

At the annual Pacific Islands Forum in August 2010, Forum Secretariat staff issued a media release stating, “The Pacific Islands Forum, which celebrates 40 years of its existence next year, is based on unity” (Forum 2010d). However, the unity of the Forum and other regional institutions continues to be tested by the increasing complexity of international issues such as trade, aid, climate change, and the regional aftermath of Fiji’s 2006 coup. As Island leaders gathered in Fiji for the “Engaging with the Pacific” conference in July, their final communiqué noted that “views expressed all round highlighted what Pacific Small Island States perceived as deficiencies in the ability of the current model of Pacific regionalism to effectively address key development and governance challenges” (Natadola Communiqué 2010).

The year 2010 was marked by debates within the Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), growing independent action by Papua New Guinea, and the ongoing challenge posed by the postcoup administration in Fiji. In the face of China’s diplomatic and economic commitment to the region, the Obama administration announced new regional initiatives, and New Zealand’s conservative government shifted aid and defense policies. While the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) expanded its reach in 2010, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) was a troubled institution,

facing challenges to its role and public criticism of its officials.

Under Director-General Dr Jimmie Rodgers, the SPC is becoming the premier intergovernmental development agency for twenty-six Pacific countries and territories. The SPC is creating new departments and incorporating programs from other members of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP). Two CROP agencies were fully integrated into the SPC by 1 January 2011: the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA).

By the end of 2010, the SPC had more than 600 staff spread across the region: 200 at its Noumea headquarters and 360 at the Nabua office in Suva, with others located at the northern Pacific regional office in Pohnpei, country offices in Port Vila and Honiara, and operations in ten other countries. Focused on three core areas (sustainable human development, sustainable economic development, and sustainable natural resources management and development), the SPC mandate now covers a range of sectors: agriculture, aquaculture, culture, fisheries, forestry, gender, information and communication technologies, human rights, maritime transport, public health, statistics and demography, youth, and cross-cutting areas including food security and climate change.

There are now nine CROP agencies; besides the Secretariat of the Pacific

Community and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, these include the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program, the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Power Agency, the Fiji School of Medicine, the University of the South Pacific, the Pacific Islands Development Program, and the South Pacific Tourism Organization. Given this diversity of institutions, CROP executives agreed in 2010 to develop “all-CROP” joint country strategies to avoid duplication of programs in member countries and territories. United Nations (UN) agencies in the region are attempting a similar “One UN” strategy, with limited results thus far.

A major interagency activity in 2010 was the inaugural Pacific Food Summit, held in Port Vila in April, to coordinate efforts for all Pacific people to have access to safe, nutritious, local food. The SPC and the Forum Secretariat also organized a Regional Consultation on Cultural Industries in December to promote cultural, creative, and innovative industries.

Forum leaders held their annual meeting in Vanuatu in August and were presented with a plethora of reports from the Forum Officials Committee, the Pacific Plan Action Committee, the Forum Regional Security Committee, and a range of Forum ministerial meetings. A key focus was progress with the 2005 Pacific Plan—the framework designed to link the work of regional intergovernmental organizations to national development priorities. Briefing journalists before the Forum, Deputy Secretary-General Feleti Teo said that, in spite of many achievements, reporting from Pacific governments on the Pacific Plan had

been “pretty poor,” and there were challenges to translate regional policy into action on the ground.

In the lead-up to September’s global Millennium Development Goals summit, a study of the 2009 Cairns Compact on Strengthening Aid Coordination in the Pacific was also presented to Forum leaders and called for increased coordination between ministries at national level as well as better coordination between donors.

The Forum provided logistical and coordination support for two “peer reviews” of development programs under the Cairns Compact. In March, Nauru was the first country to volunteer to be reviewed, choosing Cook Islands and Tonga as fellow Forum Island Countries to conduct the peer review, together with the UN Development Program as a development partner. The following month, Kiribati’s systems were reviewed by representatives from Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Both Nauru and Kiribati publicly welcomed the process (Forum 2010c, 2010a), but no other countries volunteered for peer review for the rest of the year.

