

Meeting between Prime Minister Qarase and Commodore Bainimarama

Government House; Wellington
29 November 2007

Points of Agreement and next Steps

Overview:

The meeting between Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and Commodore Frank Bainimarama at Government House in Wellington has seen lengthy, serious and meaningful discussions on the issues raised by the Royal Fiji Military Force. Substantial progress was made in resolving areas of difference.

The areas discussed, and the outcomes reached were:

Issue: Public declaration by the government that the coup events of 2000 were illegal; and all those associated with them must be removed from office.

Outcome:

The Fiji Government reaffirms that the coup events of 2000 were illegal.

The Government has undertaken to develop, without delay, a renewed and fully resourced public education programme, to take to the public and villages of Fiji, an information programme aimed at ensuring wide public awareness and understanding that the events of 2000 were illegal.

The Government is also prepared to will also proceed, consistent with Fiji constitutional and legal process, to continue to bring to account those people found by due process to be illegally associated with the events of 2000. The RFMF has been invited to provide to the Government the names of people whom it believes should face legal process.

Note: the Government of New Zealand has indicated its willingness to assist in the resourcing of the public education programme.

Issue: Withdrawal of the 3 contentious Bills: the Reconciliation Tolerance and Unity Bill, Qoliqoli Bill and the Land Tribunal Bill

Outcome:

Action on the Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unit Bill has been suspended.

The Government and RFMF agree that a current independent review of the constitutionality and legality of the Qoliqoli Bill and Land Tribunal Bill should,

with resource-assistance from New Zealand, be accelerated and brought to a rapid conclusion. New Zealand has undertaken to provide proposals to the Government of Fiji by 1 December on how the review process can be accelerated through attaching additional legal and analytical resources to the review. The meeting agreed that the review of the Bills will be completed by 1 January; with a progress report to be provided by mid December.

If the review finds that the Bills are legally or constitutionally unsound then action on them will be automatically suspended. If the review finds otherwise, then the government will enter into renewed consultations with the RFMF and other interested parties on the areas concerned.

The meeting noted the international precedents around issues such as indigenous land ownership and reform typically require lengthy processes of consultation and inclusive processes in order to ensure broad based consensus and participation. Such an approach would be equally appropriate for Fiji.

Issue: Investigations against Commander Bainimarama and the RFMF

Outcome: The Government of Fiji, should it receive advice from the appropriate Fiji Government authorities (the Solicitor General/DPP , Police Commander) that the investigations in dispute should be suspended, would be prepared to follow that advice; and to confirm publicly that it has done so.

Issue: Police Commissioner Hughes contract to be terminated.

Outcome: The current situation is that Commissioner Hughes is nearing the end of his term and has been granted leave.

Issue: No foreign military/police intervention:

Outcome: The Government of Fiji and the RFMF agree that there should be no foreign military or police intervention in the domestic affairs of Fiji.

Issue: Review of the role of the PTR Unit

Outcome: The Government of Fiji and RFMF agree on the need for a capable and professional Police Force that retains public confidence. In that context the Government agrees to undertake a review of the role of the PTR.

Issue: Review the commercial arm and role of the Native Lands Trust Board

Outcome: It was acknowledged that the NLTB is a statutory organisation and the Government of Fiji cannot interfere in its operations. However, it was

agreed that the NTLB would be requested to review its commercial arm and, in this context, New Zealand offered to provide resourcing and/or international expertise to assist such a review.

Issue: Ministry of Home Affairs must respond to RFMF concerns about Force structure, allowances and promotions

Outcome: The Government of Fiji agrees to renewed engagement with the RFMF to address its concerns.

Issue: Government must address good governance

Outcome: The Government of Fiji agrees to work with the RFMF, and other Fiji groups, to develop higher standards of governance within Fiji.