-viz the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Commission, and to report back to Leaders.

Tourism

10. Leaders recognised the importance of tourism in promoting economic growth in Pacific Island Countries' economies and encouraged those Forum member countries that are not members of the South Pacific Tourism Organisation to consider joining or establishing other cooperative arrangements with it.

Mobile Phones

11. Leaders noted with appreciation that Australia will fund a study aimed at enhancing the compatibility of mobile phone systems in the Pacific.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HIV/AIDS - Regional Strategy

12. Leaders endorsed the HIV/AIDS Regional Strategy, noting the need to address vigorously this most urgent issue. They tasked the Secretariat of the Pacific Community with developing a detailed implementation plan for the Strategy for distribution to members by the end of 2004 (through the Forum Secretariat) and report to the 2005 Forum on progress in implementing the Strategy and on any areas, which might need additional attention. Leaders noted the need for transparent and concerted public discussions of HIV/AIDS issues.

Preparations for Barbados + 10

13. Leaders noted the importance of the BPOA+10 review and in particular, in addressing the new and emerging issues in order to achieve sustainable development, and that the draft AOSIS Strategy will be further negotiated during a third round of Informal/Informals meeting in October 2004 and perhaps during the International Meeting to be held in Mauritius as an action oriented strategy. Leaders encouraged member country participation at the highest level in the BPOA+10 Review to be held in Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005. Leaders also encouraged members who have not embarked in the development of national sustainable development strategies to do so in compliance with the Johannesburg Plan of Action.

Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy

14. Leaders noted the progress in implementing the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and the development of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum - Integrated Strategic Action framework (PIROF-ISA), and the inclusion of these for consideration in the Pacific Plan. Leaders also noted that implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and the ISA Framework will be proposed as an agenda item in relevant CROP Governing Council Annual meetings, and the PIROF-ISA will be submitted to the ten year review of the Barbados Programme of Action as a major regional initiative for funding and the development of partnerships.

Environmental Vulnerability Index

15. Leaders welcomed the completion of work by the South Pacific Geoscience Commission on the Environmental Vulnerability Index and reaffirmed its importance as a tool for measuring and managing national environmental vulnerability of countries and the need to incorporate such a tool in future sustainable development processes. Leaders supported the EVI being promoted at the upcoming meeting in Mauritius, to review the Barbados Programme of Action, as the first step towards its global operationalisation and the application of the EVI regionally and nationally as a complementary environmental management tool for sustainable development.

FFA Vessel Monitoring System

16. Leaders noted that there are still Forum members that continue to license vessels that are not in compliance with the Forum Fisheries Agency's Vessel Monitoring System's requirements and urged members to fully implement the Forum's previous decisions on this issue.

Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention

17. Leaders warmly welcomed the coming into force of the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention. Leaders also welcomed the significant progress made at the fifth session of the Preparatory Conference held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands during September and October 2003 and at the sixth session of the Preparatory Conference held at Bali, Indonesia during April 2004. Leaders further welcomed the first seating of the WCPTC Commission in December 2004 in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia.

Climate Change, Climate Variability and Sea Level Rise

18. Leaders noted the developments that have taken place regionally and globally concerning climate change, climate variability and sea level rise since they met in 2003 and the work that is being progressed. They affirmed their commitment to participating at the High-Level Segment of the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties in Argentina.

Marine Mammals Protection in the South Pacific

19. Leaders noted that a literature review of scientific assessments concerning the interactions between whales and fisheries had been prepared by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and invited SPREP to undertake further research on this area.

Niue

20. Leaders, in discussing the recovery efforts of Niue in the wake of Cyclone Heta and, in the light of the high degree of vulnerability of Pacific islands, agreed to examine ways of improving the effectiveness of regional responses to natural disasters and other regional and local emergencies. The Secretary General was asked to progress this matter further, together with the relevant regional organisations.

21. Leaders noted with appreciation that Australia was providing AUD4 million as a contribution to Niue's Trust Fund to which New Zealand had already contributed NZD5 million. The Premier of Niue thanked the Forum, in particular New Zealand and Australia, and all other donors for their generous assistance to Niue during its time of need.

Sports

22. Leaders recognised the significance of sports to national development and agreed that sports remain on the agenda of the Forum. They noted that Fiji will be hosting the 2007 World Netball Championships and that Palau will host the South Pacific Mini Games in 2005.

