Chapter-2

Environmental concern and the South Pacific Forum

The aim of this chapter is to look at the role that the environmental issues have played in shaping the foreign policies and regional cooperation in the South Pacific. Therefore the chapter will also seek to analyse the regional organisations like the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Environment Programme. An attempt will be made wherever possible to analyse a particular country's stand on issues from the perspectives of domestic politics and role of non-governmental organisations. As stated elsewhere, throughout, this study the term foreign relations would connate a much broader perspective than mere inter-governmental relations.

The importance of environment issues for the countries of the South Pacific can be gauged from the speech that the then Secretary General of the South Pacific Forum Jeremia Tabai made at a conference in 1993. He said, "The environment is, I think, if anything an even more vital issue for the tiny island nations of the South Pacific than it is for larger countries like Japan. Everything about the region is about the environment."1

As countries of the South Pacific ready to enter the new millennium they face a range of environmental problems more extensive and more serious than ever before. Many of the potentially damaging activities have the handiwork of the countries outside the region, activities the countries have very little role in able to influence but nevertheless have to face the consequences – be it nuclear testing or dumping, global warming or even driftnet fishing. The small islands find themselves at times to be helpless spectators but there

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1 Jeremia Tabai – *Environmental Problems and Issues in the South Pacific*, speech at the 'Local Initiative in Asia Pacific Region Conference, Yokohama, Japan, 7-8 March 1993.
have been instances where they have tried to at least make an effort as this chapter will seek to show, when they have tried to determine their own destiny.

At the same it would be pertinent here to point out that in the past two and a half decades these countries have faced a range of environmental problems. These have arisen as a concomitant of economic development in most of the Pacific countries. Andrew Mitchell a biologist has in his book painted the broad natural history of the Pacific, past and present. The book also talks of the dangers that this beautiful and vulnerable region faces from environmental degradation. It is hard to find to find any observers who believe that the natural environment has been managed on a sustainable basis let alone improved over this period. The general impression is one of environmental decline.

The traditional subsistence societies of the region generally practised sensible environmental management of their resources. Many of these were based on sound knowledge of natural processes. The conservation ethic was expressed in customs and taboos. There were restrictions to protect to marine life or access to land and crops, such as the ra’ui or customary prohibition by the appropriate chief in the Cook Islands. But the modern economic development with the advent of cash economies has introduced new technologies and practices, some of which can place unsustainable demands on natural resources. Population growth and growing pressure on resources such as agricultural land have further weakened the traditional conservation ethic. It has often appeared in the Pacific islands, as elsewhere in the world, as a choice between the environment and development.

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3 AL Dahl and IS Baumgart,– *The State of the environment in the South Pacific*, (Noumea, 1982) p-10-2
4 Roy Fergusson in Ramesh Thakur (ed) *The South Pacific* (Otago, 1991) p 65-6
The island countries are faced with inherent limitations of size, personnel and resources to deal with the problem of environmental degradation. In fact as some analysts like Jeremy Carew Reid point out, many of the aid community were the first to point out that the environment was on the decline. Other aid specialists point out that the axiom embraced by the world conservation strategy that the conservation of resources is fundamental to their sustainable development is acutely relevant to island communities. Their distinctive characteristics place absolute limits on the nature and extent of development. It is felt that apart from the physical and biological constraints, there are also political and socio-economic factors that limit the effectiveness of environmental management measures. What this means is that in the face of the lack of scientific data and the inadequate understanding of the region's ecosystems mean that development usually proceeds in ignorance of the consequences and in the absence of measures to counter any negative environmental effects. A shortage of skilled personnel, an overriding focus on short-term political and economic pressures, and the concentration of decision making and authority in small, centralised bureaucratic elites compounds this limited awareness.6

This is the main reason why the communities of the region have tried to face the common environmental problems together as part of regional bodies and initiatives. Whether it is in terms of intra-regional or international interaction, environmental issues form an important ingredient in the foreign relations of the countries of the region. It is for this reason that a preliminary introduction to some of the regional organisations like

5 Jeremy Carew Reid – *Environment Aid and Regionalism in the South Pacific*, (Canberra, 1989) p-41
the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is given here. The Forum Fisheries Agency shall be discussed later in the chapter in the context of the fishing problem. This will help in understanding the issues and the role of the forum as the three main issues are discussed in detail from the South Pacific perspective.

The first South Pacific Conference held in 1950, opened a new era in which island countries could more fully appreciate their common natural heritage and their common development problems. The Conference became an annual forum for the sharing of experiences and information on environmental concerns and to determine collective action. Initially, attention focused on informal discussions about questions of pollution from atmospheric nuclear tests by the USA at the Marshall atolls of Bikini and Enewetak. Attention later turned to the French atmospheric nuclear tests in French Polynesia that began in 1966 and ran until 1974. These activities brought united opposition from the South Pacific countries and engendered a broader concern over the growing number of local pollution incidents and the consequences for public health. However, the no politics clause prevented the members from discussing the issues formally.

The initiative to set up an inter-governmental forum to discuss political issues that could not be aired in the South Pacific Commission was taken by Fiji’s Prime Minister Ratu Mara, was backed by the Prime Ministers of Western Samoa and Cook Islands. Australia, New Zealand, Nauru and Tonga subsequently supported it. The current membership is around 16.

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7 Interview with Dr Greg Fry of the RSPSAS, Australian National University, Canberra -- 21Aug, 1997. Also see Greg Fry – ‘Regionalism and international politics of South Pacific’ Pacific Affairs, 1981 vol 54 no-4, p-151
The South Pacific Forum has no charter or by-laws. Officials prior to forum summits work out objectives and agendas. Forum meetings proceed by discussion and consensus seeking. The conclusions are announced in a communique. Past forums have condemned French nuclear testing, US tuna poaching, promoted consensus on the law of the sea and secured Japanese cessation of driftnet fishing. They have also resolved to set up ‘Forum Fisheries Agency and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.  

Greg Fry points out that the political symbolism and the developmental advantages of organising regionally were not lost on the leaders of the Pacific Island territories approaching independence in the 1960s. The full story of South Pacific regional cooperation is not simply the history of the Forum according to Fry, as South Pacific Commission continued to exist and many other institutions were set up. But having said that he agrees that the forum is what he terms the site of the ‘main game’ of regional cooperation. It is through the forum that the principal integrative schemes have been attempted, joint political stances worked out.

When the SPF was set the broad principles of the organisation were already clear, Fry calls it a culmination of a political process rather than a new beginning. The main principle behind the Forum initiative was that of self –determination in regional affairs. What helped to put the initiative on a strong wicket was the fact that the founding fathers like Ratu Mara of Fiji and Lealofi of Western Samoa were men of stature.

The fact that Australia and New Zealand were included in this cooperative process appeared to many as being inconsistent with the self-determination principle,

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8 *Far East and Australasia* (London 1989) p-151

why include colonial powers? But the island had the foresight to recognise that though it was an unusual but necessary step to maximise their influence. Ratu Mara later asserted: "We were happy to be joined by Australia and New Zealand in the Forum... Indeed, we wanted them for a special reason. For part of the ambitious plan of the forum... was no less than to alter the whole balance in terms of trade. 10

Many analysts feel that the invitation to Australia to join can be thought of mainly in pragmatic terms, the inclusion of New Zealand was being based on close affinity. New Zealand perceived as having more empathy with the island regions. It has a significant Polynesian population and was supportive of the islanders' initiative to form the SPF. 11

In the Forum's first decade extensive decolonisation not only doubled the number of participants in regional negotiations, it also gradually introduced new interests, priorities and identities. 12 Whereas the founding Island members were mainly from the geographical area called central Pacific, the subsequent political change brought first the west, and then the north, into regional negotiations. Culturally, the early activists were mainly Polynesian and early actions could be seen as much as expressions of a Polynesian identity as of a wider regional affiliation. The element of difference was the cultural identity that began to emerge as the subregional identities reflecting a broader ideology and perspective on issue and resources. In particular the idea of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia began to emerge in the first decade of the Forum's existence. We shall see later in the course of discussion how this strand of sub regional identity has influenced a particular country's stand on an issue, say that of nuclear testing.

