

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting

Tuesday 25 October 2022

Defence Ministers and senior delegates from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, and observer nations Japan, United Kingdom and United States, met in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, for the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) from 18-19 October 2022.

Delegates reaffirmed the importance of the SPDMM as a forum to enhance cooperation among defence partners and to collectively address Pacific security challenges. Progress on the seven outcomes of the 2021 SPDMM represent concrete steps towards our shared vision of a peaceful, secure and resilient Pacific region.

Delegates acknowledged the challenges posed by traditional and non-traditional security threats – including climate change, the single greatest threat to the Pacific as set out in the Boe Declaration – and underscored the importance of collective action in responding to shared security challenges. Delegates affirmed the success of recent regional co-deployments as testament to the strength of the Pacific family, and acknowledged the opportunity to build on this model for regional responses in the Pacific.

Delegates acknowledged Fiji's development of a Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Response Framework to enhance regional coordination. Delegates endorsed in-principle a set of regional HADR Standard Operating Procedures. Delegates also recognised the value of the now annual Regional Exercise LONGREACH in enhancing regional interoperability and looked forward to the next iteration in Papua New Guinea in 2023.

Delegates reaffirmed their intent to improve information-sharing within the SPDMM, which will advance collective responses to regional challenges.

Delegates agreed to a plan to refresh the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework and Cooperative Exercise Plan; reaffirming a shared commitment to improving coordination and interoperability between militaries in the Pacific.

Delegates agreed to recommence the Future Leaders Summit in 2023, which had been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New Zealand will host the next iteration in 2023.

Delegates recognised the role of gender in peace and security, and the need to build regional capacity to achieve shared goals on gender equality, human rights and meaningful participation in peace and security processes. They agreed to re-invigorate the outcomes and recommendations from the Women, Peace and Security Summit hosted in Samoa in 2019.

Delegates thanked Tonga for its hosting of the 2022 Meeting and agreed that France would host the next SPDMM in New Caledonia in 2023.

SPDMM was hosted by The Honourable Hu'akavameiliku, Prime Minister of Tonga and Minister Responsible for Defence. Foreign delegations were led by The Honourable Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Defence; The Honourable Win Daki, Papua New Guinea Minister for Defence; The Honourable Peeni Henare, New Zealand Minister of Defence and Whānau Ora; Mr Manasa Lesuma, Permanent Secretary, Fijian Ministry for Defence, National Security and Policing; Brigadier Valéry Putz, Commander, French Armed Forces in New Caledonia; and Mr Juan Enrique Loyer, Deputy Head of Mission, Chile. SPDMM Observer nations were represented by Mr Kaieda Tatsuya, Director, Ministry of Defense Japan; Rear Admiral Michael Day, Commander District 14 US Coast Guard; and Wing Commander Andy Bryant, UK Defence Advisor to Tonga.