



SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

Nadi, Fiji, 22-24 September 2026

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Defence ministers and representatives from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga gathered in Nadi for the 11th South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) from 22 to 24 September 2026. They were joined by observers from Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Ms Desna Solofa, Acting Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) attended as a special guest.

Discussions focused on *Securing the Blue Pacific: Collective Responsibility, Resilient Futures*. Ministers recommitted to continue to work together to safeguard the region from traditional, non-traditional and hybrid security threats.

Ministers expressed grave concern over the recent ballistic missile test conducted into the waters of the Blue Pacific, which occurred without appropriate notice. Ministers noted that this was the second such test in the region within two years. Ministers highlighted that the manner in which this activity was conducted risked undermining PIF Leaders' declaration of the Blue Pacific Continent as an Ocean of Peace. It also undermined Leaders' call to engage with the Blue Pacific Continent in a manner that honours the Pacific Way, respects national sovereignty and supports national and Pacific-led approaches. Ministers echoed the statement by Leaders at the 55th PIF Leaders' Meeting.

In response to an intelligence brief from the Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting (ODMIM), Ministers noted the compounding impacts of El Niño and the fuel crisis on the Pacific security environment, as well as transnational and serious organised crime and cyber.

Regional preparedness and collective action

Ministers reflected on the evolution of the Pacific Response Group (PRG) into a genuinely regional asset following its successful rotation of headquarters to New Zealand (1 July 2026) and now year round co-location. They welcomed the Commander of the PRG's update on achievements of the PRG since SPDMM 2025, notably participation in a Certification Exercise (28 October to 6 November 2025) and Exercise MARARA (June 2026). Ministers welcomed Fiji's expression of interest to host the PRG from July 2028. **Ministers agreed to take a phased approach to expanding the mandate of the PRG, recognising the importance of first consolidating and enhancing the PRG's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) capabilities, before working to include stabilisation operations guided by comprehensive regional consultations and supported by appropriate legal frameworks.**

Ministers acknowledged the range of exercises conducted under the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework in 2026 to build interoperability. Ministers thanked Chile for its update on the strategic planning underway for Exercise Taina Vaikava and looked forward to updates at SPDMM 2027.

Ministers also thanked Australia for its report on the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) meeting that it hosted in April 2026. They requested that they continue to be updated on relevant developments, particularly the Regional Operations Deployment Framework (RODF). **Ministers tasked the Chiefs and Heads of Defence (CHODs) to take back to the JHoPS meeting a request that any future RODF consider the privileges and immunities relevant to HADR and any future PRG stabilisation function, subject to endorsement by PIF leaders.**

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Ministers welcomed the update on progress towards a SPDMM Status of Forces Agreement **and tasked the Intersessional Working Group (IWG) to commence formal negotiations in line with national processes.**

Ministers visited the Blackrock peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief camp and received a briefing and tour showcasing Fiji's operations in support of peacekeeping, HADR and countering TNOC.

Ministers agreed that the SPDMM remains the most effective forum to pursue military peacekeeping cooperation in the South Pacific and identified a number of peacekeeping initiatives to further explore through the IWG.

Ministers recognised the growing challenges of emerging technology, cyber security and artificial intelligence and **tasked the IWG to explore how defence organisations could better cooperate in these areas.**

Maritime security

Ministers welcomed the presentation from Fiji on transnational organised crime (TNOC). Ministers noted TNOC has intensified in the region and reaffirmed their commitment to jointly responding to detect, deter and disrupt TNOC across the maritime domain. Ministers noted that at the 55th PIF Leaders' Meeting, a regional mechanism *Waqqa Moana* was agreed in principle to strengthen collective maritime security response, information sharing and regional resilience. **Ministers tasked CHODs to explore a potential future SPDMM contribution to regional efforts such as *Waqqa Moana* and report back at SPDMM 2027.**

Regional partnerships and coordinating with regional architecture

Ministers conveyed their sincere appreciation to the acting PIF Secretary General Ms Desna Solofa for attending the meeting as a special guest. Ministers endorsed an update to the Governance Framework to include a standing invitation to the PIF Secretary General. Ministers welcomed the regional perspective Ms Solofa had brought to the discussions and thanked the PIF Secretariat for presenting its Regional Peace and Security Action Plan 2026-2030. Ministers noted that the SPDMM Secretariat had been engaging as a member of the Peace and Security Pillar Thematic Advisory Group and had contributed to consultations on the Regional Peace and Security Action Plan. Ministers welcomed the ongoing collaboration between the SPDMM Secretariat and the PIF to explore how a SPDMM Defence Advisor position in the PIF Secretariat could contribute to the PIF's peace and security pillar of work.

Ministers recognised the existential threat posed by climate change and reflected on the role of defence forces in reducing emissions and supporting adaptation. Ministers also welcomed the brief from the PIF Climate Peace and Security Advisor on the regional climate peace and security agenda and encouraged the SPDMM Secretariat's ongoing consultation in light of Fiji's proposal for a SPDMM Climate Peace and Security Advisor at SPDMM 2025.

Ministers thanked New Zealand for its leadership on enhancing regional defence architecture through existing mechanisms. Ministers noted SPDMM Secretaries' intention to meet annually and thanked Fiji for its leadership to establish this initiative.

Thematic engagement initiatives

Recognising that women play a critical role in preventing conflict, building peace and helping countries recover during crises, ministers acknowledged their leadership and contributions to inclusive responses to Pacific security challenges. Ministers thanked Fiji for sharing the outcomes of its Gender Barrier Assessment, the region's first. Ministers noted the SPDMM Women Peace and Security Guidance Note, endorsed the priority recommendations and **tasked the Secretariat and IWG to create a Forward Work Plan for implementation.** Ministers encouraged members to share experiences.

Ministers thanked Fiji for hosting the third Pacific Defence Faith Forum in Nadi from 22 to 26 March 2026. Ministers welcomed the continued evolution of the Pacific Defence Faith Network, underpinned by people-to-people connections and faith-based engagement. Ministers recognised the important role that faith and spirituality plays in supporting sailors, soldiers and aviators, families and the communities in which they serve. They looked forward to the next forum in 2027.

Ministers looked forward to Fiji hosting emerging leaders in 2027 for the fourth South Pacific Defence Future Leaders' Summit.

Ministers welcomed an update on the Academic Cooperation Network (ACN), including its first live webinar and thanked Chile for its leadership for the next publication in 2027.

Ministers welcomed the launch of the Defence Training Hub-Pacific which integrated the SPDMM Regional Training Framework, an online platform designed to improve coordination of individual training courses available to personnel across the SPDMM community. Ministers welcomed an update on progress responding to Fiji's proposal to establish an environmental sustainability module.

Ministers thanked Fiji for hosting SPDMM 2026 and agreed that Australia would host SPDMM in 2027.

For more information on SPDMM, please visit: [South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting](#).