As the key Forum donor (with over A\$50 million allocated to the Forum Secretariat since 1988 and A\$10 million pledged for 2010–11), Australia joined other countries to fund regional initiatives on leadership, election monitoring, and participation of more women in national parliaments. Throughout 2010, the Forum coordinated four teams of election observers to monitor voting during general elections in Nauru (April), Bougainville (May), Solomon Islands (August), and Cook Islands (November).

In spite of increased donor resources for governance programs (including funding for the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance, assistance for women in politics, and support for Tonga's democratic elections on 25 November), there were still worrying trends in government behavior. Launching a publication on Islands leadership in October (PLP/PIFS 2010), Forum Secretary-General Tuiloma Neroni Slade noted many adverse trends in the region, including "a growing dominance of the Executive over the Legislature; the disconnect between policy and its actual applications; the inability of governments to act decisively on fraud, corruption and maladministration; and the lack of resources and authority for integrity and oversight bodies to independently and effectively undertake their prescribed functions. Universal problems like private interests, conflict of interest and abuse of public facilities continue to occur" (Forum 2010e).

In 2011, the Forum will celebrate its fortieth anniversary and, according to the secretary-general, will "take stock of the achievements and . . . reflect on some of the lessons learnt over the years to guide the way forward to ensure the continued relevance of the Forum as the premier political regional organization" (Forum 2010g). However, the Forum's role was widely critiqued during 2010. A study by the Vanuatu-based Pacific Institute for Public Policy argued that "without reform, the Forum faces an existential crisis. It has been politically paralyzed on the main challenges confronting the region: trade, climate change and the military takeover in Fiji" (Bohane 2010, 1).

The Forum Secretariat's role in trade policy was a particularly contentious issue. In September, the Forum appointed Papua New Guinea's Aivu Raevo Tauvasa as the new permanent representative to the World Trade Organization in Geneva. Trade diplomacy in Europe reflects the priority given by Pacific members of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific grouping to the proposed Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU) before they move to finalize negotiations for the PACER-Plus (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations-Plus) free trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand.

A regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was supposed to be completed before December 2007 but is still in limbo. The lack of progress has prompted criticism of the Forum Secretariat and its director for economic governance, Dr Chakriya Bowman, formerly trade advisor for the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Throughout the year, Bowman's predecessor at the Secretariat, Dr Roman Grynberg, continued a series of public attacks on the conduct of regional trade policy, arguing that "the complete failure of leadership of the Forum in the EU negotiations is not a mistake but simply serves Australia's interests. . . . The direction that the Forum is taking cannot be seen as in the interests of the islands. . . . the institution has become openly and unambiguously an instrument of Australian and New Zealand power in the Pacific" (Grynberg 2010, 32).

Criticism of PIFS staff also came from Forum Island Countries (FIC).

In a leaked letter (Abal 2010), PNG Foreign Minister Sam Abal called for major changes in Forum trade policy and Secretariat personnel, stating: “I am indeed disappointed and disturbed by the manner in which PIFS staff are managing and facilitating the EPA negotiations process. . . . The lack of proper organization and management of the EPA negotiations process, as well as the neglect of the critical aspects of the EPA negotiations raise questions pertaining to the competence of officers directly entrusted with the responsibility to conduct the EPA negotiations process in a professional and technically sound manner” (Foster 2010, 25).

The Forum Secretariat reacted publicly to this and other criticism. In early 2010, officials rejected “emphatically and unreservedly” any blame for the ongoing dispute over Fiji’s suspension from the PACER process (Forum 2010b), and later they objected to criticism of the Forum’s failed nongovernmental organization (NGO) engagement policy as “mischievous and uninformed” (Forum 2010f).

