

THE ROLE OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM IN OCEAN GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the role of the Pacific Islands Forum in ocean governance. The paper gives a short summary of the Pacific Islands Forum, and highlights its initiatives and directions that have underpinned oceans development in the region over the past thirty years.

Background

The Forum's interest in ocean governance stems from the fact that the largest geographic feature that characterises the region is the ocean. The Forum region covers some 30 million square kilometres of ocean space – about the size of the African continent. In contrast, the land area only covers approximately 500,000 square kilometres of which Papua New Guinea alone accounts for some 300,000 square kilometres (see Table 1). The ocean therefore plays an important role in the political and economic affairs of the Pacific Islands Forum. In a study on the vulnerability of small States in the global society, the particular situation of the Forum Island Countries is characterised as follows:

The geographical situation of the South Pacific Island countries provides a considerable contrast in a number of respects. Generally speaking, they are more remote from larger population centres. The distance of these islands from their nearest larger neighbours, Australia and New Zealand, is roughly twice that separating the Caribbean islands from the Americas..... Many of the South Pacific States are made up of widely scattered component islands. In consequence, although the capital islands are separated from each other by an average of upwards of 1,120 km, in several cases the outlying islands of two states may be less than 400 nautical miles apart. This can give rise to problems of delimitation of their respective 200-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs) as defined in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention and recognised by customary international law. Nevertheless, compared with the Caribbean countries, the wider dispersal of the South Pacific island states as a group ensures that each has a much less restricted sovereign access to the valuable resources of their surrounding waters¹.

Table 1: Basic Demographic Features of the Pacific Islands Forum region

Country	Latest Census Year	Total Population at last Census	Mid-year population estimate 2003	Land area (km ²)	Population density mid-year 2003 (people/km ²)
Cook Islands	2001	18 027	17 800	237	75
Federated States of Micronesia	2000	107 008	112 600	701	161
Fiji	1996	775 077	831 600	18 333	45
Kiribati	2000	84 494	88 100	811	109
Marshall Islands	1999	50 840	54 000	181	298
Nauru	1992	9 919	12 100	21	577
Niue	2001	1 788	1 650	259	6
Palau	2000	19 129	20 300	488	42
Papua New Guinea	2000	5 190 786	5 617 000	462 243	12
Samoa	2001	176 848	178 800	2 935	61
Solomon Islands	1999	409 042	450 000	28 370	16
Tonga	1996	97 784	101 700	649	157
Tuvalu	1991	9 043	10 200	26	392
Vanuatu	1999	186 678	204 100	12 190	17

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

The Pacific Islands Forum is a gathering of Heads of Governments of the independent states of the region. The Heads of Governments meet once a year to discuss broad range of issues concerning political, economic and social developments in the region. The Forum first met in 1971. From an embryonic group consisting of only Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Nauru, Australia and New Zealand, the Forum has grown to 16 independent States including 2 observers - New Caledonia and Timor Leste. Unlike the South Pacific Commission, (subsequently renamed the Secretariat of the Pacific Community), the Pacific Islands Forum is not established by charter. Thus, because of its non-formal structure, it is able to respond rapidly and flexibly to deal with issues as they arise.

To facilitate its work, and to ensure its decisions are carried through by the Pacific Islands, the Forum has an administrative arm called the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Secretariat supports the Forum and provides policy and technical advice on a broad range of political, economic, trade and social issues. Initially, the Secretariat's work programme was slanted towards trade and economic development. In recent years, however, the Forum has taken a more active interest in social issues such as HIV/Aids, education and health.

