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THE 14th SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM COMMUNIQUE

The Fourteenth South Pacific Forum was held in Canberra, Australia, from 29-30 August 1983. The meeting was attended by Heads of Government from Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (as an observer), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. Tonga was represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. R.J.L. Hawke, chaired the meeting and the Minister for Foreign Affairs assumed the Australian seat.

The main issues discussed were:

Decolonisation:

The forum reviewed developments since its previous meeting in relation to New Caledonia and adopted the following resolution:

The Fourteenth South Pacific Forum:

Reconfirming its belief that the principles of self-determination and independence apply to non-self-governing Pacific territories;

Recognising that a colonial situation exists in New Caledonia;

Acknowledging the continued efforts of the Kanak people in New Caledonia towards the attainment of self-determination and independence by peaceful means;

Taking note of progress which has been made by the French Government in relation to political evolution in New Caledonia;

Recognising the legitimacy of the Kanak people of New Caledonia having an inherent and active right to self-determination and independence;

Welcoming the recognition by the Kanak representatives at the round-table talks of the rights of other groups resident in the territory to participate in an act of self-determination;

Declares support for independence in New Caledonia determined in accordance with the expressed wishes of its people;

Welcomes as a concrete step towards independence the French Government's intention to move to an act of self-determination in which the option of independence is included;

Urges the French Government to continue to carry out its responsibility in guaranteeing that New Caledonia's independence be achieved in a peaceful manner;

Further urges all the political and community groups in New Caledonia to work closely together and with the French Government towards the achievement of independence by peaceful means;

Requests the French Government, in drawing up the proposed new statute of autonomy, to transfer, at an early date, more political and administrative powers to appropriate authorities in New Caledonia, especially full control of the internal affairs of the colony;

Declares that the establishment by the French Government of the internal autonomy statute should be transitional and include a precise calendar leading to independence;

Urges the French Government in conducting any act of self-determination to take account of the desirability of excluding from the franchise those who are short term or non-permanent residents in New Caledonia.

Proposes that the French Government consider inviting a representative Forum mission to visit New Caledonia to observe developments;

Decides to review the situation in New Caledonia at its 15th meeting and in light of this, to consider the desirability of reinscription of New Caledonia on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories.

Regional nuclear matters:

The forum considered the questions of continued nuclear testing in the South Pacific, the invitation of the French Government to forum countries for scientists to visit and assess the situation at the nuclear test site at Mururoa, nuclear waste disposal and dumping, the South Pacific regional environment program, and the Australian proposal for a declaration of a South Pacific nuclear-free zone. The forum recognised that the French Government's invitation had been made on a bilateral basis and that it was a matter for governments to respond as they wished. The forum adopted the following statement of its position on nuclear matters.

The Fourteenth South Pacific Forum:

Recalled that in the communiqués issued following meetings over several years, they had taken a strong stand in opposition to nuclear testing and proposals for storage and dumping of nuclear waste material in the Pacific. Despite these unanimous expressions of view of independent and selfgoverning South Pacific countries, nuclear practices abhorrent to Forum countries continued;

Reiterated they would continue to make the strongest protests and condemnations so long as nuclear testing by France or any other country continued in the South Pacific regions. They also reaffirmed their opposition to proposals for the dumping and storage of nuclear waste in the Pacific area.

Commended the Australian initiative in reviving consideration of the concept of a nuclear-free zone among the forum members. They expressed appreciation of the Australian working document which has provided the basis for their discussions and which made a valuable contribution to establishing the objectives which a zone concept would seek to achieve.

Expressed the need for more time to consider the implications of the Proposal and to carry out consultations on it. The Foreign Minister of Australia undertook to continue consultations on a bilateral basis to encourage further development of the zone concept both within the framework of the forum and more widely. He undertook to provide the Forum countries with background on nuclear free zone concepts in other parts of the world.

Noted that there had been a wide agreement on the general principles of the concept as submitted by Australia. It affirmed that in further addressing the zone proposal it would be important to uphold the principles of freedom of navigation and overflight as provided in international law and in the treaty obligations of some forum members. It recognised the sovereign right of governments to make their own decisions on their alliance and defence requirements including access to their ports and airfields by the vessels and aircraft of other countries.