The Secretariat’s dilemmas were not assisted by policy shifts on the part of key donors. New Zealand’s conservative government—under Prime Minister John Key, elected in 2008—has set new directions for its aid program, highlighting economic growth and private-sector initiatives. The formerly autonomous agency NZAID has been reintegrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, becoming the International Development Group. This has impacted New Zealand’s role in regional initiatives. For example, at their 2009 meeting in Cairns, Forum leaders made a formal commitment

to act on violence against women and children. However, in 2010, New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully reduced funding for women’s and human rights programs as part of this shift in aid policy. Key community organizations working on the prevention of violence against women that had received extensive NZAID aid were left to scramble for alternative sources of core funding.

NGO women’s activists sought more practical support from governments at the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, held in Noumea in August, which found that regional agencies continue to operate without sufficient gender expertise to ensure that women’s needs and perspectives are front and center in development activities.

In response to civil society criticism on the pace and process of the PACER-Plus free trade negotiations, the Forum Secretariat organized the first annual “Non-State Actors Dialogue on PACER-Plus” in Honiara in October. The Forum also coordinated six-monthly “PIFS–Civil Society Organizations’ Dialogues on peace, conflict and security” in November 2009 and April and November 2010.

However, regional nongovernmental organizations like the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, and the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International all faced financial or administrative setbacks, which reduced regional networking and coordination. Suva-based nongovernmental organizations and regional media also faced constraints under Fiji’s Public Emergency Regulations,

which extended throughout the year. After the forced sale to local owners of Rupert Murdoch's *Fiji Times*, the Pacific Islands News Association was criticized for its low-key lobbying on media rights, and a new Pasifika Media Association was created in August by Polynesian media owners.

Of global significance, the other media event in late 2010 was the publication of US diplomatic cables leaked to WikiLeaks. Regional newspapers published details of US, Australian, and New Zealand perspectives about the Pacific Islands Forum, regional trade issues, China's role in the Pacific, and more contentious topics. One cable indicated that New Zealand has been spying on the Fiji military through the Waihopai monitoring base and sharing the intelligence with the US government (Simpson 2010); another highlighted Jakarta's knowledge of ongoing military human rights abuses in West Papua (Dorling 2010b); yet another revealed an official US petition to New Zealand in 2007 that called on Wellington to recognize American Samoa's jurisdiction over Olohega (Swain's Island) after the Ulu O Tokelau (head of Tokelau) suggested it was part of Tokelau (WikiLeaks 2007).

Many of the leaked cables addressed the Forum's core dilemma—how to recognize Fiji's central role in the region while maintaining isolation of the country's military-backed administration. Australian media cited a United States cable from August 2009, in which former Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Duncan Kerr told a US diplomat that the Australian government was “close to exhausting its diplo-

matic options on Fiji to little apparent effect” (Dorling 2010a). According to this cable, Kerr privately sought to encourage the US government to reengage with the administration led by Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, even as the Rudd government in Australia was encouraging other Forum members to maintain its isolation. The cable reports that the Australian government was on “cruise control toward increasing disengagement with Fiji, without achieving any desired effect.” Kerr resigned in October 2009, and his position remained unfilled until after the August 2010 Australian elections, to the dismay of Canberra-based Island diplomats (Maclellan 2010a, 22).

Hosting the August Forum leaders meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu Prime Minister Edward Natapei had to calm tensions over his postponement of a Melanesian Spearhead Group meeting that was scheduled for Fiji the preceding month. After the MSG meeting had been delayed and his role as incoming MSG chair postponed, Bainimarama gathered representation from eleven Forum Island Countries for an “Engaging with the Pacific” meeting at Natadola Beach, including PNG Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Derek Sikua, and Kiribati President Anote Tong. (An MSG reconciliation meeting took place in Honiara in December, allowing the transfer of the rotating MSG leadership to Commodore Bainimarama.)