The Pacific Islands Forum and Ocean Governance

Ocean governance issues have been of primary importance to the Forum since its inception in 1971. This is reflected in the very first communiqué of the Forum Leaders in which it expressed apprehension about the series of atmospheric nuclear tests, which were about to be conducted by

France in Mururoa Atoll in French Polynesia. This was despite the partial ban on atmospheric nuclear tests imposed under the Test Ban Treaty². Their concerns were prompted by the threats posed to the ocean by these tests. With respect to law of the sea generally, the Forum's interest was premised on the unique characteristics of the region and the importance of the oceans to the welfare of Pacific islanders. Fundamental to their interest was the idea of territorial sovereignty and the recognition of the unique dependence of the Pacific Islands on marine resources, which they argued warranted special consideration by the United Nations. Environmental considerations also underpinned the Forum's agenda. At its first meeting, Forum Leaders said:

The question of nuclear weapons tests was extensively discussed in the light of the series of tests recently concluded by France. Members were unanimous in expressing their deep concern that the French Government should have failed so significantly to accord recognition to the wishes of the peoples of the South Pacific area despite the views so clearly indicated by both government and peoples. The fact the radioactive fallout from this year's series was low because of the nature of the test explosions carried out did not lessen their opposition which would remain unaltered until such time as a firm assurance was given that the South Pacific would not be used as a site for further experimentation of this kind with its resulting implications for men and his environment and in particular the marine environment³.

During its first ten years, the Forum's interest in ocean governance was dictated by the desire to benefit from the evolving international legal regime extending coastal State's maritime jurisdictional rights and the legal and economic benefits that flowed from those rights. This struggle was spawned out of the new international economic order. Two principles underpinned this struggle. The first was to obtain a greater share of the oceans wealth, which until the 1950s and 1960s, was largely Eurocentric and vested in the hands of a few powerful and rich maritime nations. The second was the confluence of self-determination and extended maritime jurisdiction. In the 1970s, most Pacific Islands were going through a period of decolonisation. Thus, the idea of extended maritime jurisdiction was viewed from an economic perspective. This explains why at its first meeting, the Forum "discussed a number of issues concerning the Law of the sea including the breadth of the territorial sea, the question of resources jurisdiction over a wider area of sea and of the sea bed, a special regime for archipelago states and rights of passage through waters subject to the jurisdiction of coastal states"⁴ and "agreed that there was a large area of common interest among members of the Forum and that there should continue to be close consultation among them in relation to the prospective Conference on the Law of the Sea"⁵.

The Forum has not only addressed issues about sovereign rights but also concerned itself with institutions to assist the Pacific Islands to realize the benefits from the ocean. It recognized that the Pacific Islands lacked human and technical resources to utilize the oceans. In 1976, the Forum considered two papers presented by Papua New Guinea and Fiji. The paper by Papua New Guinea called for a co-ordinated approach towards environmental protection and conservation. Fiji's paper proposed the establishment of an organization to assist the Pacific Islands in the exercise of their sovereign rights particularly with respect to highly migratory fish stocks⁶. As a result, the Forum adopted a declaration, which called for the establishment of a regional fisheries organization. This was the genesis of the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). The Forum recognized at the outset, the importance of regional co-operation in oceans governance and agreed to adopt a co-ordinated approach. At its 1977 meeting, Forum stated that it:

Recognize that in the continued absence of a comprehensive international convention on the law of the sea and in view of the action taken by a large number of countries including distant water

fishing countries exploiting the valuable highly migratory species in the region, the countries in the region should move quickly to establish fishing or exclusive economic zones and should take steps to co-ordinate their policies and activities if they are to secure more than a very small part of the benefits from their resources for their peoples⁷.

The Forum's preoccupation in the 1970s and 80s was to acquire sovereign rights that were evolving under international law through the auspices of the United Nations. The Forum was also concerned about establishing institutions to assist the Pacific Islands to harness the gains of the 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ). From the mid 1980s, the Forum became involved in several specific ocean issues that threatened to undermine the Pacific Islands exercise of their sovereign rights. The focus of the Forum's interest in ocean governance shifted from the acquisition of sovereign rights to the consolidation of those rights. Two critical areas of ocean governance in which the Forum's role was pivotal concerned the negotiations to conclude a multilateral fisheries access treaty with the Government of the United States and the destructive use of long driftnets by Asian fishing vessels.