11 Mary Boyd (ed) -Pacific Horizons: A Regional Role For New Zealand, (Wellington 1972) p 9-10
12 Gabriel Gris - 'Ten Years of Regional Cooperation: the forum way' Pacific Perspective, 11 (1982) p-1
The twenty-two island governments and administrations of the South Pacific region have a strong awareness of the fragility of their environment and are concerned about means to ameliorate their environmental problems. Many of these problems are similar to all the countries. This commonality has led to the development of a regional programme as the most appropriate means by which to ensure that the environment of the South Pacific is protected and managed on a sustainable basis.

Since the early 1980s a degree of lip-service has been paid to environmental management activities reflected the concern felt by their governments that their continued economic development and prosperity is closely linked to effective management and protection of the island environment.13

Meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in March 1982, at the ministerial-level Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, the Island governments approved a mandate under which their newly created South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was to operate. In 1990 SPREP reached a stage in its development where its member governments decided that their combined environmental interests were best served by the programme obtaining full autonomy.

Thus it became an organisation in its own right, answerable to its member-governments through an annual intergovernmental meeting as well as directly reporting to the two major regional bodies through their annual meetings, the SPC and the SPF. The basic objective behind this grant of autonomy was that this would enable SPREP – to mobilise and capture international funding; to manage more effectively its financial and human resources, projects, contracts and consultants; to enhance its dialogue with other

13 Arthur Lyon Dahl 'The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme’ UNEP Regional Seas Reports and Studies no 69, (Geneva, 1985) p-3
relevant international bodies; to represent the interests of the region in appropriate international fora; to provide information on issues for which a broad policy mandate; and to be directly accountable to all member countries and territories.\textsuperscript{14}

Neva Wendt points out that the recognition in 1990 of the need for a strong environmental organisation rather than merely a programme to tackle the region's environmental problems indicated that the South Pacific governments now view environmental as an important item on the regional agenda.\textsuperscript{15}

The entry into force in 1990 of both the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (the SPREP Convention) and the Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (the Apia Convention), also serve to show that the environment is high on the agenda of regional cooperation. Hence, these issues play an important role in the foreign relations of the countries of this region.

It is proposed that the three main issues — nuclear testing, global warming and driftnet fishing be discussed not so much in terms of the various aspects involved but limit it largely to South Pacific Forum perspective, otherwise the vastness of the topics will make the discussion unwieldy. "If you don't discuss it mainly from the SPF and foreign relations angle and try to analyse all the aspects of the issues involved, the study may lose focus."\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} South Pacific Commision- \textit{South Pacific Commision Report}, (Noumea, 1990) p-23
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Neva Wendt in Stephen Henningham and RJ May (Ed) \textit{Pacific Resources Handbook} (Canberra, 1994) p-188
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Peter Dauvergne, RSPSAS, Australian National University, Canberra, discussing the scope of the present study, informal interview, 4 Sept 1997
\end{itemize}
The issue of nuclear testing and dumping in the South Pacific

Remote from large centres of population and with no political power to veto the decisions of colonial powers, the Pacific islands offered convenient locations for the initial atmospheric nuclear testing programmes of nuclear weapon states with colonial territories in the region. The United States from 1946-1963, Britain from 1957-1962, and France from 1966-1974 all used their respective test territories for atmospheric test programmes, conducting more than 150 atmospheric tests up until 1974. Since then, France has continued to test till the last test in 1996. Again while the United States ceased testing nuclear warheads in the Pacific after 1963, it continued to use the region for other forms of nuclear-weapon-related research, such as missile-testing (at Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands), and for other forms of nuclear-weapons deployment. Even the Soviet Union and China, while not possessing territories in the region, have also used the region for missile testing.

Environmental contamination and the onset of radiation-related illness among many islanders close to the testing, together with hardships and dispossession of land associated with the relocation of islanders from weapons test areas. This left a legacy throughout the islands of bitterness, distrust and anger over nuclear testing and nuclear weapon-related programmes in the region. Japanese further reinforced island concerns

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19 R Crocombe and A Ali (ed) - ‘Foreign Forces in Pacific Politics,’ (Suva, 1983) p- 295-7
over regional nuclear activities in the late seventies, and American proposals for radioactive waste disposal in the Pacific, and by continuing expansion of a range of nuclear weapon related activities in the region.

In 1963, the then Prime Minister of Western Samoa, Fiame Mataafaga commenting on his government’s protest at the continued French testing in the region said, “The government was impressed by the strong body of expert opinion. Which holds that there are no known precautions which can be quite certain of eliminating the danger to human life and health which results from the contamination of the atmosphere, the earth and the sea by these experiments.”

In fact analysts that while a censure motion was being debated in the Cook Islands Assembly, one member blamed the tests for the regular outbreaks of ciguatera or fish poisoning point it out. Even the first meeting of the Heads of government of the SPF in 1971 expressed their concern at the potential hazards that atmospheric tests pose to health and safety and to the marine life, which is a vital element in the Islanders subsistence and economy.

This danger was more apparent when the testing was carried out in the atmosphere largely explains why the protests were far more vigorous in the earlier period. With the change to underground testing in 1975, the risks posed to the health and livelihood of the people of the region became less quantifiable and more hypothetical in nature. The obvious danger of radioactive fall-out had been replaced by the far less visible and seemingly more remote risk of radioactive leakage through cracks in the

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21 Pacific Islands Monthly, July 1963 p-7
22 Helen Fraser - ‘Pacific Report’ vol 2 no 9, 25 May 1989, p-1-2
23 South Pacific Forum - ‘Joint Final Communiqué,’ (Wellington 5-7 Aug 1971)
underwater base of the atoll into the surrounding ocean. Such leaks, were they to occur, could contaminate the fish which would then be dispersed by ocean currents to islands thousands of kilometers away. Since fish form the basis of the Islanders diet and are an important source of export earnings such contamination could have devastating effects on the health and livelihood of the Islanders.

Yet the only way of determining whether cracks existed in the underwater base of Morurua atoll would be to send deep sea divers and scientists to the island, something that the French rarely allows. The whole underwater island has to be inspected at considerable depths by independent scientific teams to do. But there have been some visits by teams to Morurua. The most famous or controversial being was the report by the Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea scientists, what is known as the Atkinson Report. According to the report ambient radiation levels both in the Moruroa base accommodation area and in the inhabited areas of French Polynesia were lower than world average levels. It also found that cancer statistics for the region did not reveal high rates for types of cancer that may be associated with excessive exposure to radioactive fallout. However, the report also found that as a result of underground testing the structural integrity of the upper section of the coral atoll was impaired and although there was no conclusive evidence of short term leakage, its possibility of occurrence in the next thousand years cannot be ruled out.

Danielsson and Danielsson, however, feel that the findings of the committee can be contested on several grounds. Firstly their findings concerning the incidence of fall

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out related cancer were based on statistics supplied by the French Military. Secondly, the
team was not allowed to take samples of the sediments in the lagoon itself. Thirdly, no
diving was done. Fourth, only surface samples of the ocean water were taken. Yet despite
this the French Government did not hesitate to use these findings as proof that the French
tests were totally harmless. However while other countries conduct their tests in their
country France prefers to do it far away from the metropole.