Rugby

23. Leaders received a report from the Prime Minister of Samoa on the positive developments in sports and rugby particularly since it was given impetus by the Pacific Leaders at last year's Forum. They encouraged membership of the Pacific Islands Unions on the International Rugby Board and agreed that rugby remain on the agenda of the Forum.

Palau Arts Festival

24. Leaders congratulated Palau on its successful hosting of the 9th Festival of Pacific Arts. The Vice President of Palau thanked the Pacific Governments and their people for their contributions to the success of the festival.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

25. Leaders commended the significant progress made by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, in particular through strong support and involvement of

the countries of the region, and noted the challenges that lie ahead and the need for the region to remain focused and engaged in the nation building and reform effort in Solomon Islands, to ensure that the troubles of the past few years do not recur. The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands expressed his country's deep appreciation to the Forum for its assistance to the Solomon Islands during its time of need.

Nauru

26. Leaders strongly supported Nauru's request for Forum assistance under the Biketawa Declaration recognising Nauru's economic crisis and the threats this posed to its security and national stability, and also Nauru's commitment to reform. Leaders noted the expression of appreciation of the Nauru President for the assistance provided by the region. Leaders noted the generous assistance provided by Australia and some of the initiatives by the Secretary General, including the posting of a Forum representative to Nauru, and urged the Forum and the development partners of the region to mobilise resources to urgently assist Nauru. In this regard, the Secretary General was tasked to work with the Government of Nauru as a matter of high priority, to develop a proposal on how the Forum could assist, and consult with Foreign Ministers before advising the Leaders.

Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism

27. Leaders noted with concern the major security vulnerabilities facing the Pacific region and urged members who have not yet done so to enact and implement existing model legislative provisions including those addressing terrorism and transnational organised crime, illicit drugs, weapons control and transport security. They called for national efforts and stronger and deeper regional cooperation to combat transnational organised crime, in particular by focusing on forensics analysis and capability, provision of equipment and appropriate training for staff, and maritime and border patrol and surveillance capability. Leaders welcomed the establishment of the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC) in Suva to harness and enhance the law enforcement intelligence generated by the national Transnational Crime Units.

28. Leaders also recognised the serious risks to the region's trade and tourism of non-compliance with international transport security measures. They called for enhanced cooperation on counter-terrorism, including by establishing a network of central contact points, holding a counter-terrorism working group in advance of the 2005 meeting of the Forum Regional Security Committee, further work on extradition and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and initial coordination of views from members and regional specialised law enforcement agencies on the possibility of conducting a regional counter-terrorism contingency planning exercise.

UN Convention against Corruption

29. Leaders invited members to consider signing and ratifying the UN Convention against Corruption to strengthen good governance in accordance with the spirit of the Biketawa Declaration.

Shipment of Radioactive Materials

30. Leaders reiterated their concerns about possible economic loss in a non-release situation and sought an assurance from shipping States that where there is a demonstrable link between the incident and economic loss Forum countries would not be left to carry such a loss unsupported by the shipping States. Leaders agreed that further work be undertaken on the case for a region-specific Environment Impact Assessment including the extent to which the IAEA and shipping States' EIAs adequately take account of region-specific dimensions and on any examples of claims being made for rumour-type damage.

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty

31. Leaders called upon the United States, as the remaining nuclear weapons state to do so, to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty as a means of enhancing global and regional peace and security, including global nuclear non-proliferation.

Civil Society

32. Leaders received with appreciation the report of the Non State Actors (NSA) noting the success of the recent NSA meeting in Apia. Leaders also agreed to the Secretary General providing feedback to the NSAs on the views of the Leaders and to continue to develop consultative arrangements between the NSAs and Forum.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

French Polynesia

33. The Forum:
- welcomed French Polynesia's admission to Forum observer status as a significant political and diplomatic step in its own right;
 - supported the principle of French Polynesia' right to self-determination;
 - encouraged French Polynesia and France to seek an agreed approach on how to realise French Polynesia's right to self-determination;
 - invited the Forum Chair to advise French Polynesia and France of these views of Forum Leaders; and
 - asked the Secretary General to report back to next year's Forum on developments in respect of French Polynesia' progress towards self-determination.

