



SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING JOINT COMMUNIQUE

7 July 2020 (virtual)

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Defence ministers from Australia, New Zealand, France, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Chile and Tonga met via videoconference for a virtual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting on 07 July 2020.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the meeting as an important forum in their regional security architecture as well as a platform to advance defence and security cooperation on matters of common interest to support a stable and prosperous Pacific.

Ministers shared lessons learnt on their experiences with COVID-19 and discussed related impacts on regional security.

They noted the value of supporting one another in times of need and acknowledged that regional partnerships had helped to overcome a difficult cyclone and bushfire season, in addition to challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants shared their future-focused vision and priorities for regional security post-COVID-19 and agreed to continue to explore opportunities to address any relevant potential regional security impacts.

They noted the value of civilian Defence agencies in providing security policy advice and Defence Assessments to Ministers, and agreed that Members would look for further opportunities to cooperate in these areas.

Discussions included an exchange of experiences on Humanitarian and Disaster Relief responses, including the recent bushfire season in Australia and Tropical Cyclones Tino and Harold. Ministers discussed their views on the future of regional Humanitarian and Disaster Relief exercises, priorities and opportunities.

Outcomes from the meeting included agreement to formally record lessons learnt from COVID-19 and progress the development of a Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) concept paper, which will be presented at the next South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in 2021.

There was commitment from all participants for annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meetings in order to continue to address existing and emerging security challenges in the Pacific. Ministers agreed to host the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in Australia in 2021.