When the Pacific Islands declared 200 mile EEZs in the 1970s and 80s, it resulted in the dislocation of fishing vessels from distant water fishing nations from their traditional fishing grounds. The United States, unlike other distant water fishing nations refused to recognize the sovereign rights of coastal States over the highly migratory tuna resource. This led to a tuna war between the United States and some Pacific Islands. As a result, in 1984 the United States imposed a trade embargo on all tuna products from Solomon Islands because the Solomon Islands arrested and prosecuted a US purse seiner for fishing illegally in Solomon Islands EEZ. The Forum saw the potential long-term damage to US – Pacific Islands relations and called for negotiations. These negotiations resulted in the conclusion of the *Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States*⁸. The Forum:

...welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on the Multilateral Fisheries Treaty with the United States and the signing of that Treaty by countries in Port Moresby on 2nd April 1987. The Forum noted with satisfaction that Niue and Vanuatu became the 13th and 14th signatories during the course of the Forum meeting. It enjoined signatories to ratify the Treaty as early as possible to enable the substantial benefits arising from the implementation of the Treaty to become available to Forum countries. The Forum also endorsed Forum states adopting a regional or sub-regional approach to fisheries negotiations with the Government of Japan as a matter of priority. It requested the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency to pursue this issue. The Forum condemned in the strongest possible terms the continued illegal fishing activities of United States purse seiners and other foreign fishing vessels within the 200-mile EEZs of its member states. In this context it welcomed new initiatives by Australia and New Zealand in association with the FFA to improve regional surveillance capabilities⁹.

The Forum was also instrumental in addressing the threats posed by the indiscriminate use of long driftnets. The use of these long driftnets threatened the region's tuna stocks, particularly southern albacore tuna. The Forum responded with the Tarawa Declaration in which it expressed profound concern at the damage being done by pelagic driftnet fishing to the economy and environment of the South Pacific region. Given the catastrophic effects of this fishing technique on the lives of the peoples of the South Pacific, the Forum:

- resolved for the sake of this and succeeding generations of Pacific peoples to seek the establishment of a regime for the management of albacore tuna in the South Pacific that would ban drift net fishing from the region; such a ban might then be a first step to a comprehensive ban on such fishing;

- determined, to this end, to convene an urgent meeting of regional diplomatic, legal and fisheries experts, to develop a Convention to give effect to its common resolve to create a zone free of drift net fishing;
- called on the international community to support, and co-operate in, the urgent conclusion of a Convention establishing the zone;
- resolved that individual member states of the South Pacific Forum will take all possible measures in the interim to prevent drift net fishing within their waters, and to otherwise actively discourage operations of drift net fishers;
- further resolved that member states acting individually and collectively will take what action they can within relevant international organizations to contribute to the cessation of this harmful form of fishing;
- commended the Republic of Korea for its decision to cease drift net fishing in the region; and
- called on Japan and Taiwan to follow this example, and abandon immediately their damaging drift net operations¹⁰.

The Tarawa Declaration led to the negotiations of the *Wellington Convention for the Prohibition of the Use of Long Driftnets in the South Pacific*¹¹, which led to the cessation of the use of long driftnets in the region.

Concerns about whaling in the region prompted the Forum to support the establishment of a Southern Zone Whale Sanctuary. In 2001, the Forum:

..... recalled their decision at their 2000 meeting calling for the progressing of a proposal on a South Pacific Whale Sanctuary. Leaders also noted the outcome of the Apia meeting convened to advance the proposal.

..... noted the decision of the International Whaling Commission and the outcomes of the Apia meeting, endorsed the Apia Statement and agreed to pursue the objectives of the proposed South Pacific Whale Sanctuary through national, regional and international actions, and

.... noted that some Forum members have taken steps to effect protection of whales within their national Exclusive Economic Zones and that other member countries might wish to consider similar action, in which case appropriate technical support could be made available¹².