Bougainville

34. The successful completion of the Bougainville process will enhance security in the region. In this context, Leaders supported the efforts of the Government of

Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties aimed at establishing an autonomous Bougainville government and commended the role of the United Nations in facilitating the achievements of that objective.

Post-Forum Dialogue

35. Considering Thailand's relationship with Pacific Island Countries, its support to the region in global fora, the potential for future development of linkages with the region in trade and investment and in the provision of technical assistance, Leaders welcomed Thailand as the thirteenth Post-Forum Dialogue Partner to take effect at the 2005 Forum.

Visa Matters among Pacific Island Forum Members

36. Leaders agreed to enhance their bilateral efforts to facilitate travel within the region and noted that the Secretariat will continue to investigate options to address the concerns raised by member countries.

Republic of the Marshall Islands Radioactive Contamination

37. Leaders reiterated the following Forum position on the issue of Republic of the Marshall Islands radioactive contamination and encouraged members to lend support to Marshall Islands when making their UNGA statements this year:

The Forum recognised the special circumstances pertaining to the continued presence of radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and reaffirmed the existence of a special responsibility by the United States towards the people of the Marshall Islands, who had been, and continue to be, adversely affected as a direct result of nuclear weapons test conducted by the United States of America during its administration of the islands under the UN Trusteeship mandate.

The Forum again reiterated its call on the United States of America to live up to its full obligations on the provision of adequate and fair compensation and the commitment to its responsibility for the safe resettlement of displaced populations, including the full and final restoration to economic productivity of all affected areas.

Sudan

38. Leaders expressed grave concern over the emerging humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region, Sudan, and urged the Sudanese Government to comply immediately with UN Security Council Resolution 1556.

Candidatures

39. Leaders expressed their strong support for Sir Kenneth Keith's candidature for election to the International Court of Justice and the re-election of Tuiloma Neroni Slade to the International Criminal Court.

APPRECIATION

40. Leaders commended the outgoing Chair, Hon Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and her Government for her leadership of the Forum over the past year.

VENUE

41. Leaders welcomed the Government of Papua New Guinea's offer to host the 2005 Forum and related meetings.

**FORUM PRINCIPLES ON
REGIONAL TRANSPORT SERVICES**

APIA, 6 AUGUST 2004

Recognising that:

- the provision and maintenance of regular, reliable and competitive air and shipping services is crucial to Forum Island Countries;
- changes in the transport sector, including an increasingly competitive market and new international safety and security requirements, have significant implications for aviation and shipping in the Pacific region; and
- Forum Island Countries have limited technical capacity;

Pacific Island Forum Leaders declare the following principles as central to improving the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of air and shipping services:

- (1) Adherence to principles of good governance is crucial to the viability and sustainability of transport services. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - (a) accountability and transparency in financial management, strategic planning, investment decisions, awarding contracts, and board appointments;
 - (b) clear lines of responsibility for shareholders, boards and management; and
 - (c) accessing and acting upon professional advice, including in relation to decisions on infrastructure.
- (2) Transport services should, wherever possible, be run on a sustainable commercial basis.
 - (a) Where appropriate, this should include corporatisation and/or privatisation of government-owned services;
 - (b) Where transport entities remain in government ownership and are required to perform commercial activities, such entities should be adequately capitalised;
 - (c) Service levels should reflect demand and price should reflect the cost of delivery;
 - (d) Where subsidies are judged to be necessary to fulfil declared social obligations, these should be open and transparent;

- (e) Where appropriate, legislated monopolies should be removed with a view to increasing competition.
- (3) A central responsibility of government in the transport sector should be in establishing and administering regulatory systems.
- (4) Increased efforts should be made to implement regional or sub-regional solutions to problems in the transport sector through, for example:
 - (a) strategic alliances;
 - (b) liberalisation of the economic regulatory environment;
 - (c) agreement by FICs to regional cabotage, where FICs could benefit from more services and greater competition;
 - (d) coordinated approaches to safety and security issues;
 - (e) better coordinated airline schedules; and
 - (f) training and capacity building.
- (5) Forum member countries need to comply with internationally accepted standards on aviation and maritime security.
- (6) Donor support should be provided to Forum Island Countries to assist the implementation of transport sector reforms, conditional on a demonstrated commitment to good governance and economically sustainable solutions.