



## **SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING**

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND  
6 – 7 APRIL 2017

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#### **Joint Communiqué**

1. We, the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, as represented by Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, met in Auckland on 6 April 2017, following our prior meetings in Port Moresby in 2015 and Nuku'alofa in 2013.
2. We warmly welcomed Fiji as the newest Member, noting that Fiji joins us as an essential partner for our regional discussions on defence and security in the South Pacific.
3. We welcomed also the representatives from the United States and the United Kingdom and their contribution as observers to our meeting.
4. Ministers and other representatives expressed their appreciation to the New Zealand Government for hosting our meeting and providing hospitality for our visiting delegations.
5. We extended our sincere condolences concerning the natural disasters and other serious events experienced by members since we met in Port Moresby in 2015, including Tropical Cyclones Winston and Debbie and the Kaikoura earthquake, and welcomed the regional responses and significant contributions made by our defence forces.
6. We endorsed the outcomes of the Secretariat of the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, and expressed our appreciation to Australia for its ongoing efforts in this role.

#### *Regional security developments*

7. We reaffirmed the enduring importance of security and defence to the South Pacific, which underwrites the region's continued stability and prosperity. As part of this, we emphasised the importance of timely information sharing to enhance our collective situational awareness and ability to respond cooperatively to future events in our region.
8. We recognised the key challenges for the South Pacific in security and defence, including in maritime security and protecting our resources, and the importance of our cooperative approaches to regional security threats and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.
9. We reaffirmed the value of our dialogue on defence policy for the South Pacific including for building the capabilities and capacities of our defence forces.

10. We recognised the continued value of the meeting for regional collaboration, noting the benefits of partnership approaches to regional security as shown through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, and during the course of the Bougainville Peace Process.

*Regional initiatives and collaboration*

11. We welcomed the successful Future Leaders' Summit in 2016 hosted by Papua New Guinea with Australia's support, and also the offer of Papua New Guinea to host the next Summit in 2018.
12. We commended progress on the Women in Pacific Defence Forces initiative, noting the successful event hosted by Australia in 2015, and supported the offer of Australia to host the next biennial event, which will provide an opportunity to enhance networking between women in South Pacific defence forces.
13. We expressed appreciation to Papua New Guinea for the briefing on preparations for its Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation hosting year in 2018, which noted the national arrangements for safety and security, and the inclusion of partners as an example of regional cooperation.
14. We endorsed the updated POVAI ENDEAVOUR framework, as a reflection of the extent of defence exercises across the South Pacific, and its value for enhancing cooperation amongst our members and observers.
15. We endorsed the proposal to hold a South West Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces Meeting in Auckland in 2017, to advance our priorities for maritime security, including on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and to determine if this is a useful forum to continue, and invited the Meeting to report back to the 2019 South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.
16. We welcomed the proposal by France to lead a coordinated study on climate change's impact on defence cooperation in the South Pacific and the work of our armed forces, and encouraged each member to engage in this process. The results of this coordinated activity study could be released during an international conference hosted by France prior to the 2019 South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.
17. We further agreed the value of a regional table top exercise at the joint operational level to focus our disaster relief planning and improve working level connections, to be conducted annually and in advance of the cyclone season, and reflected in the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework.
18. Noting the important contribution of our members to peacekeeping in the region and globally, we invited members' engagement in Exercise Southern Katipo 2017 and the

global conference of International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres to be hosted in Auckland in 2018.

*Next meeting of the South Pacific Defence Ministers*

19. We gratefully accepted the offer of the Government of Fiji to host the next South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in 2019.

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