



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

**NADI, FIJI**

**8 - 10 MAY 2019**

### **Joint Communiqué**

1. We, the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM), as represented by Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, met in Nadi on 9 May 2019, following our prior biennial meetings since 2013.
2. We warmly welcomed Fiji's hosting of the 2019 SPDMM, its generous hospitality for the respective visiting delegations, and reaffirmed its inclusion in the forum in the Governance Framework.
3. We welcomed the representatives from the Pacific Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group and the Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting, as presenters, and the United Kingdom and the United States as observers to our meeting.
4. We extended our sincere condolences to the people of New Zealand for the recent terrorist attack which they had suffered.
5. We also extend condolences to Pacific peoples affected by extreme weather events and other large-scale natural disasters, including Tropical Cyclone Gita in 2018 in Tonga and Fiji, and Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 in Fiji.
6. We welcomed progress on the outcomes of the 2017 SPDMM, as shared by Permanent Secretariat, and expressed our ongoing appreciation to Australia for its efforts in this role.

#### *Regional Security Developments*

7. We recognised the evolving geopolitics of the Pacific, and the rapidly shifting and complex dynamics which influence regional security. We reaffirmed the enduring importance of coordinated efforts on defence and security to enhance regional stability and prosperity.
8. We highlighted the importance of responding to both traditional and non-traditional security threats that affect us all and will continue to challenge our collective resilience. This includes transnational and cyber security threats, maritime security challenges, and natural disasters.
9. We acknowledge the 2018 Boe Declaration's affirmation that "climate change presents the single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and wellbeing of Pacific peoples" and recognised climate change as a challenge for which regional defence organisations must be ready.
10. We reaffirmed the value of the SPDMM, as the only forum which enables South Pacific defence ministers to engage on existing and emerging threats, key policy developments, and our collective responses to regional security challenges.

11. We emphasised the significance of the SPDMM for enhancing regional cooperation, deepening interoperability, and building strong and enduring partnerships. This also includes developing the capabilities and capacities of our defence forces.

*Regional Initiatives for Cooperation*

12. We commended progress on the Future Leaders' Summit, as a key initiative of the SPDMM, and welcomed Papua New Guinea's successful hosting of its second iteration in 2018. We reaffirmed this to be an ongoing commitment of the SPDMM.
13. We recognised the need for regular engagement at the ministerial level to support collective resilience of the South Pacific, and have thus agreed that the SPDMM will take place annually.
14. We acknowledged the ongoing damaging effects of natural disasters to the Pacific, exacerbated by climate change, and ongoing collaborative efforts to build resilience and strengthen response mechanisms.
15. We welcomed France's leading of a coordinated study on the implications of climate change in the South Pacific, as endorsed during the 2017 SPDMM, and the successful hosting of a discussion symposium in Noumea in March 2019.
16. We endorsed the recommendations developed following this study, including New Zealand's offer to host a Climate Change and Defence Working Group Meeting in 2020 to assist member countries to progress outcomes.
17. We request that the Chilean Minister of Defense explore the possibility to include a panel to discuss and propose how Defence can support mitigation efforts against climate change, as part of COP25 in 2019.
18. We welcomed the presentation by the Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting forum, and recognised the value of such exchanges to building the region's analytical capacity. We agreed that this exchange should continue regularly, on a self-selected topic, and include a presentation at future iterations of the SPDMM.
19. We welcomed the broadening of the scope of the Pacific Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group to better address existing and emerging regional security threats and priorities identified by Pacific Island countries, as acknowledged by the 2018 Boe Declaration.
20. We recognise that the threat of terrorism has no territorial boundaries, and acknowledge the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge on counter-measures, following the tragic events in Christchurch.
21. We commended the successful and inaugural regional seminar on the Pacific Defence Gender Network, held in Suva in April 2019, and the ongoing commitment to the Women in Pacific Security Forces Seminar. Both initiatives were endorsed by the SPDMM, and aim to support the full and fair participation of females across defence and security forces.

22. We welcomed Australia's hosting of the 2017 Women in Pacific Security Forces Seminar, and New Zealand's co-hosting of the next iteration with Samoa from 22-23 August 2019. We endorsed New Zealand's proposal that Women, Peace and Security become a standing agenda item for future iterations of the SPDMM.
23. We reaffirmed the value of and our commitment to the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework, which offers opportunities for our respective defence forces—and the security forces of Pacific Island countries not represented in this forum—to develop core skills and maintain interoperability.

*Next Meeting of the SPDMM*

24. We gratefully accepted the offer of the Australian Government to host the next SPDMM in 2020.