

Pacific Consultation on Advancing Regional Human Rights Mechanisms
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva
28 - 30 November 2011

Outcome Statement

The Pacific Consultation on Advancing Regional Human Rights Mechanisms (RHRM) was held at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji from 28 to 30 November 2011. The Pacific Consultation was attended by Members of Parliament of Nauru, Cook Islands, Samoa, and the Marshall Islands, as well as a Senator from the Federated States of Micronesia and senior government representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

2. The Pacific Consultation was also attended by representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs): Nauru Islands Association of NGOs (NIANGO); Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI); Cook Islands Association of NGOs (CIANGO); Federated States of Micronesia Alliance of NGOs (FANGO); Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC); Kiribati Association of NGOs (KANGO); Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI); Nauru Island Association of NGOs (NIANGO); Melanesian NGO Centre for Leadership; Pacific Islands Alliance of NGOs (PIANGO); Samoa Umbrella of NGOs (SUNGO); Solomon Islands Development Services Exchange (DES); Tongan Women and Children's Crisis Centre; Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO), and the Vanuatu Women's Centre.

3. The Pacific Consultation was jointly organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Regional Rights Resource Team (SPC/RRRT), with support from the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) and the Commonwealth Secretariat, and with major funding support from the Government of Australia. Human rights experts from regional and national mechanisms from the European Court Of Human Rights; Global Advocacy; Indonesia NGO Coalition for Human Rights Advocacy (HRWG); the Maldives Human Rights Commission; the New Zealand Human Rights Commission; and the Regional Office for the Pacific of the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-Pacific) provided technical support to the Consultation.

4. Participants welcomed the convening of the Pacific Consultation on Advancing Regional Human Rights Mechanisms to provide them with: i) information on existing and different national and regional human rights mechanisms; ii) an analysis of the merits of developing both national and regional human rights mechanisms in the Pacific; and iii) an opportunity to exchange views regarding a potential pathway for the establishment of a regional human rights mechanism for the Pacific.

5. Participants recalled the 2004 Leaders' Vision to seek a Pacific region that is "... respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values and for its defence and promotion of human rights" and further reaffirmed their support and commitment to the better promotion and protection of human rights in the region. Participants further noted that the PIFS and the SPC/RRRT have been tasked by their respective governing bodies to further examine and explore a potential pathway for the establishment of a regional mechanism to assist and support FICs' efforts in

meeting their human rights responsibilities. Participants reiterated the need to ensure that Forum member governments are consulted closely in achieving this goal.

6. Participants also noted that in respect of human rights work jointly undertaken by the PIFS and SPC/RRRT with relevant international organisations, Forum Leaders at their meeting in Auckland in 2011 "... noted the development of this cooperation, and the networks created by this activity, represent an important source of human rights expertise for the entire region."

7. Participants discussed and considered the advantages and challenges, as well as experiences of FICs in establishing national human rights institutions to better promote and protect human rights within the context of their respective countries' sovereignty, national circumstances, cultures and customs, and the right to a quality environment towards wider consideration of a potential pathway for the establishment of a regional mechanism. Participants also considered the sustainability and possible financial implications of establishing a regional human rights mechanism. Participants also reflected on the need to avoid duplication of existing national and regional functions, and whether regional human rights mechanisms could add value to existing national mechanisms.

8. Acknowledging the diversity of peoples, cultures, ethnicities, languages, socioeconomic development and government systems of the Pacific, participants noted that the establishment of any future regional mechanism should be unique to the Pacific; be based on Pacific values; promote and protect Pacific cultures; respect and build on existing international human rights norms and standards and reflect common aspirations for the region in support of the Forum Leaders' Vision. Participants further noted that the development of any future regional human rights mechanisms will require the political will and commitment of Forum member governments.

9. Participants acknowledged the positive and constructive contribution of civil society to human rights processes at all levels, and in partnership with Forum member governments. They also encouraged further enhanced cooperation between governments and CSOs, including CSOs' participation in the planning and development processes of any national and regional human rights institutions.

10. In line with the decision taken by the Forum Regional Security Committee at their meeting in June 2010, participants expressed support for the establishment of a dedicated Working Group to explore the potential for regional human rights mechanisms, subject to further consultation with Forum members. Participants emphasised the need for further consultations with Forum members in the course of the establishment of the Working Group. Participants also welcomed the opportunity for further discussions on the proposal for a technical advisory group to assist, as required, the Working Group.

Suva
30 November 2011