Ocean Governance, Trade and Transportation

One of the primary concerns of the Forum during its initial stages was trade. The oceans play an important part in trade in the Pacific Islands because most of the movement of goods throughout the region is carried out by means of the ocean. At its first meeting, the Forum:

..... agreed that a considerable amount of further study in this field was required. It was noted that a joint working party had already been formed of representatives from each PIPA member country to investigate fully the organization and operation of a regional shipping line. An UNDP regional transport survey is also under way. The Forum decided that further discussions on shipping would be held in the light of the information provided by these two investigations and the results of the Senior Officials' Trade Meeting¹³.

Following the survey, the Forum concerned itself with the establishment of a regional shipping service to serve the trade interests of the Pacific Islands. At its meeting in 1974:

The Forum discussed the SPEC report on regional shipping and the reports of the subsequent meetings of the Technical Meeting on Shipping and the SPEC Committee, which recommended that, in the light of the information available, the way was now clear for the Forum to decide whether or not to proceed with the proposed regional shipping venture. Members re-affirmed the need to make progress in this key area by adopting a truly cooperative approach at the inter-governmental level. It was pointed out that some member countries already operated shipping

services in the region and members were asked to support these services. It was also pointed out that other Members were not well served by available shipping.

The Forum agreed as a first step, to establish a Regional Shipping Council, consisting of Ministers or their representatives from all Members of the Forum. The Council would organize, through SPEC, the studies and investigations needed as a basis for a subsequent decision by the Forum on the establishment of a Regional Shipping Corporation and on any other practical steps to improve shipping services throughout the region. The necessary groundwork for the setting up of the Council was entrusted to SPEC, along with the preparation of a report on future action to be considered at the next meeting of the Forum. The Forum welcomed with appreciation an offer by the Prime Minister of New Zealand to make an immediate grant of \$25,000 to enable work under this heading to be pursued with minimum delay¹⁴.

The Forum recognised the importance of shipping to trade and agreed to establish the Pacific Forum Line. The establishment of the Pacific Forum Line in 1997 underscored the Forum's ongoing interest in the importance of the oceans as a means through which the Pacific Islands could expand internal and external trade links.

With respect to trade, the Forum has been actively involved in global negotiations to develop favourable terms of trade for fishery products in the region. This involves working with the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency in ensuring better terms and conditions for access to the region's lucrative tuna resource. The Forum has also been involved in promoting the application of trade related measures as a conservation tool. Its project on certification of exports of ornamentals and aquarium products helps to ensure best practices in the exploitation of the region's fisheries resources.

Nuclear Waste and protection of the ocean environment

The Forum's environmental concerns for the ocean have seen it take a strong stance against nuclear testing, the dumping of nuclear wastes and the transportation of nuclear materials and other hazardous wastes through the Pacific. In 1985, it approved the *South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty*¹⁵. The underlying principle behind the Treaty may be gauged from the Forum's communiqué of its 1986 meeting.

The Forum recalled that it had endorsed the text of the Treaty and opened it for signature on 6 August 1985 in Rarotonga. It was noted that ten Forum members had now signed the Treaty and four had already ratified it. The Forum was pleased with the favourable international reaction to the conclusion of the Treaty and looked forward to the Treaty coming into force in the near future when eight instruments of ratification had been lodged. The Forum reiterated its view that the Treaty was a significant addition to the existing arms control and disarmament regime and would make an important contribution to protecting the region's favourable security environment.

The Forum finalised the Protocols to the Treaty and agreed that they should be opened for signature when the Treaty came into force or on 1 December 1986, whichever came first. It further agreed that if at any future time the Forum decided to amend the Treaty in ways that might affect the obligations of States that had signed the Protocols the Forum would, at the appropriate time, consult with the States concerned. The Forum also agreed to the inclusion of a specific withdrawal clause to enable signatories to the Protocols to withdraw in the event of any unforeseen circumstances arising which would jeopardise their national interests.

The Forum agreed that the deeply-felt concerns and aspirations of all its members in regard to the acquisition, stationing and testing of nuclear weapons and the dumping at sea of nuclear waste were addressed in the Treaty of Rarotonga. It expressed the strong hope that the States eligible to sign the Protocols would acknowledge these concerns and aspirations and adhere

to the Protocols when they were opened for signature. The Forum noted with pleasure that some States eligible to sign the Protocols had already indicated that signature would receive prompt and favourable consideration¹⁶.

