

**PACIFIC REGIONAL CSO FORUM
12-15 OCTOBER 2007, TONGA**

NUKU'ALOFA COMMUNIQUÉ

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PREAMBLE

We, the representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) of seventeen Pacific nations meeting in Tonga, appreciate the opportunity given to us by the Pacific Leaders to contribute to the improvement of the Pacific Plan.

We also welcome the *Policy on Consultative Status and Accreditation Between the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and Pacific Regional Non State Actors (PRNSAs)*.

We believe that civil society's understanding, support and input into the Pacific Plan is integral to its success, and can only be achieved if our contributions are given active and serious consideration.

We look forward to working closely with the Pacific Forum Leaders to determine priorities for the next stage of the Pacific Plan, and urge that they establish mechanisms at regional and national levels to ensure that meaningful consultation occurs.

We draw to the attention of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders that there are other pertinent issues challenging Pacific peoples that should be addressed by the Pacific Plan as set out below.

To ensure maximum support for the Pacific Plan by the people of the Pacific, we call upon the Leaders to address the following issues under the four pillars of the Plan:

1: ECONOMIC GROWTH

We reiterate recommendations 1, 2 and 7 on Economic Growth from the Port Moresby statement and recommendations 3,3,5 and 6 from the Nadi state 2007, and urge that they be implemented.

A: TRADE PARTNERSHIP

Pacific CSOs recognize and appreciate the increased engagement by governments with CSOs over the past two years and look forward to a stronger relationship in the future. Pacific CSOs appreciate the expertise the Pacific has brought to the negotiations, and support the efforts Pacific governments have made in the past in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations.

We call on Leaders to ensure that Pacific ACP countries:

1. Adhere to the 'red lines' agreed by Pacific ACP Ministers in June 2007, as a minimum negotiating position;
2. Stress the absolute necessity for Pacific unity in the EPA and not let bilateral agreements divide the Pacific ACP negotiating position;
3. Recognise that Pacific CSOs express grave concerns over recent additions to the European Union (EU) negotiating position, particularly with regard to the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause and strongly urge its rejection.
4. Insist that the EU honours its legal obligation to provide an alternative to the EPAs that maintains current levels of market access as provided for in the Cotonou Agreement, article 37.6;
5. Ensure there is sufficient time to conduct meaningful consultations and scrutiny of the draft EPA, including by parliaments and CSOs, as well as incorporate the results of the social impact assessment in the review processes;
6. Conduct on-going monitoring of social impacts;
7. Advocate for, and maintain ACP solidarity and strength in the EPA negotiations;
8. Delay negotiations if Pacific ACP countries do not achieve their negotiating position by December 31st, 2007;
9. Remain strong and continue advocating for positions that are in the Pacific's development interests.

B: ENERGY

CSOs recognize the work undertaken by Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and national governments; in particular the outcomes of the recent Pacific Energy Ministers Meeting, held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands (April 2007).

CSOs note that approximately 70% of our Pacific communities, in particular women and children, continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of access to modern energy services.

Access to safe renewable energy is considered a fundamental pillar to ensure sustainable livelihoods for the eradication of poverty.

We therefore urge Leaders to:

1. Call on CROP agencies and relevant national authorities to work in partnership with CSOs to ensure communities have access to information regarding energy issues;
2. Ensure the sustainable use and management of renewable and non-renewable resources are a major priority of the relevant sectors within the Pacific Plan under its environment, cultural and social initiatives;
3. Utilize existing monitoring mechanisms such as the Pacific Islands Energy Strategic Action Plan (PIESAP) to ensure that equal priority is accorded to energy

- issues and development in rural and remote island communities, and call on the relevant CROP agencies to make annual update reports available to the public;
4. Acknowledge, recognize and ensure consideration for small island communities that have custodianship over energy sources as a way to minimize conflicts over the development, implementation and management of energy sources;
 5. Provide resources, technical expertise, training for local people and funding to national governments through development partners in order to identify potential safe, renewable and clean energy sources.
 6. Reject nuclear power as an energy source in accordance with the Nuclear-Free Pacific commitment made in the Rarotonga Nuclear Free Pacific Treaty.

2: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A: CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Change is already a reality and poses an immediate danger to the survival of Pacific Island communities, particularly those living in Small Island States, in coastal areas and those dependent on agriculture and natural resources.

We acknowledge the leading role played by Pacific Island Countries in negotiating the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Kyoto Protocol.

There is an unprecedented scientific consensus, notably through the IPCC, about the threat that climate change poses. Although Pacific Island countries contribute negligibly to greenhouse gas emissions, they are profoundly affected by the impacts.

We are deeply concerned with the lack of action by the major polluting countries and those that have not signed the Kyoto Protocol.