The July 2010 Natadola meeting agreed that Fiji's Strategic Framework for Change “is a credible home-grown process for positioning Fiji as a modern nation and to hold true democratic

elections.” The communiqué also recognized the need for “Fiji’s continuous engagement with the region and its full participation in regional development initiatives and aspirations”—a reference in part to Fiji’s isolation from current negotiations for the PACER-Plus free trade agreement (Natadola Communiqué 2010). These statements conflict with the ongoing suspension of the Fiji administration from the Commonwealth and from Forum meetings (reaffirmed in Vanuatu in August). This tension was unresolved by year’s end, though Forum leaders in Port Vila tasked officials to investigate ways Fiji could be reintegrated into the PACER-Plus process.

Participants at the “Engaging with the Pacific” meeting agreed to meet annually on a voluntary basis. This plants a seed for future “Islanders-only” dialogue to continue without the two largest Forum members in the room, let alone the plethora of other institutions that want to engage Island leaders.

Just as the MSG links the most populous countries of the region, other subregional groupings coordinate economic, environmental, and social development outside the Forum framework. In June, the 13th Micronesian Chief Executives Summit met in Saipan, bringing together leaders from US territories and freely associated states in the northern Pacific (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands). In November, customary leaders from Palau, Yap, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Nauru, and the Marshall Islands also gathered in Koror for the 5th Micronesian

Traditional Leadership Conference (an initiative launched in 1999 by Palau’s high chief, Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons, which brings together Micronesian traditional authorities every three years to discuss custom and culture).

In Port Vila, Forum leaders decided to grant official observer status to the World Bank, which now joins the Asian Development Bank and the Commonwealth as Forum observers. The sight of the World Bank gaining increased access to Forum meetings raised eyebrows from representatives of the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation lobbying at the Vila meeting, who were once again rebuffed in their attempt to gain observer status.

Most self-determination issues remain off the regional agenda, in spite of key events during 2010 such as presidential voting in Bougainville (which saw the defeat of former Bougainville Revolutionary Army leader James Tanis by long-serving PNG politician John Momis) and major land occupations and clashes in Rapa Nui, pitting indigenous activists against Chilean police and authorities. The key exception was New Caledonia, where engagement with the region has been expanding. In March, French High Commissioner Yves Dassonville joined New Caledonia President Philippe Gomes to lead an eleven-member delegation to Australia; in May, the governments of New Caledonia and France jointly hosted the UN Special Committee on Decolonization regional seminar in Noumea for the first time; and in June, a ministerial mission from the four independent MSG countries visited New Caledonia to assess

the implementation of the Noumea Accord.

New Caledonia and French Polynesia also approached regional leaders to upgrade their status from associate membership in the Forum (MacLellan 2010b, 25). However, the August Forum meeting saw a significant rebuff to this lobbying, with leaders encouraging New Caledonia “to continue their dialogue with France in order to be able to satisfy the full membership requirements of the Forum” (ie, independence) (Forum communiqué 2010, item 72).

While Paris has pledged its commitment to the Noumea Accord decolonization process, the current French government does not envisage independence for other Pacific dependencies. In a January 2010 speech, French President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that France’s overseas collectivities “are French and will remain French”; while encouraging greater autonomy, he stressed that there is “one red line that I will never accept should be crossed: that of independence” (Sarkozy 2010).

Although it is active in the Forum and the MSG, Papua New Guinea increasingly plays an independent role in regional politics, reflecting its size as a dynamic, populous nation near the borders of Asia. Papua New Guinea is the only Pacific Island nation in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and is seeking full membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. With major reserves of timber, fisheries, and minerals as well as new projects to export oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), Papua New Guinea has the potential to develop its economy well beyond those of neighboring atoll nations.