Expressed their commitment to advancing the cause of general disarmament; supporting the negotiation and conclusion of an effective treaty which would outlaw all forms of nuclear testing by all States in all environments; and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices particularly through support for the treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Decided to place the question on the agenda of its 1984 session to provide further opportunity for consideration and examination of the concept of the nuclear-free zone.

Single regional organisation:

The forum considered the question of a single regional organisation and adopted the following resolution:

The Fourteenth South Pacific Forum:

Recalling its decision at the Vanuatu forum meeting to commend the desirability of a single effective regional organisation;

Recognising that a single regional organisation to be effective and to meet the needs of the region, should:

i) have the basic goal of furthering the objectives of the forum countries in assisting all Pacific Island countries and territories in their development efforts, either individually or collectively;

ii) ensure the continued participation and contributions of those developed countries, including those outside the region, who have to date played an important role in assisting regional development, on the basis of mutual respect and constructive partnership among the Forum countries, the Island territories and the metropolitan countries.

iii) recognise the position of the Forum as the supreme authority on issues of regional concern;

iv) be more cost effective in the long run than existing arrangements;

v) maintain close relations with other regional institutions and organisations and with international agencies operating within the region, channelling wherever possible their activities through the single regional organisation, with a view to developing greater co-ordination of their activities to the benefit of regional countries.

Agreed that greater emphasis should be given towards attaining the objective of a single regional organisation for the Pacific with a view to establishing in the region a new and lasting relationship among developed and developing countries and territories to promote regional development;

Decided to appoint a Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs from four countries to:

a) consider the political, legal, constitutional and financial implications of a single regional organisation;

b) undertake consultations with the governments of France, USA and the United Kingdom, as well as those island territories not members of the forum and SPEC, to inform them of the forum's views and to ascertain from them their views on their participation in a Single Regional Organisation; and

c) recommend to the fifteenth South Pacific Forum a set of proposals on the single regional organisation based on the foregoing.

Requested the chairman of the fourteenth South Pacific Forum to convey to the governments of France, the USA and the United Kingdom as well as their Pacific territories the forum's decision to initiate consultations with them on a single regional organisation.

Decided that funding for the committee be arranged by SPEC through the short term advisory services project.

Australia undertook to provide financial assistance. The composition of the Committee would be finalised after consultations.

Regional trade and communications:

The forum noted the report of the third meeting of the regional committee on trade and that the SPARTECA agreement was generally working well, although there were a number of areas where continuing assistance was necessary for forum island countries to take full advantage of the various Provisions of the agreement.

The forum, in noting the recommendations of the 1982 study on closer economic co-operation, endorsed the desirability of taking concrete steps to promote closer economic relations between forum island countries and endorsed in principle the lowering of tariff barriers to promote regional trade.

The forum considered a number of papers and reports and also received a verbal report from the chairman of the Pacific Forum Line on the line's financial situation. A number of countries expressed their strong support including financial commitments for the continuation of the line's operations, but the forum concluded that the line's financial situation should be reviewed by the shareholders of the line at the earliest opportunity. The Pacific Forum Line shareholders would examine the viability of the line in its present situation and take decisions about the future of its operations.

The forum adopted a program for the long-term development of rural and outer island telecommunications in forum island countries. The program is designed to provide a regional co-operative approach and a framework within which external assistance for development in this area can be coordinated. The offers by Australia of \$A 300.000 and New Zealand of \$NZ 250.000 towards developmental costs of the program were accepted with appreciation.

Pacific Island Fund:

The forum decided not to proceed with the proposal to establish a Pacific Islands Fund.

[...]

Next forum session:

The forum accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister of Tuvalu to host the next forum with dates to be decided in consultation with the Government of Tuvalu.

Canberra Times, 31. Aug. 1983, nach Aktueller Informationsdienst Asien und Südazifik, Hamburg, 18-83.