The fact that the nuclear men have used the Pacific as their playground for 40
years has really disgusted the islanders. Stewart Firth says, “The Bikinians, the
Enewetakese, the Ronglapese, the Utirikese, the Pitjantjatra, their names almost as
unfamiliar to the outside world as the story they have to tell. Together numbering no
more than a few thousand, they have already lived in what might be our common future.
Thanks to the mushroom clouds, they have experienced a radioactive environment at
first-hand. Coming from traditional cultures, which bent nature only gently to human
purposes, they know the inhuman violence, which a far more powerful culture can
unleash. We should take careful note of their experiences, which might one day be ours.\textsuperscript{27}
It is this sensitivity that made the people of Palau an island group in the Pacific east of
Phillipines, a country no bigger than an average city market center, to draw up the first
nuclear free constitution in the world.

On Hiroshima day, August 6 1985, it is this sensitivity that led the led eight South
Pacific countries to sign the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ). It was signed at
the meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands.

\textsuperscript{27} Stewart Firth –‘\textit{Nuclear Playground},’ (Canberra 1987) p-xi
The Rarotonga Treaty, as it is known, was the fifth nuclear free zone to be established internationally and the first since the Outer Space Treaty was signed in 1971. The only previous NFZ in an inhabited region was the Latin American NFZ (Tlatelolco Treaty). The initiative represented the third of three waves of South Pacific regional interest in the nuclear free zone concept. The first occurred in 1962-63 and involved proposals by the opposition Labour parties in Australia and New Zealand for a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Free Zone. The second occurred in 1974-75 when New Zealand and South Pacific gained UN support for establishing such a zone. These proposals will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter (chap3).

The Rarotonga agreement purports to be a ‘nuclear-free zone treaty,’ it does not establish, a zone in which all nuclear activities are prohibited. It is more appropriately described as a partial nuclear-free zone treaty. It is primarily an arms control agreement, although it also contains one non-weapons prohibition – a ban on the dumping of radioactive wastes. All other parts of the nuclear fuel cycle are unaffected. The energy, biomedical and research uses of nuclear-technology for example are not banned. Fry opines that the nuclear free label was given by Australia to create the impression that the proposal meant quite a lot but in reality it was a modest proposal. What the proposal really added up to, is a prohibition on the presence of nuclear weapons, or on their manufacture or testing, anywhere within the territories of the South Pacific states, up to the twelve-mile sea limit. There is one significant qualification to this general prohibition. The treaty specifically allows each state to make an exception for nuclear weapons that may be aboard ships that are visiting its ports or navigating its territorial or archipelagic...

29 Greg Fry (ANU Canberra) informal discussion Aug –Sept 1997
waters, and for weapons that may be aboard aircraft that are visiting its airfields or which are transiting its airfields or which are transiting its airspace.\textsuperscript{30} The significance lies in the fact that the treaty does not compel signatories to allow such involvement. It leaves the decision to the state concerned. In its attempt to ban direct nuclear weapons presence on land while not prohibiting weapons-related activity or the transit of nuclear-armed ships or aircraft, the Rarotonga agreement resembles the Tlatelolco treaty.\textsuperscript{31}

But significantly the SPNFZ treaty failed to get an unanimous consensus in the SPF member countries, this was because of the fact that though the SPF countries were committed to regional cooperation they all had their own nuclear policies and tended to interpret the SPNFZ accordingly. The Melanesian States – Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and even Fiji, countries which prefer to have a joint approach on issues of mutual concern. The Melanesian Alliance states have pursued the most anti-nuclear and anti-colonial policies of all the island countries. While sharing the regional concerns about nuclear weapon testing, acquisition and waste dumping, as embodied in the treaty, the three states have expressed concern over additional nuclear activities in the region and have voiced dissatisfaction with the Rarotonga Treaty on the grounds that it is insufficiently comprehensive.\textsuperscript{32} At even mid 1989, Vanuatu and the Solomons had neither signed nor ratified the treaty; Papua New Guinea had signed but not ratified. In

\textsuperscript{30} South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty document, article 5 (see appendix)
\textsuperscript{32} Department of Foreign Affairs – ‘Submission to Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Enquiry into Australia’s Relations with the South Pacific,’ (Canberra 1987) p-45-46
the case of Vanuatu and the Solomons, failure to ratify was explicitly linked to dissatisfaction with the treaty.

It is interesting to analyse the stand of each of the countries. Papua New Guinea was very vocal on French nuclear testing even before independence. The first international action after independence was to co-sponsor the NFZ proposal submitted to the UN by New Zealand and Fiji. An indication of how strongly anti nuclear it was. While talking to his Solomons counterpart, the PM Somare indicated that PNG had not made up its mind on the port access issue. At the SPF in Aug 1983, Somare criticised the SPNFZ idea of the Australians saying the idea was crafted for the convenience of Australia in terms of US nuclear-armed ship visits. However, PNG’s strict stance was softened in mid 84, with the visit of the US special advisor. “Papua New Guinea, does not have the resources to defend itself, so we have to rely on friends like the US. We maintain our position on nuclear ships but are flexible.” The probable reason for this turnaround can be the insecurity of PNG after its border problem with the Irian Jaya province of Indonesia. And this national security factor led to the gradual acceptance of the SPNFZ proposal by PNG.

The Solomons government has been opposed to French nuclear testing and Japanese nuclear waste dumping. Its Prime Minister Mamaloni reacted strongly to report that Japan planned to dump nuclear wastes in the Pacific. In 1982, it deferred indefinitely the visit of the French ambassador-designate Menguey of the strong anti nuclear

33 Pacific Islands Monthly, Nov 1975 p-17.
34 Dept of Foreign Affairs (PNG) – ‘Papua New Guinea Foreign Affairs Record’ (PNGFAR) (Port Moresby May 1983) p-35
35 Fiji Sun, 31 Aug 1983
36 Dept of Foreign Affairs (PNG) – ‘Papua New Guinea Foreign Affairs Record’ (PNGFAR) (Port Moresby Sept 1984) p-40
feeling.\textsuperscript{37} The Solomon Islands Christian Association organised a march protesting against nuclear activities so did many other public groups. This anti nuclear feeling among the public led to the govt protesting strongly on nuclear issues.\textsuperscript{38} While it was vocal in protesting against nuclear testing and dumping it allowed the visits of US ships like USS Goldsborough. But from 1983 it had a policy of cautious restraint. The main reason why it was wary of the SPNFZ proposal was that it left the issue of nuclear armed ship visits to the sovereign right of each country.\textsuperscript{39} It was, however, very active in the meetings, it submitted a new substantive article on the prevention of nuclear waste dumping. It wanted a more effective treaty.\textsuperscript{40} At the end it reconciled to the fact that a comprehensive treaty was not possible because of the different policies being pursued by the SPF members.

Vanuatu government had been very attentive on nuclear issues since its independence. It was the country which presented its own NFZ idea, a comprehensive proposal that prohibited nuclear armed ship transit, nuclear military bases, any form of nuclear waste dumping and activities related to uranium.\textsuperscript{41} Vanuatu made the first decision to ban the US nuclear armed ships to Port Vila in Feb 1982, Prime Minister Walter Lini called the decision “just one small piece of evidence as to how bold we hope to be in future.\textsuperscript{42} Naturally therefore, it was critical of the SPNFZ proposal. Criticising Australia, Lini said, “We cannot understand why people should be against testing but, for

\textsuperscript{37} Govt of Solomon Islands – "Solomon Islands Government Monthly Magazine (SIGMM), (Honiara Jan 1982) p-3
\textsuperscript{38} Solomon Govt – "Solomon Islands Foreign Affairs Review" (SIFAR) (Honiara 1983) p-36
\textsuperscript{39} Solomon Govt – "Solomon Islands Foreign Affairs Review" (SIFAR) (Honiara 1984) p-11
\textsuperscript{40} Laka Levi – "A Report on South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Working Group's 3rd Meeting," (Honiara 1985) p6-7
\textsuperscript{41} Vanua’aku Viewpoints, 27 Nov 1981
\textsuperscript{42} Pacific Islands Monthly, April 1982, p-28
economic reasons, sell to the nation which does the testing." It refrained from signing the SPNFZ. Vanuatu’s anti nuclear stance can be accounted for by the fact that during its independence struggle, with the implicit support of the French govt. the Francophone section in the country revolted against the Anglophone govt. This experience has made it sensitive to the problem of foreign interference. It felt that if there is no strict ban on the activities of external powers it would have dangerous implications, possibly leading to foreign interference in the region.