In the 1980s, a Japanese company proposed dumping low-grade nuclear waste in the Pacific. The Forum vehemently opposed the proposal on the grounds that it posed serious and grave risks to the region's fragile marine environment. In 1981, the Forum passed a resolution:

- Recalling the resolution passed at previous South Pacific Forum meetings;
- condemning any actions representing further exploitation of the Pacific for nuclear purposes in ways which disadvantage the peoples of the Pacific;
- Reaffirming its strong condemnation of testing of nuclear weapons or dumping or storage of nuclear wastes in the Pacific by any government as having deleterious effects on the people and environment of the region;
- Urging France immediately to cease its nuclear weapons testing programme and provide full details of the effects of its past testing activities on Pacific people and the environment;
- Urging the United States and Japan to store or dump their nuclear waste in their home countries rather than storing or dumping them in the Pacific; and
- Calling on all Governments to recognise that Pacific Heads of Government meeting as the South Pacific Forum, are united in their grave concern for the protection of the people and environment of the region, and that any attempt to deal differently with each on the matter is unacceptable¹⁷.

The Forum has also been concerned about the use of the Pacific as a means through which hazardous materials are transported. In 1995, the Forum adopted the *Waigani Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region*¹⁸. The Forum stated that: -

..... The Convention was an important milestone, in banning the importation of all hazardous and radioactive wastes from outside the Convention area to Pacific Island Developing Parties, and ensuring that any transboundary movements of hazardous wastes within the Convention area were completed in a controlled and environmentally sound manner. The Forum thanked the Working Group of officials, and the Secretariat, for the intensive work put into completing the Convention since the 1994 Forum. The Forum urged all members to sign and ratify the Convention expeditiously, to bring it into effect as soon as possible, in accordance with their national processes¹⁹.

The Forum's concerns about the transportation of radioactive materials has been ongoing. In 1999, the Forum initiated direct negotiations with representatives of Japan, France and the United Kingdom to address the concerns of the Pacific Islands. At its most recent meeting in 2003, the Forum: -

..... reiterated their continuing concerns over the shipment of radioactive materials through the region. It welcomed the recent assurance by shipping States to take all practicable action to assist in the management of an incident, whether or not such an incident involved the release of radioactivity, and to cooperate effectively with any state concerned, particularly states close to where any accident had taken place. Leaders called on shipping States to continue the dialogue with Forum members and in particular, to progress the proposals that Forum members had developed for innovative arrangements and assurances²⁰.

Good Governance and Sustainable Development

Fundamental to sound ocean management and sustainable development is good governance. Three initiatives of the Forum apply by implication to good governance of the oceans. These are the Aitutaki Declaration, the Forum Economic Action Plan Eight Principles of Good Governance and Accountability and the Principles of Good Leadership. The Forum resolved through the Aitutaki Declaration to promote peace and security and recognised that –

Good governance, sustainable development and international cooperation, including preventive diplomacy, are among the most effective ways of overcoming the vulnerability, building mutual confidence and strengthening the overall security of states in the region²¹.

The Biketawa Declaration reflect, *inter alia*, the Forum's:

- Commitment to good governance which is the exercise of authority (leadership) and interactions in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, participatory, consultative and decisive but fair and equitable.
- Belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief and in the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political process in framing the society in which he or she lives.
- Upholding democratic processes and institutions which reflect national and local circumstances, including the peaceful transfer of power, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government.
- Recognition of the importance and urgency of equitable economic, social and cultural development to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of the peoples of the Forum.
- Recognition of the importance of respecting and protecting indigenous rights and cultural values, traditions and customs.
- Recognition of the vulnerability of member countries to threats to their security, broadly defined, and the importance of cooperation among members in dealing with such threats when they arise, and
- Recognition of the importance of averting the causes of conflict and of reducing, containing and resolving all conflicts by peaceful means including by customary practices.

