

# **HON JUDITH COLLINS KC, MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

## **SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING 2025**

**December 2025**

This publication provides the briefing document for the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in October 2025, held in Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, Chile.

The pack comprises the following document:

- the October 2025 Briefing *South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting 2025*.

This pack has been released on the Ministry of Defence website, available at:  
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# SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING 2025

## Briefing Document

22 – 24 October 2025, Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, Chile



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## TAB ONE: OVERVIEW

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*SPDMM 2025 Overview and Objectives*

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## Overview

Chile will host the 10th SPDMM from 22-24 October, in the cities of Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, Chile. The annual meeting brings together Defence Ministers from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga to discuss key defence and security issues affecting the South Pacific. The United States, United Kingdom and Japan are SPDMM Observers.

2. Since it was established in 2013, SPDMM has become a valuable mechanism in the Pacific regional security architecture. It is a forum for Defence Ministers to set regional priorities for defence forces and defence policy agencies. For New Zealand, influencing, building and maintaining Pacific consensus on defence issues is a key outcome and objective of SPDMM.

3. This year's theme is "*An integrated South Pacific*." It focuses on calling for deeper cooperation and stronger collective action. Under this theme, Chile has indicated that their focus for the meeting will be on the topics of maritime security, climate change and Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

4. Chile has largely retained New Zealand's programme and agenda format from SPDMM 2024, and the meeting will follow a similar format of open session discussions, and Ministerial bilateral engagement followed by a day of closed session (members only) discussions.

The closed session will include discussions on the Pacific Response Group, the SPDMM information sharing framework, coordinating regional security architecture, and SPDMM Status of Forces (SOFA) Feasibility Study.

5. New Zealand's key policy objectives through SPDMM 2025 are to:

- **Reinforce the SPDMM as the pre-eminent Defence coordinating meeting** for the Pacific
- **Understand Pacific Partners' views** on the region's top Defence and Security challenges.
- **Encourage Pacific solutions to regional challenges** and through existing regional mechanisms.
- **Advocate the value of coordinating regional defence and security** meetings through the SPDMM.

Chile is host and chair of the meeting and will introduce each agenda item and call on speakers, as well as officially open and close the meeting.

The meeting will be in English, however the Chair will speak in Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation provided via headsets.

*Agenda Items New Zealand is leading*

New Zealand will be invited to lead on the following agenda item:

- **Closed session – Agenda Item 8: Coordinating regional Defence architecture.**

*Key Actions / Decisions Required from New Zealand*

During the closed session of the meeting, New Zealand will be asked to endorse/approve or give views on the proposals below:

- **Open session – Report from the SPDMM Secretariat:** Members will be asked to task the Secretariat to disseminate their stocktake of ship riding to relevant regional organisations in the spirit of enhancing coordination across regional architecture. We recommend you task the Secretariat to share this stocktake with other regional organisations.
- **Open session – Agenda Item 3: Women, Peace and Security (WPS):** Members will be asked to share their views on ways to support WPS through SPDMM. This is a high priority for the host, Chile. We anticipate that Chile will seek members endorsement for the SPDMM Secretariat and Intersessional Working Group to develop a SPDMM WPS Guidance note for consideration at the next SPDMM. Should Chile seek endorsement, we recommend that you support this initiative.
- **Open session – Agenda Item 4: Climate Change:** Chile will provide a presentation on the first publication by their newly established Academic Cooperation Network. This Network is a Chilean initiative and Chile's publication has focussed on the theme of 'climate change'. All SPDMM members have had an opportunity to contribute an article. New Zealand's contribution is an article by an Ian Axford Fellow from the United States who was embedded in the NZDF on 'climate change policy in the South Pacific and the NZDF's approach'. Members will be invited to respond to this publication and share remarks on how SPDMM can enhance Pacific climate change resilience.
- **Closed session – Agenda Item 5: Regional Security Response Mechanisms:** Members will receive an update on the Pacific Response Group (PRG), a regionally deployable military capability established to support rapid, coordinated military responses to crises within Pacific Island countries, endorsed at SPDMM 2024. Members will be asked to endorse the paper outlining phase two of the PRG and to discuss broadening the mandate of the PRG beyond its current Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) focus. We recommend you endorse this paper.