In Fiji, it was the anti-nuclear movement that took the lead on nuclear issues, not the government. In May 1970, an article in the Fiji Times by Dr Graham Baines, a biologist at the University of South Pacific, telling people in Fiji of the problem that the concentration of strontium-90 in rainwater in Fiji had increased five fold, owing to French nuclear tests. It drew the attention of the USP Student Christian Movement. Soon others joined in the protests like the YWCA, the Fiji Council of Church and others. Later the Against Testing On Morurua committee (ATOM) was formally established. As a result Fiji govt. decided to deny the French aircrafts and ships associated with the tests landing or port facilities. The most significant action was of Fiji joining Australia and New Zealand in taking the testing issue to the International Court of Justice. Fiji was active in the SPNFZ discussion and accepted it. Whereas in 1982, the government said that it would allow nuclear ships to visit its ports but the next year it reversed its

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43 Fiji Times, Suva 31 Aug 1983
44 Yoko Ogashiwa – ‘Microstates and Nuclear Issues: Regional Cooperation in the Pacific,’ (Suva 1991) p-62
45 Fiji Times, 8 May, 1970
47 Fiji Min of Foreign Affairs—‘Statement’ (Suva 1974) p-28-9
decision taking in to account various political and economic factors. Among the factors was the growing American interest in Fiji as a counter to Soviet presence in the area, visits by US official, greater interaction with the Fijian military, aid for the military and upgradation of its embassy at Suva were some of the sops given by the Americans. Another reason was the Soviet financial support to the opposition party, leading to Soviet vessels being barred from Fijian ports. Another group was formed called the Fiji Anti Nuclear Group FANG to coordinate the work of all anti nuclear groups. The govt. supported the SPNFZ and after the coup the influence of the groups waned. The Mara – Rabuka view of the SPNFZ continued to be pro ANZUS in spite of the anti nuclear sentiments of the people.

The Polynesian members of the SPF are all microstates in terms of population and resources. The Polynesian states have conservative Western-oriented foreign policies, and align themselves closely with the ANZUS states. In the case of the Cook Islands and Western Samoa, both countries moved from refusing entry to nuclear warship visits in the 1970s to accepting such visits in the 1980s. The Polynesian states generally supported the Rarotonga Treaty, and did not join the Melanesian states in seeking changes to its provisions. Four of the five Polynesian Forum states, Western Samoa, Tuvalu, Niue and Cook Islands were among the first to sign the treaty.

The one Polynesian Forum state to have expressed dissatisfaction with the treaty and refused to sign was Tonga. It was very appreciating of the ANZUS and grateful for the blanket protection offered to the island states by ANZUS, even though island states

50 Michael Hamel Green Regional Arms Control in the South Pacific (Brisbane, 1989), p-7
are not formally party to ANZUS, Tonga criticised New Zealand 's nuclear ships ban on the ground that it was likely to cause regional instability.\textsuperscript{51} In fact Tonga felt that the United States should have the right both to store and station nuclear weapons especially in wartime contexts. Tonga also endorsed the US decision not to sign the Rarotonga protocols.

The heavy dependence of the Polynesian states on the ANZUS states for economic assistance and expatriate worker remittances, and the traditionally conservative nature of their governments, ensured that there would be little Polynesian opposition to a limited-scope NFZ arrangement initiated by Australia. New Zealand (which traditionally is closer to these states than Australia) supported it.

Two of the Micronesian states, Nauru and Kiribati, were members of the SPF at the time the Rarotonga treaty was negotiated. Two others, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands became members in 1987. Most of the states of compact of free association with the USA. Nauru and Kiribati participated actively in the SPNFZ discussions. Nauru in particular voiced its concern over two principal aspects of the treaty. Nauru like the Melanesian states wanted the inclusion of ban on missile testing and asked for its concern to be recorded.\textsuperscript{52} Secondly Nauru sought stronger controls over the dumping of radioactive nuclear wastes in the sea and cited UNCLOS provisions in this regard.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Department of Foreign Affairs - 'Submission to Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Enquiry into Australia's Relations with the South Pacific,' (Canberra 1987) p-118.

\textsuperscript{52} South Pacific Forum Chairman's Report (Suva 1983) p-27

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{ibid} p-22
In the case of the three Micronesian states north of the equator, the Federated States of Micronesia, all have anti nuclear policies and even legislation Palau has a nuclear free constitution and the FSM's less rigorous constitutional anti nuclear provision. This makes them close to the Melanesian states in their approach to regional denuclearisation.

But on the issue of nuclear waste dumping, however, there was complete unanimity, and they fought very strongly with countries like Japan to keep their waters safe. For instance, Western Samoa not only opposed this at the governmental level but also at non governmental level. When the Japanese team visited Western Samoa in August 1980 to explain the plan for waste dumping, they were blocked by female protestors, many of whom belonged to the local branch of the Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association, led by Leaupepe Faimaala, its president and former member of parliament.\textsuperscript{54} At the meeting of the London Dumping Convention in February 1983, which regulated the disposal of waste into the oceans, Nauru and Kiribati moved that the Convention which allowed ocean dumping of low-level nuclear waste under special licence, be amended to ban all dumping of radioactive wastes in the ocean.\textsuperscript{55} Nauru tried to voice protest against nuclear waste dumping, with Kiribati, in the international conference on behalf of non-independent Micronesian Islands which belonged to the same cultural area as they did. Responding to the Nauru-Kiribati proposal, the Scandinavian countries suggested a gradual phasing out of dumping by 1990.\textsuperscript{56} Spain presented a motion to set up a study group to look at the proposal and ban all dumping for

\textsuperscript{54} The Samoa Times, 29 Aug 1980
\textsuperscript{55} Pacific Islands Monthly, March 1983, p-29
\textsuperscript{56} ibid p-5
two years. The bigger countries (USA, USSR, Japan) opposed the resolution and instead suggested a scientific review to assess the harm done by nuclear dumping. Eventually the Spanish proposal was adopted by a majority of 19 to 6. Although the moratorium on dumping was passed it was not binding on member countries; it was only a resolution. But for the microstates like Nauru and Kiribati it was a tremendous achievement. They had managed to draw international attention to the problem. Even now, the Forum is concerned about the dumping and passage of nuclear wastes through its territory. It agreed that shipments of plutonium and radioactive wastes through the region posed a continuing concern and agreed to adopt a consistent position on the issue, taking into account the risks of an accident occurring and the consequences of such an accident. It reiterated the expectation that such shipments should be carried out in a manner which addressed all possible contingencies and the concerns of relevant countries. The Forum expected that shipments would be made only if the cargo is of demonstrably minimal risk, ships are of the highest standard and shipping states agree to promote the safety of the material and provide compensation for any industries harmed as a result of changes in the market value of the region's fisheries and tourism products in the event of an accident.