We therefore call upon Leaders to:

1. Take immediate action to combat climate change by:
 - a. Insisting that developed nations commit to binding targets at the forthcoming 13th Conference of the Parties in Bali in December 2007 to maintain global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius, and commitments from major developing countries;
 - b. Including CSOs on delegations of member states to the Bali Conference and we acknowledge those that have already done so.
 - c. Calling on Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.
2. Protect marginalized and disadvantaged people by:
 - a. Negotiating a regional contingency plan to accommodate environmental refugees in a manner that maintains their national identity and cultural integrity;

- b. Cautioning against the appropriation of land for biofuels at the expense of food security and also cautioning against the promotion of biofuels as a solution to climate change;
 - c. Minimizing the effect of climate change impact and rising energy prices.
3. Address mitigation and adaptation by:
- a. Engaging CSOs in the development of programmes and as part of the review process of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Resource Allocation Framework;
 - b. Allocating funds within government budgets for ongoing work and by integrating mitigation and adaptation into government policies to ensure sustainability;
 - c. Promoting measures such as forest conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy;
 - d. Involving CSOs in partnerships recognizing the effectiveness of CSO support for community level mitigation and adaptation measures.

B: HIV and AIDS

We commend the leadership shown by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders in the fight against HIV and AIDS, the development of the Pacific Islands Regional Strategic Plan and the work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to oversee the implementation of such plan.

We note that:

- Papua New Guinea is facing a generalized epidemic,
- The regional pandemic is doubling every 5 years,
- Women are making up at least half the number of new cases, the majority of whom are living in stable family relationships;
- Discrimination continues to exist as a result of low education and lack of legal protection;
- Lack of confidentiality associated with the 'coconut wireless' culture is still a barrier to efforts of scaling up HIV testing;
- The access to life-prolonging HIV treatment which also prevents mother-to-child transmission continues to be limited by a lack of sustainable regional bulk purchasing mechanism and lack of funding.

We call upon the Leaders to:

1. Strengthen prevention efforts, with a particular emphasis on women-focused interventions and the role of traditional and religious leaders;
2. Promote initiatives that respond with care and compassion to People living with HIV and AIDS;

3. Effect positive legislative change to reduce discrimination against People living with HIV and AIDS, protect their human rights, and ensure confidentiality;
4. Scale up voluntary testing and counselling initiatives;
5. Strengthen HIV-specific training for health care workers, counsellors and other service providers;
6. Develop a regional bulk purchasing mechanism that will secure long-term supply and access to anti-retroviral treatment for our communities;
7. Reject inclusion of intellectual property rights in trade agreements to ensure affordable access to medicines;
8. Advocate on HIV and AIDS at national and international levels, as well as exploring strategic alliances with other countries to reduce the cost of anti-retroviral drugs;
9. Address the cross-cutting issues between HIV and AIDS and other sectors such as free trade, economic growth, immigration, mobility, poverty, gender, violence, culture, energy, environment, indigenous property rights and land as well as linking the response to HIV in PNG with other Pacific islands;
10. Declare the next 10 years as the regional decade for building an AIDS-Free Pacific where sustainable changes would have been met to reduce the impact of the epidemic on our communities.

3: GOOD GOVERNANCE

A: ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

In our work with communities of the Pacific, we have recognized that responsible leadership, accountability and the respect for the voice and the active and equal participation of the people are crucial to achieving good governance that recognizes Pacific values at community, national and regional levels as well as securing a prosperous and peaceful future for our people.

We call upon our Leaders to:

1. Promote traditional customary practices and governance that value women and family roles;
2. Promote the participation of young people and women in decision-making;
3. Develop initiatives that harmonize traditional governance systems and structures with introduced models;
4. Integrate traditional governance systems into solving governance challenges;
5. Encourage Forum member states to sign and ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related optional protocols;

6. Urge Forum member states that have yet to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to do so, and allocate resources across the region for the full implementation of commitments and reporting obligations.

4: HUMAN SECURITY

The state and its interests have been at the centre of conventional approaches to human security. Changing the focus to a people-centered approach guarantees the twin values of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” which are the basis of human security. CSOs believe that in order for human security interventions to work in, and for the Pacific, the approach must also take into account relationships within and between Pacific communities.

We note that the outcomes of the women and civil society consultations on *Human Security in the Pacific Region* (Nadi, Fiji, April 2007) provide a people-centered perspective to assist in the formalization of a Pacific human security framework.