In regional and international negotiations, Papua New Guinea has been willing to advance its own interests to the detriment of collective regional positions. One example is Papua New Guinea’s signing of an interim Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union before a regional agreement could be finalized. According to the Forum’s former trade advisor, “There are Australian commercial interests in PNG that run trade policy in that country. . . . These businessmen have in the past sabotaged the EPA negotiations by negotiating behind the backs of other Pacific Islanders and completely undermined Pacific solidarity” (Grynsberg 2010, 32).

For global climate negotiations, Papua New Guinea cofounded the Coalition for Rainforest Nations and is actively lobbying for carbon-credit schemes under the UN Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD). These efforts potentially conflict with the interests of other members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which cannot benefit from the protection of forests as a source for carbon-credit trading (Fry 2008).

In 2010, through a program coordinated by the Forum Secretariat, Prime Minister Somare offered twenty full scholarships per year over the next five years for Pacific students to study at PNG institutions. Even as his own leadership was being challenged at home, Somare announced a more active role on the international stage with the passage of the International Obligations Bill, which provides the legal framework for PNG participa-

tion in UN peacekeeping operations (Somare 2010). As US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell has noted: “Pacific Island countries are strong partners who punch above their weight, stepping up to deploy police and military forces for peacekeeping missions and participating in U.S.-led combat operations in the world’s most difficult and dangerous places” (Campbell 2010a).

Remittances from peacekeepers and other overseas workers are a crucial element of economic policy in the region. In October at their annual meeting in Niue, Forum economic ministers received a study on “Trends in Remittance Fees and Charges,” estimating that Pacific workers and families pay at least US\$90 million in remittance fees each year, the highest level in the world. (The average cost of sending remittances to Pacific Island countries is 21.7 percent of the amount remitted when sent from Australia and 15.2 percent when sent from New Zealand.)

In spite of this, Australia’s troubled Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme has failed to match the success of New Zealand’s horticultural labor program. Since 2007, the New Zealand Recognized Seasonal Employer scheme has seen nearly 17,000 workers arrive for work in orchards and plantations. Unlike New Zealand’s horticulture industry, Australian growers have failed to take up Pacific workers under the seasonal worker pilot, claiming overregulation, tight profit margins, and other industrial pressures. Although Papua New Guinea signed a memorandum of understanding in July to join the Australian scheme, no

PNG workers have yet been recruited; by the end of December 2010, only 154 Australian visas had been issued under the scheme: 133 for Tonga, 10 for Vanuatu, and 11 for Kiribati (MacLellan 2011).

Island nations are still largely reliant on economic and aid support from traditional partners like the United States, European Union, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, but there is increasing interest in diversifying sources of development assistance and trade. In September, the Solomon Islands foreign minister thanked a range of countries for support, including Cuba, Italy, Taiwan, Papua New Guinea, and “our new partners Luxembourg for supporting the Melanesian Spearhead Group and Portugal for supporting Solomon Islands external students” (Shanel 2010). In recent years, Honiara has developed a more nonaligned foreign policy, building diplomatic links with Iran and joining Vanuatu to call for an end to the US embargo of Cuba. Once scorned as a Soviet proxy in the Islands, Cuba now trains hundreds of Pacific medical students, sends medical workers around the region, and collaborates with Pacific nations as a member of AOSIS and the UN Special Committee on Decolonization.

In June, Pacific leaders met in Abu Dhabi with members of the Arab League, hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The Arab League pledged tens of millions of dollars of aid and increased trade with Pacific nations. Pacific leaders supported the Arab League’s call for an Arab Peace Initiative in the Middle East, a nuclear-free

zone in the region, and backing for the UAE rather than Canada in their bids for a seat on the UN Security Council.

Under the interim administration in Suva, Fiji is also broadening its international links. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama stated that “this significant shift in foreign policy direction heralds the globalization and maturity of Fiji. It demonstrates Fiji’s intention to become a good and engaged global citizen. Accordingly, over the past year Fiji has formalized diplomatic relations with many countries with which no ties previously existed. In addition, Fiji has sought membership of the Non-Aligned Movement” (Bainimarama 2010).

