

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Clive Pearson to the Ottawa Convention Intersessional Programme “Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention”, Friday 11 May 2001.

Mr Co-Chair,

I would briefly like to inform delegates in this Standing Committee about New Zealand’s outreach efforts in the Pacific, in the context of the United Nations Asia Pacific Regional Disarmament Conference. This conference was held in Wellington from 27-30 March and was the first of its kind in the Pacific.

It provided a platform to offer perspectives on key disarmament and arms control issues. It brought a Pacific dimension to the regular UN Asia Pacific process. It updated the UN and the disarmament treaty secretariats on the concerns of the region, as well as the resource and other challenges small countries face when wanting to participate in international treaty regimes. And, it facilitated the information exchange and relationship-building that can underpin Pacific states’ adherence to the main treaty regimes.

While the region has not suffered the humanitarian problems associated with landmines seen in other parts of the world, nevertheless the Ottawa Convention has already attracted a good level of support from Pacific island states. Eight countries have ratified (Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands) and three countries have signed but not yet ratified (Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu). Four Pacific island states have not yet acceded (Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu).

Mr Co-Chair,

We chose to work in partnership at the conference with the ICBL and the New Zealand Campaign to Ban Landmines (CALM) in promoting new adherence to the treaty and its implementation, including Article 7 reporting. We arranged to hold bilateral sessions involving the ICBL with government representatives from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, as well as a representative of the Pacific Forum Secretariat based in Suva, Fiji. The Pacific Forum Secretariat has distributed conference materials on specific treaties to those Pacific island states that did not attend).

Together with the ICBL and CALM we also facilitated a seminar on the Ottawa Convention. Pacific states exchanged experience and information on ratifying and implementing the treaty; identified obstacles and assistance available to overcome these; and considered what might be reasonable goals to set for making progress towards wider adherence within the Pacific and fulfilment of reporting requirements.

Mr Co-Chair,

Feedback from Pacific participants at the Conference has been positive. It is too soon to tell what impact the intensive programme on treaty issues has had: concrete outcomes in the form of new treaty action, for example, will be better evaluated in the medium term. New networks have, however, been created and commitments made to follow-up and assist with the preparation of enabling national legislation to support new treaty ratifications, and reporting requirements. New Zealand and Australia intend to cooperate with the Forum Secretariat to provide Pacific states with regular distillations of key developments on treaty ratification. New Zealand is also considering what might be an appropriate new focus in the disarmament and arms control area for the next Pacific Forum Heads of Government meeting in Nauru in August 2001.

Mr Co-Chair,

New Zealand will continue to work with partners in governments and non-government organisations to keep these important issues on the South Pacific agenda in our regional discussions as well as, of course, at the multilateral level.

Mr Co-Chair, I thank you.