*See Meeting Paper 2 (under tab four) for more information*

s6(a), s6(b)(i)



*See Meeting Paper 5 (under tab four) for more information*

- **At the close of this meeting on Friday 24 October: Members will be asked to** endorse Fiji's hosting of the SPDMM (2026); Pacific Defence Faith Forum (2026); SPDMM Future Leaders Forum (2026). Members will then be asked to endorse the SPDMM 2025 Joint Communique. We recommend you endorse this.

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*SPDMM Attendees*

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This year SPDMM delegations will be represented by:

- **Australia:** The Honourable Richard Marles, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Defence;
- **Chile:** Adriana Delpiano Puelma, Minister of National Defence
- **Fiji:** The Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, Republic of Fiji Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration;
- **Papua New Guinea:** The Honourable Dr Billy Joseph, Minister of Defence of Papua New Guinea
- **Tonga:** His Royal Highness Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Tonga
- **France:** General Eric Peltier, Deputy Director, General Directorate of International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS) – France not represented by a Minister.

SPDMM Observer nations will be represented by:

- **Japan:** Ms Mitsuko Hayashi, Director General, Japan Ministry of Defence
- **United Kingdom:** Mr Benjamin Merrick, Director of International Security, Ministry of Defence
- **United States:** Mr Jedidah Royal, Acting Assistant Secretary of War for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs

SPDMM Guest – for the second time the Pacific Island Forum will be attending, represented by:

- **Pacific Island Forum** Secretary General, Baron Waqa

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*Hot Topics in the Pacific – an overview*

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The 2025 South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting is set to the backdrop of wider regional events. These include:

*The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting*

- The annual Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting was held in Solomon Islands in September 2025. [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

Key issues/ takeaways:

- The next three PIF hosts are: Taiwan recognising Compact state, Palau (2026), New Zealand (2027) and French Polynesia (2028). [REDACTED] s6(a)

- The primary security outcome of the PIF Leaders' Meeting was the endorsement of the **Blue Pacific Ocean of Peace Declaration**. [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED]

s6(a)

- The Pacific Islands Forum has been advancing a “**Review of Regional Architecture**” to ensure the regional architecture is fit-for-purpose to deliver against the priorities of the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*. Outcomes, including on the consolidation of regional agencies, remain under consideration.

○ [REDACTED] s6(a), s6(b)(i)

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*SPDMM Open Session Agenda- Members, Observers and Guests*


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Wednesday 22 October		
6:30-8:30	Breakfast and executive time – all delegates	Sheraton Miramar Travesia Restaurant 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
8:30-8:45	Inauguration <i>Local press to enter during the Chilean Minister of Defence welcoming words.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chile's national anthem</li> <li>- Minister Delpiano's welcoming speech</li> <li>- Welcome video</li> </ul>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
8:45-9:05	Opening remarks (3 minutes per member) <i>First speaker: Fiji</i> <i>(The speaking order will proceed in a clockwise direction)</i>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
9:05-9:15	Official photo for heads of delegations and CHODs	Sheraton Miramar Terrace 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
9:15-9:20	Break for Chilean invited authorities to exit the room	Sheraton Miramar
9:20-9:25	Opening prayer <i>Hon Minister Pio Tikoduadua (Fiji)</i>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
9:25-9:35	Report from the SPDMM Secretariat <i>The Secretariat will brief participants on outcomes and follow-up from the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in 2024.</i>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor

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9:35-10:35	<p>South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting – Open Session</p> <p>[Agenda Item 1]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional Security Challenges: new trends</li> </ul> <p><i>ODMIM analyst to present a briefing (10 minutes). Opportunity for members to discuss and respond (5 minutes each).</i></p> <p><i>First speaker: New Zealand</i></p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p> <p>Reflections 1: Opportunity for observers and PIF Secretary General to share reflections (5 mins each, starting with PIF SG, followed by Japan, UK and USA)</p>	<p>Sheraton Miramar</p> <p>Bombal 'B' Hall</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> floor</p>
10:35-11:05	Coffee break / Morning tea	Sheraton Miramar
11:05-13:10	<p>South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting – Open Session</p> <p>[Agenda Item 2]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-traditional Maritime Security challenges: Transnational Organized Crime (TNOC)</li> </ul> <p><i>ODMIM analyst to present a briefing (10 minutes) followed by a presentation from Chile on TNOC (15 minutes). Opportunity for members to discuss and respond (5 minutes each).</i></p> <p><i>First speaker: Chile</i></p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p>	<p>Sheraton Miramar</p> <p>Bombal 'B' Hall</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> floor</p>

	<p>[Agenda Item 3]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women, Peace and Security (5-7 min each member)</li> </ul> <p><i>First speaker: Australia</i></p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p> <p><i>Reflections 2: Opportunity for observers and PIF Secretary General to share reflections (5 mins each, starting with USA, followed by the UK, Japan and PIF SG)</i></p>	
13:10-15:00	Seated lunch and executive time	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'A' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
15:00-16:00	<p>South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting – Open Session</p> <p>[Agenda Item 4]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Climate Change (5 minutes each member)</li> </ul> <p><i>Chile to present publication from Academic Cooperation Network (10 minutes), followed by an opportunity for members to discuss.</i></p> <p><i>First speaker: Tonga</i></p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor

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	<i>Reflections 3: Opportunity for observers and PIF Secretary General to share reflections (5 mins each, starting with Japan, followed by the PIF SG, USA and UK)</i>	
16:00-16:05	Screening of a video of the process of the making of the Pacific Shirts SPDMM 2025	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor

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*SPDMM closed session Agenda – members only – not observers or guests*

Friday 24 October		
6:30-8:15	Breakfast – all delegates	Sheraton Miramar Travesia Restaurant 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
8:15-8:30	Opening prayer <i>His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala (Tonga)</i>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
8:30-9:50	South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting – <u>Closed</u> Session <i>This discussion will be open to SPDMM members only</i>	Sheraton Miramar Bombal 'B' Hall 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
<div>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</div> <div>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</div>		

# SPDMM 2025

	s6(a), s6(b)(ii)	
9:50-10:15	Coffee break / Morning tea	Sheraton Miramar
10:15-11:00	<p>South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting – <u>Closed</u> Session continued</p> <p><i>This discussion will be open to SPDMM members only</i></p> <p>[Agenda Item 9]</p> <p>Regional Security Response Mechanisms</p> <p>Open to discussion (5 min each member)</p> <p><i>First speaker: Australia</i></p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p> <p>s6(a), s6(b)(ii)</p>	<p>Sheraton Miramar</p> <p>Bombal 'B' Hall</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> floor</p>
11:00-11:30	<p>South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting closure</p> <p>Opportunity for members to make concluding remarks (3 minutes each), endorse the SPDMM host for 2026 (5 minutes) and finalise the joint communique (5 minutes).</p>	<p>Sheraton Miramar</p> <p>Bombal 'B' Hall</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> floor</p>

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	<i>First speaker: Chile</i> <i>Observers and guests are welcome to return to this session.</i>	
11:30-12:00	Executive time / preparation for the press conference	Sheraton Miramar
12:00-12:30	Press Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting Publication launch</li> <li>- Joint Communique launch</li> </ul>	Sheraton Miramar Vergara 'A' Room -1 <sup>st</sup> floor

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## **TAB TWO: ANNOTATED AGENDA – OPEN SESSION**

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*Inauguration and opening Remarks – Wednesday 22 October 0830-0905*

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**Lead: Chile**

**Proceedings**

1. Chile will commence the inauguration of SPDMM 2025 at 0830.
2. Chile will play their national anthem and local press will enter during the Chilean Minister of Defence's welcoming remarks, which will be followed by a welcome video.
3. Chile will then **invite Members to provide opening remarks below**. First speaker is Fiji (The speaking order will proceed in a clockwise direction).
4. After everyone's opening remarks, Heads of Delegations and Chiefs of Defence Forces will be invited to take a photo (10 mins).
5. This will be followed by an opening prayer led by Fiji (5 mins).