The Forum Principles of Good Leadership complements the Eight Principles of Good Governance and Accountability and underscores the link between proper management of the ocean and good governance at all levels of government. Without good governance, many of the institutions and laws enacted to protect and preserve the marine environment would be rendered ineffective.

The Regional Oceans Policy

By the late 1990s, the Forum realised that oceans governance should be encompassed under an all embracing framework which would be consistent with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agenda 21 Programme of Action for Sustainable Development's call to adopt a more holistic and integrated approach to ocean governance. In 1999, the Forum

.....recalled their 1995 decision urging members to become parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea at the earliest opportunity, and further urged members, which have not yet done so, to become parties to UNCLOS at the earliest opportunity.

..... welcomed the recent initiatives taken by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies to assist FICs to understand their rights and obligations under UNCLOS and in providing FICs with a legal and policy framework to implement UNCLOS.

..... endorsed the conclusions and outcomes of the recent South Pacific Regional Follow-Up Workshop on the Implementation of UNCLOS which was held in Vava'u, Tonga, from 23-27 August 1999, in particular, the six priority areas identified by the workshop which are: national

and regional Ocean Policy and legislation; marine scientific research and cooperation; delimitation of maritime zones including continental shelves; human resource development; special technical assistance and support and cooperation of regional institutions; ratification of UNCLOS and linkages to relevant treaties; and surveillance cooperation and exchange.

..... urged members which have already become parties to UNCLOS, to implement UNCLOS and, in particular, the outcomes and conclusions of the Follow-Up Workshop and encouraged relevant CROP agencies to continue to provide assistance to FICs in implementing UNCLOS, particularly in the six priority areas identified²².

The Oceans Policy was adopted at the Forum's 2002 meeting. The Regional Oceans Policy contains five key principles. These are:

- Improving our understanding of the ocean;
- Sustainably developing and managing the use of the ocean resources;
- Maintaining the health of the ocean;
- Promoting the peaceful use of the ocean; and
- Creating partnerships and promoting co-operation

In adopting the Policy, the Forum Leaders "recalled their 1995 decision urging members to become parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) at the earliest opportunity" and welcomed recent developments in the areas of Oceans and Legislation as a platform for developing an Action Plan in this important area for the region and approved the "Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy". The Forum also called for follow-up action plans for the region and for members individually in this area.

The co-ordination role of the Forum Secretariat

Specific aspects of ocean governance initiatives is undertaken by the respective technical organisations – Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission (SOPAC), FFA, and the South Pacific Regional Environment programme (SPREP). Important links are increasingly being made with non-State actors. In 1995, the Forum agreed to restructure the Forum Secretariat to focus more on policy advice and coordination as opposed to program and project implementation. The policy role of the Forum Secretariat include coordination of regional policy initiatives at both macro and sectoral levels. The Forum Secretariat is the permanent chair of CROP, a coordinating body made up of the executive heads of the regional organisations. This body has become much stronger over the last couple of years with a permanent secretariat and chair. The current focus is on ensuring that all regional initiatives are properly vetted for relevance and cost-effectiveness, and that unnecessary duplication of effort is avoided.

The establishment of a pro-active role for CROP, including through the establishment of the Working Groups to act as steering committees, reflects the priority accorded to effective regional coordination and collaboration. And the various decisions of the 1995 Forum referred to above underscores the importance that is attached by Pacific Leaders to this objective. The Forum Secretariat's Development and Economic Policy Division houses a special Regional Coordination Section for the purpose of coordinating key regional policy and functional initiatives between the Forum and technical agencies, both CROP and non-CROP. The Resources Issues Adviser and the Economic Infrastructure Adviser provide the principal link for marine sector issues.

To facilitate the coordination of regional activities in the development of a regional strategy for the marine sector, CROP established a Marine Sector Working Group. The main focus of the Marine Working Group is to assess the areas of activities that have complementarity and overlap between existing and proposed regional initiatives and to develop strategies for prioritising work programmes and allocating institutional responsibilities in the marine sector.