Fiji’s military-backed government has drawn on Chinese support for major projects, such as the first wholly Chinese-owned hotel, the sss International, which opened in Nadi in 2010. The China Development Bank has also loaned the Fiji government F\$70 million (F\$1 = US\$0.53) for the Sinohydro Corporation of China’s Nadarivatu hydroelectricity project. Since Fiji obtained Approved Destination Status to receive Chinese tourists in 2005, Air Pacific has replaced its Nadi–Tokyo flights with Nadi–Hong Kong routes to tap the growing Chinese tourist market.

However, Fiji is not alone in receiving Chinese diplomatic and economic assistance. In 2008, China provided US\$206 million in grants and soft loans to Forum countries that do not recognize Taiwan (Hanson 2009), and China has given funding to PIFs and other CROP agencies under the China Development Cooperation Fund and

the China–Pacific Islands Forum Regional Scholarships Program. The Forum Secretariat has increased its focus on strengthening trade and economic cooperation with China through Beijing-based Trade Representative Sam Savou.

In 2010 Pacific governments committed significant resources to be represented at the World Expo held in Shanghai. An inaugural China–Forum Island Countries Trade and Investment Symposium was organized to coincide with the World Expo, attended by twenty-one businesses from ten Pacific countries. In turn, three business delegations from China traveled to Fiji, Kiribati, and Cook Islands later in the year for discussions with Pacific Island counterparts.

Under President Ma Ying-jeou’s government, elected in 2008, Taiwan is less active with checkbook diplomacy in the region but still maintains diplomatic and aid ties with six Forum member countries (Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu). Taiwanese representatives met with these countries at a Port Vila casino in August, on the fringes of the Forum leaders meeting. (Taiwan does not have formal status as a Post-Forum Dialogue Partner, and in August Forum leaders declined Palau’s formal proposal to grant Taipei this status.)

US government concern over China’s economic and diplomatic influence in the region has sparked renewed engagement by the Obama administration. After years of benign neglect of the southwest Pacific by the Bush administration, the US State Department’s Kurt Campbell led a large delegation to the Pacific Islands

Forum in August. He also wrote for *Islands Business* magazine about renewed US commitment: “Enhancing engagement and ‘Stepping up our Game’ in the Pacific is a foreign policy priority for the United States” (Campbell 2010b). Island leaders have heard such pledges before, but a major initiative in November 2010 was a trip to the region by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (postponed from early 2010 due to the Haiti earthquake). Clinton first visited Hawai‘i, making a speech on US relations with the Asia-Pacific region. Committing to “forward-deployed” diplomacy, Clinton said that “everywhere we go, we will advance one overarching set of goals: to sustain and strengthen America’s leadership in the Asia-Pacific region and to improve security, heighten prosperity, and promote our values” (Clinton 2010a). This was followed by flying visits to Guam, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, and American Sāmoa.

A key US interest is promoting increased trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region through the negotiation of a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA). Even as trade activists launched an international campaign to seek the release of draft TPPA negotiating texts (Kelsey 2010), Secretary of State Clinton stated: “We are also pressing ahead with negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an innovative, ambitious multilateral free trade agreement that would bring together nine Pacific Rim countries, including four new free trade partners for the United States, and potentially others in the future” (Clinton 2010a).

In Port Moresby, Clinton confirmed that the US government is planning

a new, larger embassy compound in the PNG capital, as Papua New Guinea gears up to manage a booming LNG industry (Clinton 2010b). With ExxonMobil and other transnational corporations preparing to exploit the energy boom, the US Export-Import Bank has approved the largest transaction in its history to develop Papua New Guinea’s gas reserves. Clinton offered the PNG government support from the US State Department’s Energy Governance and Capacity Initiative to assist in energy sector governance, taxation, and revenue management of the profits flowing from LNG projects in coming years.