**Opening remarks (3 mins per member)**

- Warm Pacific greetings to you all and thank you Chile for your hosting of this important multilateral meeting. This is my second SPDMM meeting and it is great to see so many familiar faces in this room from Auckland in 2024.
- Please accept the Minister of Defence, Hon Judith Collins sincere regrets that she cannot attend this year. [REDACTED] s9(2)(g)(i) It is an honour to be representing New Zealand as the Associate Minister of Defence at the 10th SPDMM.
- Since 2013, the SPDMM has become a **valuable mechanism** in the Pacific regional security architecture and an important annual event that brings Defence Ministers together to discuss ways to collectively safeguard our region.
- The South Pacific is, and always will be, a focus for New Zealand. New Zealand is a Pacific nation, and our security is directly connected to that of our Pacific partners and of the region as a whole.
- I would like to touch on the symbolism I see by meeting at the 'Sheraton Miramar Hotel'. I understand Miramar in Spanish means to look out at the sea – it's a constant reminder of our shared focus and shared region – the South Pacific.
- This year's theme of an '*integrated South Pacific*' is particularly important given the security challenges we share. It speaks to all of our efforts as a collective.

- I value this opportunity to further our collaboration, coordination and of course, our camaraderie during the plenaries, bilateral sessions and the time we will spend together.
- Over the next few days, New Zealand Defence will be represented by myself and Air Marshal Tony Davies, the Chief of our Defence Force.
- Thank you, Chair.

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*Report from SPDMM Secretariat – Wednesday 22 October 0925-0935*

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**Lead: SPDMM Secretariat (10 mins)**

**Objective**

- **Note** SPDMM Secretariat's update of outcomes from SPDMM 2024.

**Proceedings**

1. The Secretariat will brief participants on outcomes and follow-up from the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in 2024.

**Talking points (if needed)**

- Thank you, Secretariat, for your concise report back of outcomes since SPDMM 2025.
- I look forward to hearing more about progress made between last year and this year's SPDMM over the next few days.

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*Item 1: Regional Security Challenges: New Trends – Wednesday 22 October 0935-1035*

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**First Speaker:** New Zealand

**Objectives**

- To **understand Pacific partners' views** on the region's top defence and security challenges.
- To **share New Zealand's** views of the biggest Defence challenges we face now and in the future.

**Proceedings**

1. Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting (ODMIM) analyst to present a briefing (10 minutes).
2. Chile will invite members to speak.
3. Observers will then be given an opportunity to share their reflections.

**Talking points for item 1 (5 mins per member)**

- We are in a moment in time where the geostrategic environment is getting increasingly more and more complex and challenging.
- Globally, the norms, rules and institutions that kept us safe are constantly being challenged.
  - Russia's ongoing illegal war on Ukraine has demonstrated the idea that sovereign borders prevent acts of violence by another state is no longer as sacrosanct as it once was;
  - Disproportionate attack on civilians by states are challenging humanitarian norms;
  - States are rapidly arming in non-transparent ways;
  - And, in my other portfolios, states are increasingly engaging in foreign interference activities to advance their own interests.
- This exacerbates wider societal and economic challenges. Democracies are facing increased polarisation; the global economic headwinds after COVID-19 continue; temperatures keep rising and technology keeps rapidly marching forward.
- The Pacific is not immune. One feature of our changing environment is that distance is no longer the barrier it once was and international norms are more challenged in their ability to provide the protections that they once did.

