

**ALLOCUTION DE MONSIEUR EDOUARD FRITCH  
PRESIDENT DE LA POLYNESIE FRANCAISE**

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Cérémonie d'ouverture  
Conférence du Groupe des Parlements des îles du Pacifique

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Salle Vetea Bambridge, Assemblée PF  
Mardi 10 Septembre 2019

Your Excellencies,

Speakers, Senators and Delegates from the Pacific,

I also would like to acknowledge our Colleagues from New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna,

Your Excellency Mr High Commissioner of the Republic of France,

Distinguished Representatives of this Honorable Assembly,

Distinguished Experts from the United Nations (UN) , the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner under the Pacific Islands Forum (OPOC –PIF), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP),

Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Ia ora na, Manava e Maeva.*

I am truly delighted to see familiar faces that reflects the Pacific, because you are the legitimate faces of the Pacific and I wish to commend the Speaker of the Assembly of French Polynesia, my friend Gaston TONG SANG, for taking the initiative to convene this Conference of the Pacific Islands Parliaments Group on such a key issue for our Pacific Region as the sustainability of our Blue Economy.

You may recall that in July 2015, the Leaders of the Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) signed the “Taputapuātea Declaration on Climate Change”, urging to limit global warming to below 1.5° Celsius. Our declaration was strongly defended in Paris during the COP21. Since then, the Climate change has become the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific. And we, reaffirmed our commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Our “Vaa” (canoe) follows the same objective of our integration within the Pacific region. The Legislative and Executive bodies of our Country are “paddling” in the same direction in order to reinforce our position and regional ties in the Pacific.

We are truly honored to welcome you as distinguished Representatives of 16 (sixteen) Countries, but also experts from International and Regional organizations :

- the Special Envoy of the UN, Mr Peter THOMPSON;
- Mr Kosi LATU, Director of SPREP;
- Mr Peter WILLIAMS from SPC in Noumea;
- And Mr Peni SUVEINAKAWA from OPOC/Suva.

Today, I wish to acknowledge Mister Tong Sang’s ambition to transform the “Group of Polynesian Parliamentarians” (GPP) into a “Group of Pacific Islands Parliamentarians” (GPIP) with your endorsement.

This initiative echoes and supports the aims set by the Leaders of the Pacific Island Forum which is the key political regional Institution in the Pacific. The “Framework for Pacific Regionalism” commits Leaders to “*work together to address our common challenges, harness shared strengths and ensure that our individual and collective advancements bring practical benefits to all Pacific peoples*”.

We also set our principal objectives as follows:

- **Sustainable development that combines economic social and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably;**
- **Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable;**
- **Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and**
- **Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.**

Furthermore, the more consultations between Pacific Island Nations, the Better!

It is in harmony with our Blue Pacific narrative objectives in giving more voice to the Blue continent.

In regard to our Blue Pacific Ocean, we may be considered as Small Island Territories but in the eyes of the larger Nations, we are and have become **Big Oceanic States** and our marine resources are **the object of covetousness**.

For this reason, as Custodians of this Ocean, we must and I urge each and every one of us to take the necessary measures to protect and manage in a sustainable manner our marine resources before it is too late.

In this context, We, Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum, acknowledged in Tuvalu that regionalism depends on our solidarity and efforts to **address regional priorities to secure our Blue Pacific Continent**.

These priorities are:

- Climate change and disaster resilience,
- Regional security,
- Oceans and Maritime boundaries,
- NCD's – Non-Communicable Diseases such as obesity and cardio-vascular disease and disability which is a crucial issue in our Pacific Island Society **particularly with our youth** and this needs to be addressed.

Very recently, the Bahamas Islands and its population were devastated by the most violent hurricane named Dorian, killing at least 45 people and leaving more than 70 000 people in need of food and shelter according to the United Nations report.

Your Excellencies and Distinguished representatives, I wish to draw your attention: Leaders of the Forum **endorsed in 2018 in Nauru the Boe Declaration**, a new security declaration viewing security through a broader definition of security including human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation **in building resilience to disasters and climate change**.

The Boe Declaration is a call to action for stronger and cohesive regional security cooperation and coordination.

As Mister António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General emphasized last may in Suva, Fiji, the Pacific Islands Leaders have the : “**Unique Moral Authority to Speak Out on Climate Change**”.

We endorsed in Tuvalu, during the Pacific Islands Leaders retreat, the Kainaki II “**Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now**”, which expresses our view on this crucial matter.

Last week in Santiago, Chile, I met with H.E. Sebastian Piñera, President of the Republic of Chile, and the Honourable Carolina Schmidt, her Minister of Environment and Chair of the COP25. Both of them have the ambition to put Oceans in the center of climate change discussions next December. In this regard, Chile is the hosting country for the first BLUE COP with the main objective being to identify new engagements and specific actions to ensure healthy and resilient oceans. French Polynesia will support this initiative. On the same note, we were able to share an ambitious cable project on connectivity.

**This could be one of the largest cable network that will link South America to the rest of the Pacific, in the same manner as the agreement that we have signed last year in Auckland for the Manatua Consortium Project linking Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa.**

With the same objective in mind, today and tomorrow, **you will share and discuss the crucial issue of “A resilient Pacific Ocean” and the “economic impact of Fisheries” in our region, which is as you all know a key factor for our Blue Economy.**

Let me wish you much wisdom as you debate and interact amongst yourselves particularly with the experience and wisdom of your Senior Representatives.

I look forward in anticipation to read your “Taraho’i declaration” which will enable us to move in a sustainable and coherent manner.

Thank you for your attention, and let me wish you a constructive and pleasant stay here in Tahiti.

Mauru’uru roa, Te aroha ia rahi.