In this regard, the Forum noted the efforts of Japan, France and the United Kingdom in providing information about the recent shipment of high level wastes and expressed the hope that this would be continued. The Forum noted the adoption of the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, and in particular, its provisions for a dedicated transboundary fund for the victims of transboundary damage.
and giving coastal states jurisdiction over actions concerning nuclear damage in their Exclusive Economic Zones.\(^{57}\)

Similarly, as we will see in chapter 3&4 how the SPF asserted itself against the USA and Australia in the Johnston Island chemical weapons incineration issue. Suffice here to say that when the USA decided to move its chemical weapons stockpiles from Germany to the Johnston atoll for incineration of the weapons, the SPF protested strongly. It sent a ministerial delegation to Washington to fight plans by the US.\(^{58}\) The Secretary General of the SPF Henry Naisali, criticised the plans, accusing the US of treating the Pacific peoples as breadfruits and coconuts rather than as human beings. The trip was just before the deadline to transfer chemical weapons from Germany to Johnston. The Australian PM Hawke tried to dampen the opposition but Naisali stressed that all Forum countries agreed in principle to the destroying of chemical weapons but in an apparent reference to Australia said that they differed in when and how they should be destroyed.

He cast doubts on US assurances that the incineration is safe. In righteous indignation he asked, “Why bring them (chemical weapons) to our frontyard in the Pacific? You know why? For they don’t class us as human beings in the Pacific. They class us as breadfruits, coconuts, guava, tapioca and taro.”\(^{59}\) At the 28th SPF meeting the Forum drew attention to the region’s continuing concerns about the Johnston Atoll Chemical Agent Destruction System, reiterating that the facility should be permanently

\(^{57}\) SPF Forum Communique (Rarotonga, 1997)

\(^{58}\) The Age, Melbourne, 8 Sept 1990

\(^{59}\) ibid
closed when the current programme of chemical weapons and agent destruction was completed.\textsuperscript{60}

At the end of the 1980s broadly most of the SPF countries except for Tonga and Vanuatu had signed the treaty. When France resumed testing in 1996 for a short while, the SPF as well as people from all over the world protested strongly. With the imminent coming into force of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty from this year, most of the nuclear weapon states have signed the SPNFZ which has now lost its importance. Greg Fry says, “With CTBT this issue is for the Pacific now a question of history, it was important, but now they have to put it past them and get on with their lives. You have to remember that the island countries cannot afford to fight for very long, they face too many physical and economic constraints.”\textsuperscript{61} Why was there no unanimity in their nuclear policies? Says Fry, “As small countries they are remarkably aware of their identity, colonialism has only made them more sensitive to the question of sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{62}

Hamel Green analyses that the island state responses to the treaty suggests that support or acquiescence or any other stand on the treaty was derived not only from the common nuclear concerns of these states but also their economic dependence and vulnerability. The incentive for the SPNFZ was to put pressure on France to relocate its testing site, the second incentive lay in the economic and military assistance from the ANZUS states. On the negative side, heavy economic dependence on aid meant that the country were constrained to take note of the economic implications of their decision. At

\textsuperscript{60} South Pacific Forum \textit{Forum Communique} (Rarotonga, 1997)
\textsuperscript{61} Greg Fry, informal discussion, ANU Canberra, Aug - Sept 1997
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{ibid}
the political level too, they had a perception of political destabilization.\textsuperscript{63} This may have constrained the Forum island states from pursuing more comprehensive denuclearisation.

But they continue to be concerned, for instance at the Rarotonga Meeting -- Leaders warmly welcomed the ratification of the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) by the United Kingdom today in Rarotonga and called on the United States to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Forum Leaders warmly welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) at the UN General Assembly on 10 September 1996, and its opening for signature. Forum Leaders congratulated Forum members which have been amongst the first countries to ratify the CTBT and urged all nations to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible to facilitate the Treaty’s earliest entry into force.\textsuperscript{64}

The issue of global warming

The spectre of the Greenhouse effect has dramatically raised the developed world’s interest in the environment, but positive action was slow in coming. In the Pacific, where entire nations may be swallowed, time is already running out. “If the Greenhouse effect raises sea levels by one metre, it will virtually do away with Kiribati,” says the island’s President Jeremia Tabai. “In fifty or sixty years my country will not be there.”\textsuperscript{65} He is only too aware that the most extreme situation will be faced by small islands occupying low coral atolls. Four Pacific nation – Kiribati, the Marshall Islands,

\textsuperscript{63} Michael Hamel Green \textit{Regional Arms Control in the South Pacific} (Brisbane, 1989), p-49
\textsuperscript{64} SPF \textit{Forum Communiqué} (Rarotonga, 1997)
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Pacific Islands Monthly Special Report}, April-May1989
Tokelau and Tuvalu — are composed entirely of low relief atolls and recent studies warn that these states will be devastated if projected sea level rises occur. They may simply cease to contain habitable land.

In the 1990s the Greenhouse Effect has become the flagship of the international environmentalist cause, and the springboard to the front pages for many other man-made economic problems.

Ironically enough while the Greenhouse Effect is a typical 20th century dilemma, the term Greenhouse Effect was coined almost a century ago. There is still considerable uncertainty over the actual nature of the Effect. Recent years have been witness to wide temperature variation the hottest of summers and the coldest of winters, all these phenomena has been attributed to global warming. While most regions of reasonable landmass will adapt to the climactic changes—some may even find considerable economic advantages in the new agricultural possibilities. But in the Pacific, the predicted rise will mean widespread upheaval and potential disaster.

In a 1990 background paper presented to the Australian Parliament, Bryan Strait is very cautious in projecting the possible implications the greenhouse effect may have. In the South Pacific he agrees that the major concern is the projected rise in the sea level. Thermal expansion of the oceans is modelled to produce a rise of 20 to 140 cm with a doubling of Carbon dioxide. This would not completely flood many, if any, of the South Pacific islands. However, this rise could cause the reduction of the freshwater lens in many islands and make them uninhabitable. But the scientific evidence now has proved beyond a shred of doubt that the small islands of the Pacific will be severely affected by

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66 UNEP Global Warming and Greenhouse Effect, (Internet site)  
67 Bryan Strait The Greenhouse Effect (Canberra 1990)
the warming of the seas. Many like Tuvalu and Kiribati may cease exist while others like Nauru and Niue will be severely impacted. Neva Wendt comments that the greenhouse effect emanates from activities undertaken by the more developed countries outside the region – a point which island governments and administrations are quick to point out. Yet the small Pacific atolls are the ones particularly vulnerable to the potential greenhouse results.\textsuperscript{68}

It is for this reason that the countries of the region have played an important role in the discussion for a framework for climate change convention. During the discussions the small island states had a proposed for an insurance mechanism to be established to compensate small island nations for loss and damage caused by climate change. It was a draft proposal submitted by Van Lierop on behalf of small islands states. Full plans for the international insurance pool proposal were subsequently submitted to the fifth session in New York in February 1992. The proposal’s approach was that contributions should come from industrialised developed countries based on national levels of carbon emissions and a country’s ability to pay measured in terms of GDP.\textsuperscript{69} The response from the industrialised nations was reportedly along the lines of “We sympathise with your plight but we need to be realistic. This a complex issue requiring further consideration.”\textsuperscript{70}

The Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) was finalised on 9 May 1992. The proposal for an insurance mechanism was not incorporated. The Convention as whole is a modest document and while being an important step in international recognition of climate change as a problem, it contains no concrete commitments on the

\textsuperscript{68} Neva Wendt in Stephen Henningham and RJ May (Ed) \textit{Pacific Resources Handbook} (Canberra 1994) p 190
\textsuperscript{69} A Buckley ‘The proof we fear could kill us’ \textit{PIM} June 1992 p 35-36
\textsuperscript{70} ibid
stabilisation and reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The Convention's final text lacks teeth primarily because the US took a non-negotiable stance on commitments. Vanuatu's Van Lierop who was representing the small island states said, "I don't think we could have gotten any better – because the commitment to specific commitment was just not there in the United States, and without them, there is no point in having a convention." The main value of the Convention lay in the fact that it sets in train a process, that can be added to and evolve later to what is absolutely necessary.