In Hawai‘i, Clinton announced that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) will reopen an office in Fiji in 2011 (the first USAID presence in the region in sixteen years) and create a fund of US\$21 million to support climate change adaptation programs. The US diplomatic initiative was warmly welcomed by Fiji’s administration, which has been at loggerheads with Australia and New Zealand. Colonel Pio Tikoduadua stated: “Obviously, we appreciate the confidence of the US government in Fiji and their recognition of Fiji as an important link or center of growth for the Pacific. This is all the more reason why other countries should follow what the US government has done and shown to us by recognizing us an important link to the rest of the Pacific” (Nasiko 2010b).

However, while Clinton was in the Pacific, Fijian leader Voreqe Bainimarama was in Beijing at a ceremony to mark the 35th anniversary of Fiji-China ties. Bainimarama noted: “Fiji’s relationship with China has gone from

strength to strength especially in the last four years since we came in China recognizes what we are trying to do and what we have gone through because they have gone through the same things” (Nasiko 2010a).

Successive US administrations have been seeking greater Australian and New Zealand involvement in military deployments such as the war in Afghanistan. The 2010 Clinton visit cemented improved strategic relations with New Zealand that were disrupted in the late 1980s when the US government cut off military and intelligence links with Wellington over its antinuclear policies. A US briefing for Hillary Clinton released to WikiLeaks revealed that the US government had resumed intelligence cooperation with Wellington, but without the public of either nation being informed: “Our intelligence relationship was fully restored on 29 August 2009 (which should not be acknowledged in public)” (WikiLeaks 2010).

The US government is maintaining its economic support to Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, extending military deployments in the northern Pacific in the face of perceived Chinese strategic influence. Guam is being transformed by the planned relocation of US marines from Okinawa and the basing of US nuclear attack submarines in Apra Harbor. Speaking to the US Congress in September, the State Department’s Kurt Campbell noted: “The US defense relationships in the Asia-Pacific, which form a north-south arc from Japan and South Korea to Australia, depend on our strong relationship with the FAS [Freely Associated States], which along with

Hawai‘i, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Sāmoa, and the smaller US territories comprise an invaluable east-west strategic security zone that spans almost the entire width of the Pacific Ocean” (Campbell 2010a).

During her Pacific visit, Secretary Clinton reaffirmed a range of strategic agreements. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen joined Clinton during her stopover in Australia to discuss forward positioning of US materiel in Australia and increased use of Australian military bases and training facilities. Mullen traveled on to the Kingdom of Tonga to thank the Tongan government as one of the few regional countries to send troops to Iraq as part of the “Coalition of the Willing.”

On 4 November, Clinton joined New Zealand Foreign Minister McCully to sign the Wellington Declaration, announcing a “framework of a new United States–New Zealand strategic partnership to shape future practical cooperation and political dialogue” (McCully 2010). This framework will involve regular high-level political dialogue, ministerial level meetings, and annual political and military talks. As the two foreign ministers met, the New Zealand government released its Defence White Paper 2010—the first in a decade. The White Paper looks at New Zealand military options in the Pacific, in light of pressures on the international order; increased pressure on maritime resources and risk of illegal migration; “South Pacific fragility”; and the diminution of America’s technological and military

edge (NZ Defence Ministry 2010, 10–11).

The Wellington Declaration also commits the two countries to work more closely on projects in the Pacific, including renewable energy and natural disaster response, at a time when climate change remains a key regional concern.

In October, regional officials held the inaugural CROP Executives Committee Meeting on Climate Change. The next month, Kiribati hosted an international conference in Tarawa, adopting the Ambo Declaration on Climate Change in the lead-up to the sixteenth Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which started in Cancun, Mexico, in late November. While there was less regional effort in Cancun than in Copenhagen in 2009, officials from the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) joined government, youth, and church delegations in Cancun. Hopes were low after the failure to negotiate a legally binding treaty at the 2009 Danish summit, which ended with a nonbinding “Copenhagen Accord.”