We call upon the Leaders to:

1. Identify and address human security challenges in accordance with values that promote the maintenance of peace, justice and human rights rather than regionally-sanctioned military interventions.
2. Urgently address the broader threats to environmental security especially climate change, over-fishing of tuna, impacts of extractive industries such as mining and logging and natural disasters.
3. Recognise the strong relationship between human security, poverty and disability.
4. Initiate studies into conditions that contribute to militarism and armed conflict in the region and document best practices from traditional, customary and religious practices that have promoted and maintained peace, justice and reconciliation.
5. **We call on the Forum Secretariat to recognize and consolidate the diversity of CSOs providers of human security programs that address the multi-dimensions of human security.**
6. Actively support the UN process towards an Arms Trade Treaty and declare the Pacific a “No Arms Trade Zone” because of the negative impact of fire-arms use, especially on women and children.

5: SELF DETERMINATION

The granting of independence and self-rule are fundamental freedoms and human rights of indigenous peoples.

We commend the Forum Leaders for the continuous support they have shown to the issue of political self-determination in the Pacific region and in other parts of the world. However, the Pacific Plan still needs to reflect that support.

We acknowledge that Leaders have granted observer status to Te Ao Maohi/French Polynesia, Kanaky/New Caledonia and Timor Leste and support efforts to advance the issues of all territories who have not yet gained their sovereignty.

We have great concern about the conflicts emerging in the region that are destabilizing our countries and threatening the sovereignty of our people; Hence, we are expressing strong hopes that parliamentary democracy will be restored in Fiji by March 2009, and particular assistance be provided to facilitate and accelerate democratic reform in Tonga.

We warmly welcome the overwhelming vote by the UN General Assembly in favor of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and commend the Federated States of Micronesia for their support to the resolution; We deeply deplore the vote against the Declaration by Australia and New Zealand and convey our disappointment to those Pacific Islands states who either abstained or absented themselves from the vote.

We urge the Leaders to:

1. Play a more effective role in assisting and promoting dialogue between administering authorities and territories;
2. Promote and use effective and peaceful instruments and processes to resolve conflict situations related to issues of self-determination;
3. Support and fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007;
4. Request the review of the 1969 UN Act of Free Choice for West Papua and the re-listing of West Papua and French Polynesia on the agenda of the UN Decolonisation Committee;
5. Maintain support to West Papua by granting it observer status in the Forum and encourage continuing dialogue between the Indonesian government and West Papuan leaders on the issue of self-rule;
6. Commission a fact-finding mission to assess the human rights violations in West Papua;
7. Promote cultural exchanges between West Papua and the rest of the Pacific region, including its inclusion in the Pacific Arts Festival and the South Pacific Games;
8. Oppose any attempt by the US government to influence or control in any way, the self-determination efforts of the citizens of “Ko Hawaii Pae Aina” (Hawaiian Kingdom), and acknowledge the US commitments adopted under US Public Law 103-150 of 1993;
9. Support the call from the people of Western Sahara to urge the UN to strongly encourage Morocco to hold the referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara that was originally scheduled for December 1992.

6: WOMEN

We commend the vision of the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration but believe that in order for the Pacific region to be a true region of peace, harmony, security, economic prosperity and sustainable development, women must be fully integrated into all processes of the Pacific Plan, including the Digital Strategy.

We support the various commitments to gender equality in the Pacific Plan, but note that the Pacific Plan process has marginalized women CSOs' involvement in the formulation of implementation strategies as well as potentially undermining women's Human Rights and the status of women through its approach to development. The situation is exacerbated by the current lack of accurate and relevant data on Pacific women relating to the four pillars of the Pacific Plan.

Without the voice of women to define the type of development they want and without the successful incorporation of women and indigenous strategies in the Plan, development goals cannot be adequately achieved.

We call upon the Leaders to:

1. Recognise the high level of gender-based and institutional violence in the region and work with women's CSOs to take urgent measures to address the issue.
2. Initiate studies in partnership with Women CSOs and utilizing Pacific Island consultants on the following:
 - a. the feminization of poverty based on Pacific Islands indicators;
 - b. the contribution of women in the development of our economies;
 - c. the socio-economic status of women in the informal sector, such as market vendors and handicraft producers;
 - d. the negative impact of privatization of basic services such as water, education, health services, electricity and communication on women in the formal and informal sector;
 - e. the utilization of women and traditional practices in conflict resolution matters.
3. Include women's CSOs in the evaluation and the future development of the strategies of the Pacific Plan;
4. Ensure the effective participation of the Pacific Islands, including women CSO representatives in government delegations to inter-governmental and international platforms, particularly the upcoming UN-GASS 2008 and 2011;

5. Allocate resources for the implementation of gender commitments at national and regional level such as the Revised Pacific Platform for Action (PPA), CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action;
6. Resource women's CSOs' initiatives towards achieving peace, security, reconciliation and social justice such as the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.