- And these problems are big, societal and global trends, which seem outside the ability of Pacific defence ministers to fix.
- It can be disheartening. Especially because we as Defence institutions are paid to prepare for the worst.
- But, and this is something PIF Leaders have noted too, there are opportunities. We may not always be able to stop the big and broad headwinds but we can shape how we stand together to face them.
- For New Zealand, when we look out at a more complicated world, we know we stand with, and for, the Pacific, no matter how complex the world gets around us.
- That's what we can do, that's the reaction we can control. We work on how we stand together to advance the things we care about as a region that allow our regional norms to stand firm in the face of challenges from afar.

*Responding to regional challenges through SPDMM*

- SPDMM, and our meeting today, helps us to do this. Building on the work of Pacific leaders at the PIF, we can consider how we, as defence institutions of the Pacific, support a Pacific region which advances common interests.
  - At the operational level the Pacific Response Group has helped us advance interoperability – s9(2)(g)(i)
  - At the strategic level, New Zealand looks forward to discussions on the regional defence architecture and how we can work better and more effectively together to articulate a Pacific Defence view. And have that view connected and integrated with the wider Pacific architecture.
  - On the global level, the conversations Chile is facilitating on climate change and how engage and connect with experts outside of government, helps to bring new perspectives to the challenges we face as a region.
  - And at the more ideological level, we look forward to discussion on the Ocean of Peace concept and how we ensure that the Pacific region protects Pacific values around non-militarisation by outside militaries, regional solidarity and protection of our Pacific resources and knowledge.
- I look forward to our discussions over the next three days.

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*Item 2: Non-traditional Maritime Security Challenges – Wednesday 22 October 1105-1310*

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**First Speaker:** Chile

**Objectives**

- **Underline the importance of working** together and coordinating on Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) **with civilian authorities** and agencies given this is a cross-cutting issue.
- **Exchange views** on how SPDMM members can adapt and respond to non-traditional maritime security challenges.
- **Share** how New Zealand has responded to this challenge through **using novel technologies**.

**Proceedings**

1. Chile will invite an analyst from Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting (ODMIM) to provide a 10 min briefing on regional security challenges
2. Chile will provide a 15 min presentation on transnational organised crime.
3. Chile may invite members to share remarks on this topic.

**Talking points for agenda item 2 (5 mins per member)**

- This topic is currently one that is of keen interest to me and my government. I've already spoken with some of you on the challenges we share across the South Pacific.
- Like all the challenges we see in our region, non-traditional challenges in the Pacific are complex and interconnected: whether these are the environmental challenges we all grapple with; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing that threatens economies; or the significant harm caused by trafficking of drugs and people.
- Many of these we label non-traditional because they are not carried out by states. But the passage of drugs and illicit goods is not a new issue for any of us. We know the impact these things have on our societies and on the collective security of our region.
- I suggest that it's not non-traditional challenges we're addressing, but the challenge is for us to use **non-traditional responses** to age-old security challenges.
- We know that the only effective way to deal with mutual challenges in the Pacific is together, and this is exactly why we're meeting here.
- One non-traditional approach is **using innovative and novel technologies** to make a difference, building on our conversations of last year. Approaches need to integrate

new technologies and new capabilities into collaborative and coordinated responses. For example:

- In July, the New Zealand and Fijian navies worked together to conduct IUU and Transnational Serious Organised Crime (TSOC) patrols using two New Zealand uncrewed surface vessels, with support from aerial assets and a Fiji Naval vessel for boarding.
- This was achieved through Fiji's multi-agency Maritime Essential Services centre and demonstrates how Pacific forces can work together, utilising new technology, to get after the challenges of maritime domain awareness and transnational and serious organised crime.
- The wider benefits of operations such as these are not only the challenges at hand - IUU fishing and TSOC - but contribute to regional stability and improve our interoperability.
- But as we all know, Defence Forces are few in the Pacific and we need the extensive **intra-Pacific links between agencies such as Police, Customs and so forth** I know the connections between our New Zealand agencies and their Pacific counterparts are strong, and the key is how to get all agencies within and between Pacific countries working towards common goals.
- In this current geostrategic environment, it's sometimes hard to keep space for these regional challenges. But where we can build strong and resilient maritime domains in the Pacific we are also addressing important security needs as we increase our interoperability and improve stability.
- I welcome your views on how we can use new approaches to address these "non-traditional" challenges.