At the Rio Conference, Tuvalu and Nauru, neither UN members were the first to sign the Climate Change Convention together with the Biodiversity Convention in a symbolic act to show the importance of these conventions to the small island states. The Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) issued a declaration at the Conference which welcomed the recognition extended to the AOSIS as a special interest group during the INC negotiations and appealed to all members of the international community to recall that the special conditions and threat which led to that recognition still exist but it also said that despite recent advances in some areas, small island and low lying coastal developing countries continue to see, in a general sense, their needs concerns and assigned relatively low priorities within the United Nations systems.

What then was the achievement of the small islands states at the Rio Conference. By raising the issue at the Conference they managed to bring the issue to the forefront of the international agenda, they forced the world community to think about the issue. Most

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72 ibid
importantly the exposure before television cameras and the international print media ensured that they simply did not address the delegates at the UNCED conference but appealed to a larger television audience the world over who till then were probably even unaware of the existence of these tiny countries. And this by itself is no mean achievement.

Post Rio the small island have been active in the negotiating process.

At the Third Conference of the Parties to the Protocol (COP3) held at Kyoto, the South Pacific Forum countries played an important role in urging the international community to act. At the 28th SPF meeting at Rarotonga the SPF in declared that the Forum recognised and endorsed the deep concerns regarding the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on rising sea levels and changing weather patterns on all Forum members, especially low lying island nations as recorded in the "Statement on Climate Change and Sea Level Rise" issued by the 7th Economic Summit of Smaller Island States Leaders held in Rarotonga on 12-13 September 1997. They urged all countries to make additional efforts in meeting commitments under the FCCC, and expressed concern at the insufficient progress made so far.

Leaders recognised that to respond effectively to those concerns would require the active cooperation of all countries with significant greenhouse gas emissions.

Leaders urged all participants at the forthcoming Kyoto Conference to pursue vigorously an outcome which would produce the highest level of net reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions, by means of a legally binding Protocol or other legal instrument.
The Forum also called for the COP3 outcome to provide for procedures and future time frames under which significant developing country emitters would limit and ultimately reduce their greenhouse gas emissions as part of global efforts towards attainment of the long term goal of the FCCC. 73

The Small Islands Economic Summit which was also held at Rarotonga in September 1997 said in a statement “We, the Smaller Island States, reaffirm that global warming and sea-level rise are among the most serious threats to the region and the survival of some island states.” It recognised and endorsed the Second Assessment Report of the Inter- Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of 1996, which stated that the balance of scientific evidence suggests a discernible human influence on the global climate. The avoidable destruction of entire communities and countries and their cultures contravenes the basic right of every State, large and small, rich and poor, to exist. This it said cannot be tolerated by the family of nations.

It stressed that the existence of Pacific peoples and their cultures is intimately connected with their island environments. Therefore, for the Smaller Island States, it is essential that developed State Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) honour their legal commitments under the Convention to return their emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

The Smaller Island States, recognise the critical importance of the ongoing negotiations within the UNFCCC aimed at adopting a protocol or other legal instrument at the Third Conference of the Parties to be held in Kyoto, Japan in December (1997). “We urge the parties to the Convention to adopt a protocol that contains legally binding

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73 SPF Forum Leaders Retreat Statement, (Rarotonga 1997)
obligations for reductions in the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by developed countries by 20% relative to 1990 levels by the year 2005, as proposed in the Draft Protocol submitted by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).”

"Because advanced developing countries are increasing rapidly their emissions of greenhouse gases, we also call upon them to consider how they might limit, and ultimately reduce, their greenhouse gas emissions in the future and to announce their intentions at the Kyoto Conference."74

At the Kyoto Meet too, the SPF countries made a fervent appeal to the international community on the question of cuts in domestic emissions. The Samoan environment minister Tualu Sale Tagaloa set the tone for the appeals “"No Party should contemplate the loss of whole societies with indifference," He was speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States which has 35 members from the Pacific, Carribbean and Indian Ocean regions at the Conference.

"Where is the leadership to forge and direct that commitment? Where is the humble assumption of responsibility? Sadly, it appears that at this moment both are absent," he said.

The Conference was informed that the small island developing states would be the first to be affected by the consequences of climate change and the least able to adapt. Sea-level rise posed the most danger as it eroded scarce land areas, threatened the reefs and invaded precious ground water.

Island states were described as the indicators of what was likely to happen to others. He referred to the concerns of the insurance industry whose exposure to risk and

74 8th Small Islands Economic Summit, Statement on Climate Change (Rarotonga, 1997)
existing data about increased storm activity made island communities uninsurable for climate-related risks.\textsuperscript{75}

Tuvalu, one of the countries which will bear the brunt of this impact said, “There is an asserted consensus that binding significant targets to reduce greenhouse gases are essential, if the catastrophic impacts of climate change on the livelihood and existence of people are to be limited. Our mere presence here in Kyoto this week manifests this belief. For the people of low-lying small island states of the world, however, and certainly of the small island country of Tuvalu in the Pacific, this is no longer a debatable argument. The impacts of global warming on our islands are real, and are already threatening our very survival and existence. The security of our future and that of our children and grandchildren is indeed at stake,” the Rt Hon Toaripi Lauti, Prime Ministerial Special Envoy emphasised.

It is therefore essential and imperative that this Conference in Kyoto takes into account the plight already faced by the people of Tuvalu and those similarly low lying small island States, within the final negotiated text of the Protocol. As is well known, Tuvalu is one of the smallest island states on earth with all the characteristics of smallness, i.e. low lying, isolated, geographically fragmented and extremely vulnerable to external forces including climate change impacts.

The vulnerability and fragility of Tuvalu’s ecological system and its proneness to climate change effects is well documented. A 1996 assessment of climate change impacts and adaptation carried out for Tuvalu by the Environment agency of Japan and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), convincingly concluded that, "..\textsuperscript{75} SPF Forum Statement of the Samoa’s environment minister to COP-3, Kyoto, 1997
because of its location and physical nature, Tuvalu is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and in particular rising sea level”. This conclusion spells it all out, and is consistent with the findings highlighted in the second assessment report of the IPCC. Added to which is the conclusion from many scientific studies that coral reef islands like Tuvalu, will be uninhabitable when sea level rises as a result of global warming and climate change.\(^{76}\)

Empirically, these findings have very close correlations with what Tuvalu and many in the Pacific have actually and physically experienced and suffered as a result of climate change, especially strong winds and sea level rise. We are already experiencing increased frequency of cyclones, tomatoes, flooding, and tide surges many of which unexpectedly hit us outside the usual climatic seasons of the islands. The costs of these effects to us in Tuvalu is enormous. It is almost unbearable.\(^ {77}\) Not only were houses and whole villages damaged, but also vegetation and food crops were completely destroyed. In one recent incident an entire island community were left homeless and its vegetation damaged so much so that the island is uninhabitable right now. In another incident, one whole islet completely disappeared into thin air. Erosion to coastal areas of our already scarce land is further worsened, and the increased salinity in underground water is seriously affecting not only vegetation and traditional food crops but also the health and lives of the people.

While Parties to the UNFCCC debate over what emission reductions to take, Tuvalu continues to bear and suffer the increasing cost of climate change impacts which

\(^{76}\) SPF Forum Statement of the Tuvalu’s Prime Ministerial Envoy to the COP-3 (Kyoto, 1997)

\(^{77}\) ibid

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is threatening the very existence, culture and unique identity of Tuvalu as a member of the global community. There is nowhere else on earth that can substitute for our God-given homeland in Tuvalu. The option of relocation as mooted by some countries therefore is utterly insensitive and irresponsible.