The terms of reference of the Marine Working Group is to:

- Review, clarify and assist advise on development priorities in the marine sector;
- Determine areas of complementarity and overlap and any potential gaps in coverage of existing and proposed regional activities/initiatives in the marine sector; and
- Recommend to CROP implementation procedures for enhancing coordination and cooperation, and for ensuring priority areas are adequately addressed.”

Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussion that the Forum has a multifaceted role in ocean governance, which transcend economic, political and social spheres. The above discussion has only taken a snapshot of some of the more important initiatives that the Forum has played in ocean governance. Ocean governance in the Pacific has been evolutionary and the Forum has been and the epicentre of many of the initiatives which have been developed in the region. The importance of the Forum as an overarching body that encompasses the wider spectrum of ocean governance will only continue to grow as new challenges emerge. The discussion has not even covered the wider social and environmental links to ocean governance, which are covered by the Forum. Social issues with respect to gender in fisheries, HIV/Aids transmission by fishers, the socio-economic impact of marine related activities on the broader community, and the intrinsic links between climate change and sea level rise and its implications for ocean governance have not been discussed in the interest of time and space. Nonetheless, they are issues that cannot be ignored in the wider trajectory of ocean management.

The subject areas which have been dealt with by the Forum are wide and varied. In the past, the Forum was preoccupied with the need to establish and affirm sovereign rights granted under international law. In later years, the Forum was concerned about protecting those rights. What of the future? The challenge for the future is to keep the oceans peaceful for mankind’s benefit. As the former Secretary General, Noel Levi said:

The age of information had exploded, and as technology made the world smaller, so did our access to one another. And, as we hoped for peace and tolerance in the dawn of a new era - we have been, with pain spun into a web of hate and violence around the world, and global terrorism now threatens the very things we have taken for granted - our freedom to move, freedom of religion, and above all, respect for human rights. But amidst the cloud of struggle all over, and despair from the poor, regional actions such as the one we took on the situation in the Solomon Islands, bring hope to peace. Let us hope that we can, God willing, cope with these challenges²³.

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society, Report of a Commonwealth Consultative Group*, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986)

² South Pacific Bureau of Economic Co-operation, *Forum Communiqué of the 1971 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1971)

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- ³ Ibid, *Forum Communiqué of the 1972 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1972)
- ⁴ Supra note 2.
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Ibid, *Forum Communiqué of the 1976 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1976)
- ⁷ Ibid., *Forum Communiqué of the 1977 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1977)
- ⁸ Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), *Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States*, (Honiara: Forum Fisheries Agency, 1993)
- ⁹ Ibid., *Forum Communiqué of the 1987 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1987)
- ¹⁰ Ibid., *Forum Communiqué of the 1989 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1989)
- ¹¹ See Lal Kurukulasuriya et.al., *Convention on the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific*, (Apia: South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and United Nations Environment Programme, 1998), pp.328 - 331
- ¹² Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Forum Communiqué of the 2001 Meeting*, (Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat)
- ¹³ Supra note 2.
- ¹⁴ South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, *Forum Communiqué of the 1974 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1974)
- ¹⁵ Supra note 11 at pp. 293 – 302.
- ¹⁶ South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, *Forum Communiqué of the 1986 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1986)
- ¹⁷ South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, *Forum Communiqué of the 1981 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation, 1981)
- ¹⁸ Supra note 11 at pp. 332 – 356.
- ¹⁹ South Pacific Forum Secretariat, *Forum Communiqué of the 1995 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1995)
- ²⁰ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Forum Communiqué of the 1003 Meeting*, (Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2003)
- ²¹ South Pacific Forum Secretariat, *Forum Communiqué for the 1997 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1997)
- ²² South Pacific Forum, *Forum Communiqué for the 1999 Meeting*, (Suva: South Pacific Forum Secretariat, 1999)
- ²³ Noel Levi, *Opening Address to the 2003 Pre FOC Meeting, Auckland 12 – 13 August 2003*, (Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2003)