In early 2010, three Pacific countries (Tuvalu, Cook Islands, and Nauru) formally advised the United Nations that they could not sign on to the accord, as it failed to address their core concerns on climate mitigation and adaptation, in spite of accord pledges for both “fast-track” and long-term financial support for developing countries to deal with climate change. Most states in the Islands region have not benefitted from fast-track funding of US\$30 billion in 2010–2012 under the accord,

as Sāmoa Prime Minister Tuila‘epa Sailele Malielegaoi told the UN General Assembly in September 2010: “The much publicized ‘fast track’ funding announced in Copenhagen to meet the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable countries has become a ‘best kept secret.’ Information on how much of the pledges have been honored, disbursed and to whom, has been scarce. When available, the information is vague and seems bereft of coordination. . . . The uncertainty as to the legal form, content and completion date of a new treaty makes it a moral imperative for the promised fast track resources to be made available without delay and with clear simplified guidelines to ensure that the intended recipients do indeed access assistance” (Malielegaoi 2010).

The issue of climate financing is a focus of the March 2011 Pacific Climate Change Roundtable in Niue, drawing on an October 2010 draft report to SPREP entitled “Mobilizing Climate Change Funding in the Pacific Islands Region,” which outlines options for funding that are appropriate for small island states.

In the Pacific, Solomon Islands is the first Forum country and one of only four countries in the world to submit a proposal for adaptation funding under the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund. But some small island states have limited capacity to report to a range of donor climate mechanisms, let alone gain easy access to new development resources. Beyond this, Oxfam International has estimated that less than 10 percent of climate funds allocated to date have been spent on helping people in vulnerable countries

adapt to the impacts of climate change (Oxfam 2010).

At the climate negotiations in Cancun, the Pacific Islands Forum signed a memorandum of understanding with the European Union for a “Joint Pacific–EU Initiative on Climate Change.” Australia has also pledged extra funds for adaptation efforts in the region, but behind the scenes, the major powers were continuing to pressure diplomats from AOSIS countries to limit their calls for a stronger treaty. For example, Australia reportedly pressured Tuvalu as it attempted, on behalf of other Island states, to plug a loophole for Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry in the draft UNFCCC treaty. (The loophole would allow logging nations to cut down more trees but keep increased emissions off the books.) One nongovernmental organization in Cancun claimed: “Australian Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Greg Combet, reportedly met with Tuvalu Deputy Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga . . . in the margins of the negotiations. Feedback from the margins indicates that Mr Combet suggested that relations between the two countries could be damaged if Tuvalu does not abandon its stand opposing new rules for forests and land use accounting in the Kyoto Protocol’s second commitment period” (Graham 2010).

In Cancun, Australian and New Zealand officials continued to lobby for exemptions for agriculture and forestry, even though the Australia Institute (a Canberra-based research center) has reported that “the Australian Government is not doing enough to ensure that Australian imports of

forestry products are consistent with the goals of Australian aid programs and stated commitments to reduce greenhouse gases” (Hoisington 2010).

With development impacts a key concern for atoll nations, Kiribati President Anote Tong hosted a side event on adaptation in Cancun. Tong expressed concern over the slow pace of negotiations: “I, as other representatives of most vulnerable countries . . . [am] disappointed and deeply concerned that as an international community we continue to focus on negotiating a detailed and comprehensive arrangement which would appease the views of the different groups involved in the process. . . . For the most vulnerable states, time is running out. We demand that attention be centered on the needs of those most vulnerable” (Kiribati 2010).

While there were some positive outcomes from Cancun for the Pacific, such as the establishment of a Green Climate Fund and a process for reviewing the global goal of keeping global temperature rise below two degrees centigrade, there are still many hurdles before a legally binding global climate agreement can be realized in South Africa in December 2011.

NIC MACLELLAN

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