My delegation fully appreciates the high costs to developed countries of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to acceptable levels. Indeed coming from a small island state already suffering from the effects of climate change, we are trying to understand the rationality of lack of actions to implement commitments made in Rio five years ago. However, we also wish to remind the Conference that the costs of not doing something to that effect, urgently now, are even much higher. To us in Tuvalu it is certainly not a question of economics and costs. It is a matter of life and death. Ignoring our pleases will amount to nothing less than denial of our rights to exist as part of the global society and of the human race. 78

The Fijian delegate to COP3 Mr S T Cavuilati, Ambassador, Fiji Embassy stressed on the necessity of having legally binding targets. Specified legally binding targets and timeframes on reductions is a must in Kyoto. We believe in a 20% emission reduction GHG to 1990 levels as the most appropriate targets to achieve if the 60-80% estimation by the IPCC were to be given the serious attention it deserves. 79 "The sciences have warned us and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has brought matters closer to home with figures and expert opinion. Notwithstanding the apparent lack of responsibility and leadership in so far as the implementation of the Berlin

78 ibid

79 SPF Statement of the Fijian Ambassador to COP-3 ST Cavuilati (Kyoto, 1997)
Mandate is concerned, we shall continue nevertheless with present efforts, at mitigation and adaptation, uncertainty as most claim, a stimulant in our commitment for continued action. But our efforts alone and those who have taken the lead in these areas will be far from enough, in fact it is negligible in the light of the enormity of the problem we are facing. Its extent would undoubtedly require the genuine resolve by all the Parties to the Convention to change the course of events, dismal and seemingly hopeless however it has been. In this regard, the Berlin Mandate in our humble view, has clearly and unequivocally, mapped out for all of us the most reasonable and pragmatic way forward recognising the principles of common and differentiated responsibilities.\(^{80}\)

The Papua New Guinea delegate its Ambassador to Japan, Aiwa Olmi, stressed on the urgency by pointing out that, """The current drought in our country and the submerging of some of our smaller low-lying atoll islands only aggravate the urgency of our climate associated problems. My government therefore wishes to urge the international community to act immediately in making commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions rather than acting later," Efforts to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions needed to be achieved at a level, and a timeframe, that allowed ecosystems to adapt naturally. "this is to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable development to proceed in a sustainable manner," he said\(^{81}\)

What were the Pacific countries delegates really trying to do? Pacific Island delegates at the Climate Change Conference in Kyoto, Japan continue to press for firmer action by developed countries as delegates from 160 countries try to agree on the terms of a Protocol to the UN Convention on Climate Change. Negotiators from various groups

\(^{80}\) ibid
\(^{81}\) ibid
are seeking to compromise on a range of proposals that offer different targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, different time frames and commitments.

They were very critical of the strategy of the developed world to push the blame on others. The Vice President of the Federated States of Micronesia, HE Leo Falcam, said "the failure of developed countries to take up a leadership role, and instead look to developing countries for flexibility and compromise was impossible to understand given the origins and nature of the climate change threat.

"By the time our islands become the first casualties it will be too late for the rest of the world to avoid its own subsequent destruction," the Vice President said.

The Solomon Islands urged delegates to deliver on promises made at the Rio Earth Summit five years ago.

"Are we going to bury our heads in the sand while awaiting the crisis to strike or must we act now and decisively to adopt a meaningful Protocol with meaningful targets and time frames," said the Solomon Island Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Relations, Hon Patteson Oti.\textsuperscript{82}

The SPREP submission to the COP3 speaks of the work done by the SPF countries under the aegis of SPREP to combat the problem of climate change, excerpts, "Climate change is a major challenge for us all but for island States the future appears particularly grim."

The conclusions reached by the IPCC in its first and second assessment reports are clear increases in greenhouse gas concentrations since pre-industrial times have led to a positive radiative forcing of climate, tending to warm the surface and to produce other

\textsuperscript{82} ibid.
changes of climate - "the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human interference on the global climate". The IPCC has clearly stated that in order to just stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, there is a need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 60-80%.

It is clear that the different proposals of between 0-15% are well below this target. This presents a difficult and uncertain future for many of the Pacific island members, especially the low lying island members... So what can be done to assist countries reduce these uncertainties and respond effectively?

SPREP's role in this process is to strengthen the capacity of the Pacific island members to understand the science of climate change and to participate effectively in these negotiations. This capacity will be even more crucial in a "post-Kyoto" world. In assisting Pacific island governments and administrations protect and improve their shared environment, SPREP's climate change programme is trying to build this capacity at national and regional levels. For example:

- The South Pacific Sea Level Monitoring Project funded by Australia, which has already recorded a rise in both temperature and sea level;

- The Atmospheric Radiation Monitoring Project funded by the United States, which will reduce the uncertainties of General Circulation Models and the prediction of El Nino events;

- The Pacific Island Climate Change Assistance Project funded by the GEF, and integrated with the UNITAR's CC:TRAIN programme, will enable
countries to submit their initial National Communications as well as build capacity for them to meet their obligations under the Convention;

- Vulnerability assessments and the development of methodologies funded by Japan; and,

- The strengthening of meteorological capacity and the participation in IPCC related activities funded by Australia, the Commonwealth Secretariat, WMO, New Zealand and Denmark.  

As is evident these extensive quotations the SPF countries have tried their best to have their voice heard in the COP3. But the inability of the developed world to look beyond their own needs has made these countries very frustrated. At the COP4 held at Buenos Aires in December 1998 the AOSIS told the conference that their efforts to address the impacts of climate change will be largely symbolic unless effective action is taken by major emitters of greenhouse gases to reduce their emission.  

"The combined emissions of our small and developing economies are negligible, easily lost in the margin of error of global emission calculations. Our efforts at pushing forward the international negotiating process would remain mere gestures, unless the countries responsible for the alarming rise in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions also took effective action to meet their emission reduction targets."

Lamenting on the delay Nauru said, "We helped to draft the first edition of the Kyoto protocol five years ago and have been working for nearly a decade yet greenhouse emissions from developed and large developing countries alike continue to rise. When

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83 ibid
84 SPF Press Statement no 9098 (Buenos Aires 1998)
will this stop? If we are to avoid an apocalypse the time to act is now.” 85 While the Cook Islands asked the countries to take measures to cut emissions domestically. 86 At the Buenos Aires Conference the SPF country delegations tried to push for immediate and practical action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Decrying the attitude of the Western Powers the Bikenibau Paeniu, Prime Minister of Tuvalu said, “What we have been doing up to now is inventing processes, which will never achieve our common objective. Are we negotiating because a minority group does not want to accept its responsibility?” 87 The attack could not have been more direct. What the discussion reveals is that the SPF countries, which are the worst sufferers of the climate change, can really do little in terms of influencing the process for climate change. But their strategy of taking up such issues in a common voice has ensured that their voice is at least heard in the international fora. Climate change it can be said has played an important role in galvanizing these countries to coordinate their international stances as a single regional unit. It has formed the basis for international and regional cooperation in forms such as technical and financial assistance. Thus it is an important component of their relations both at the regional level and at the international level.

