

## **Forum Leaders Special Retreat Communique in Fiji**

### **PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SPECIAL LEADERS' RETREAT**

**Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea**

**27 January 2009**

#### **LEADERS' DECISIONS**

Heads of State and Government of Australia, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; and representatives of Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji and Palau; met in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on 27 January 2009 to discuss the situation in Fiji. Leaders noted the apologies received from the Republic of the Marshall Islands for its inability to attend due to circumstances beyond its control.

2. Leaders expressed their thanks to the Government and people of Papua New Guinea for their warm hospitality and generous hosting of the meeting, and the excellent arrangements made for the Retreat.

3. Leaders:

(a) Reiterated the condemnation expressed by them in the Niue Communiqué of the failure of the Fiji Interim Government to demonstrate the necessary political will to fulfil the undertaking made to Forum Leaders in 2007 that it would hold parliamentary elections by March 2009;

(b) Noted and acknowledged the steps taken by the Fiji Interim Government towards re-engagement with the Forum since the Leaders' Meeting in Niue, including the reconvening of the Forum-Fiji Joint Working Group, and the second visit of the Ministerial Contact Group; but expressed serious concern at the continuing lack of practical preparations for holding elections;

(c) Stated that more than two years of rule by an unelected military government, with no clear timetable for the return of constitutional government to the people, is not acceptable by international standards including those embraced by all Forum members and enshrined in the Biketawa Declaration, and emphasised the need to restore democracy without further delay;

(d) Reaffirmed that there are long-term issues that need to be addressed in Fiji, including through independent and inclusive political dialogue; but that such dialogue must be primarily focused on the holding of elections. The dialogue process should not be the cause for further delay in holding elections;

(e) Called on the Interim Government to take the following actions to demonstrate its commitment to the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Fiji:

(i) provide to Forum Leaders a new timetable agreed with all key political stakeholders,

specifying in detail the agreed steps to elections and a return to democracy, and the timing for completing them, reflecting a consensus reached through a genuine, open, inclusive dialogue without threats, preconditions, ultimatums or predetermined outcomes;

(ii) make a clear commitment that any reforms agreed through political dialogue will be implemented in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Fiji;

(iii) undertake and sustain serious and credible election preparations, including allocation of necessary resources to the Office of the Supervisor of Elections, and the prompt preparation of the electoral roll; and

(iv) make a renewed commitment that the military will withdraw from civilian politics following such an election, return to barracks, and submit to the authority of the elected civilian government in accordance with the Constitution;

(f) Agreed, subject to progressing the actions specified at sub-paragraph (e) above, to positively consider providing prompt financial and technical assistance to the President's Political Dialogue Forum; in recognition of the value of independent and inclusive dialogue as a long-term process to assist in resolving broader issues in Fiji. The specifics of such assistance would be determined in close consultation with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations;

(g) Reaffirmed the ongoing readiness of Forum members to continue to assist Fiji with preparations for an election, and called on the relevant authorities in Fiji to cooperate fully with Forum members and other donors to expedite such assistance;

(h) Agreed, in furtherance of Forum members' collective commitment to the fundamental principles enshrined in the Biketawa Declaration, to the imposition of "targeted measures" under paragraph 2(iv) of the Biketawa Declaration in relation to Fiji to take effect unless:

(i) the Fiji Interim Government nominates an election date by 1 May 2009;

(ii) that election is held by the end of December 2009; and

(iii) the actions in paragraph (e) above are taken and publicly declared by 1 May 2009.

(i) Agreed that such targeted measures will comprise the following:

(i) suspension of participation by the Leader, Ministers and officials of the Fiji Interim Government in all Forum meetings and events; and

(ii) ineligibility of the Fiji Interim Government to benefit from Forum regional cooperation initiatives, and new financial and technical assistance, other than assistance toward the restoration of democracy under the framework of the Biketawa Declaration;

(j) Agreed that the targeted measures, if imposed, will remain in place until such time as a democratically elected, civilian parliamentary government is restored in Fiji;

(k) Tasked the Ministerial Contact Group with continued monitoring of the Fiji situation, within the framework of Leaders' decisions, including in relation to the assessment of the Fiji Interim Government's compliance with sub-paragraph (e) above, and directed it to report further to Leaders as required and in any case before their 2009 annual meeting in Australia. Such reporting could, if necessary, recommend the partial relaxation of

existing measures, or, alternatively, the adoption of further measures, which might include full suspension of Fiji's membership in the Forum; and

(1) Called on the international community to support the measures outlined above by taking complementary actions to encourage the prompt restoration of elected constitutional government in Fiji.

4. Leaders considered that the timelines specified in these decisions are consistent with the position stated to Forum Leaders by the representative of the Fiji Interim Government on a timetable for the return to democracy.

**Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea**  
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