**The problem of driftnet fishing**

Driftnetting is a new fishing method introduced in the South Pacific by Japanese and Taiwanese fleets in the mid 1980s. The Forum Fisheries Agency was established in 1979. Its origins can be traced to two papers presented to the South Pacific Forum at its

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85 SPF Press Statement no 7898 (Buenos Aires 1998)

86 SPF Press Statement no 8098 (Buenos Aires 1998)

87 SPF Press Statement no 8798 (Buenos Aires 1998)
Suva meeting. The Papua New Guinea paper highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in environmental and fisheries matters. While Fiji proposed the adoption of a coherent and rational approach to fisheries cooperation, to ensure that the benefits stemming from the UNCLOS would flow to south Pacific Island countries. In seeking to promote regional fisheries cooperation and coordination of policies the FFA takes its direction from the Forum Fisheries Committee. The South Pacific Forum subsequently reviews the FFC decisions. In this way the SPF is kept briefed on FFA activities and the major fisheries issues and problems confronting the region. 88

FFA member countries became concerned about the impact of driftnet fishing in the region in mid 1988 after Taiwanese fishing interests approached the Cook Islands seeking permission to transship driftnet caught fish in Rarotonga. A series of technical fisheries meetings followed involving FFA member countries and several South Pacific territories voiced strong opposition to driftnet fishing by distant water fishing nations in the region. Opposition was primarily based on the non-selective nature of the fishing method and the undesirable impact it has on other fish stocks, marine mammals and seabird populations. 89

Taiwan began driftnet fishing for shark, mackerel and longtail tuna in the Arafura and Timor Seas north of Australia in 1974. Australia observers monitored the by-catch of this fishery between 1981-1983. They recorded several species of small cetaceans being killed and discovered that the Taiwanese fishermen were under reporting the by-catch. Australia brought the fishery to an end in 1986 by limiting net length to 2.5 km. It has

88 David Doulman in Yash Ghai (Ed) Development and Management in Small Island States (Suva 1992) p180-1

89 Min of Foreign Affairs and Trade Information Bulletin no 56 (Wellington Jan 1996) p-21
been reported that at least 50 Taiwanese vessels still continue to operate in the Arafura Sea within the Indonesian EEZ. Between 1982 and 1987, Japanese large-mesh driftnet vessels fished for albacore mainly in the Tasman Sea area of the South Pacific. The Taiwanese large-mesh fleet moved into the Tasman Sea in 1986. In 1987, Japanese and Taiwanese large-mesh fleets began fishing for albacore in the Subtropical Convergence Zone (STCZ) between 30 deg - 40 deg S. A couple of large-mesh driftnet vessels from the Republic of Korea also fished in the South Pacific during the 1980s, but left in June 1989. Since then the ROK has prohibited driftnet fishing in the South Pacific. Japan suspended driftnet operations in the STCZ during the 1990-91 season because of the Wellington Convention and UNGA Resolution 44/225. However, Japan said that it would go back as soon as acceptable conservation and management measures could be implemented. Taiwan continued to driftnet fish for albacore in the STCZ during the 1990-91 season. Beginning in 1989, Taiwanese vessels were also licensed to driftnet in the EEZ of Papua New Guinea.  

90 Large-Mesh Driftnet Characteristics South Pacific: The driftnets were multifilament nylon with a stretch mesh size of 160-200 mm. The width or depth varied between nine and 15 meters. The length of the Japanese large-mesh driftnet varied between 20 and 55 km, although in its last season it ranged between 35 and 80 km. The average Taiwanese net was around 24 km. During the 1989-90 season, between 4,500 and 10,000 km of driftnet were set each night in the STCZ. The Tasman Sea: In 1989, the Japanese used 39 meter long, 10 meter deep tans combined in five km sets, with 50 floats per tan, a double lead line and a 180 mm mesh. Sets were set in parallel rows and approximately 40 km driftnets were fished by each vessel each.

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90 Linda and Paul High Seas Driftnetting: The Plunder of Global Commons, A compendium (Kailua 1994) p10-12
The Taiwanese used 39 m long, 15 meter deep tans, combined in eight km sets with a 200 mm mesh. They also set approximately 40 km of driftnet in parallel rows.  

Areas and Seasons The major fishing season was December through April. The fleets fished between 30 - 40 deg S and 140 - 170 deg W in the Sub-tropical Convergence Zone. Driftnet fishing in the Tasman Sea west of New Zealand was concentrated between 38 - 40 deg S and 162 - 158 deg E. In 1989, Australia and New Zealand banned large-scale driftnet fishing in their EEZs, leaving little of the Tasman Sea available for high seas driftnet fishing. An estimated 20 Japanese and Taiwanese driftnet vessels fished there during the 1989-90 season.

The 1989 Forum meeting considered the driftnet issue and expressed grave concern about it. Through the Tarawa Declaration the SPF resolved that a convention to ban driftnet fishing should be developed and that steps should be taken to establish a management regime for South Pacific albacore tuna. Later the South Pacific Conference endorsed the Tarawa declaration as did the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the Langkawi Declaration. The United States House of Representative endorsed the Tarawa Declaration and called for the United States to cooperate with the South Pacific organisations in formulating an international convention to ban driftnet fishing in the region.

In the 1983-84 season, the Japanese reportedly operated 1720 large mesh driftnet vessels in the South Pacific and Tasman Sea. By 1988-89, the number reached 64. With

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91 ibid
92 ibid
93 SPF Forum Communique (Tarawa 1989)

94 David Doulman in Yash Ghai (Ed) Development and Management in Small Island States (Suva 1992) p 90
the passage of the Tarawa Declaration and the Wellington Convention, (to be discussed in the next chapter in the context of the role played by Australia and New Zealand). Japan reduced her fleet in the STCZ to 19 in 198990 and zero in 199091. South Korea withdrew its two vessels in June 1989. During the 1987-88 season, approximately seven Taiwan driftnet vessels were operating in the South Pacific and Tasman Sea. In 1988-89, that number increased to 60-130 vessels. Thereafter, Taiwan announced that only nine vessels would be licensed to fish in the South Pacific STCZ during the 199091 season. However, albacore trollers reported that between 12-18 Taiwanese vessels driftnetted for tuna in the South Pacific in 199091. In 1990, one of these was videotaped fishing without a flag. During the 1991-92 season, there were no reports of driftnet fishing vessels operating in the region. Those vessels put out of work by the Wellington Convention presumably moved on to driftnet in the Indian and Atlantic Ocean. The Taiwanese fleets recruit international crews, mainly indigenous Taiwanese, Filipinos, Chinese, Indonesian, Thai and South Africans. (Shall again be discussed in chap4).

However the countries of the South Pacific did not a uniform view about the ban of driftnet fishing in the region. The reason can be traced to what the South Pacific fisheries expert Colin Hunt points out in an article. Tuna stocks is of great socio economic importance to SP countries. They generate substantial economic flows for the countries and hence a bargaining power that these countries. The main means that these nations are able to benefit from the fish stocks is by the hefty access fees given DWFNs. Hence they cannot afford to take a very stringent stance. At the time when the Tarawa declaration was being debated, Japan was busy doling out aid. On July 13 1989 it gave

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95 Colin Hunt 'Management of South Pacific tuna fishery' Marine Policy vol11 no2 p155
96 Colin Hunt Rent equity and sustainability in South Pacific Tuna Fishery, (to be published) p14
Kiribati US$6.7 million for building a new hospital, at the same time a Japanese firm paid $10,000 to Vanuatu to help the former to send a team to Japan to participate in the games for the disabled. On 26 July 1989, Vanuatu received US $8MILLION FROM Japan for its construction work at Banerfield airport. Others who received liberal aid were Tuvalu, and Tonga etc.

The 1989 Wellington Convention commits the countries of the region to prohibit driftnet-fishing activities within their exclusive economic zones and by their nationals in the high seas within a defined area of the Pacific Ocean. The SPF played an important role in the signing of the UN resolution in 1991 which bans driftnet fishing.

In an interview, Colin Hunt says that the reason why the SPF have not played a decisive role in deciding fisheries matters is that they have preferred to negotiate at time alone, hence preventing an OPEC like cartel from developing. Says Hunt; “Being small nations they are more acutely aware of the need to preserve their distinct identity.”

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97 Colin Hunt personal interview 1Sept 1997(NCDS, ANU Canberra)