## Background

### *Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting*

The Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting (ODMIM) is an annual meeting of Pacific defence and security officials, which provides a platform to address common strategic intelligence priorities at the Chief of Defence Intelligence level.

2. A brief from the ODMIM is provided to the SPDMM every year. Leaders selected a brief on non-traditional security this year to fit in with the rest of the SPDMM agenda. You will be provided a briefing from an analyst from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, and an analyst from the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. s6(a)

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*Item 3: Women, Peace and Security – Wednesday 22 October 1105-1310*

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**First Speaker:** Australia

**Objectives**

- **Connect** the implementation of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda to the promotion of the international rules-based order.
- **Highlight** the publication of New Zealand's 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan on WPS, and the role of Defence in its implementation.
- **Underscore** Defence's focus on supporting the implementation of the WPS Agenda in the Pacific, including through Defence led mechanisms.

**Proceedings**

1. Members will be invited by Chile to share remarks on Women, Peace and Security.
2. Observers will then be invited to share their reflections, starting with USA, UK, Japan then the PIF Secretary General.

**Talking points for agenda item 3 (5-7 mins per member)**

*Supporting the international rules-based order*

- New Zealand is committed to defending the international rules-based order, which reflects the values for which we stand and protects our interest. An international system which values and supports international humanitarian law, and the protection of fundamental human rights, is one which brings benefits for the South Pacific.
- The United Nations Security Council resolutions which make up the women, peace and security agenda are fundamental, both for recognising that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by conflict, and their critical role in supporting successful outcomes in favour of peace and security. Abiding by, and advocating for, the WPS Agenda is representative of the importance which we place on international cooperation and advancing the rules and norms we have built together.
- I am pleased to be able to share with you that this year, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Resolution **1325**, **New Zealand formally reaffirmed its commitment to the WPS agenda by publishing its second National Action Plan.**
- New Zealand will focus implementation around the four pillars of the United Nations WPS Agenda – Participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. We will focus our activities within the Indo-Pacific region.

### *Pacific Engagement*

- Defence highly values opportunities to working collectively with our South Pacific partners on WPS. For us, continuous improvement and knowledge building through partnership is essential for assuring the full realisation of WPS principles:
  - New Zealand is proud to have co-founded the Pacific Defence Gender Network and of its role in continued stewardship of this forum as chair.
  - The NZDF regularly provides South Pacific partners with opportunities to join New Zealand's gender focal point courses.
- Defence is looking to continue to develop its WPS cooperation with our Pacific partners.

### *Opportunities for women in peacekeeping and defence*

- New Zealand recognises that considering and prioritising gender diversity has a meaningful effect on what military operations can deliver.
  - The NZDF's Female Engagement Team offer one example of how women can elevate the performance of a military. The Female Engagement Team comprises highly trained women who work in support of Special Operations Force objectives. They amplify NZDF capability and have proven to be critical for complex military operations, particularly where cultural or legal dynamics call may create barriers for male soldiers.
  - More broadly, mixed gender teams support success in operations. NZDF Joint Forces Headquarters routinely includes considerations of gender in its operational planning. This includes recognition for the need for the full and meaningful participation of women across all ranks, trades, and services, in both combatant and non-combatant roles.

### *Challenges for women in peacekeeping and defence*

- Siloing women into select roles or responsibilities based on inaccurate gender assumptions places an artificial limit on their potential. When female personnel are provided the resources and opportunity to develop and are given access to fully participate in defence activities, the diversity which comes from their perspectives and skills elevate the performance of Defence at tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

### *Encouraging women to pursue careers in Defence and addressing retention*

- Reducing the structural and systemic inhibitors to women's participation is foundational for encouraging the pursuit of careers in Defence. The NZDF is making a concerted effort to enhance gender equality within the forces through its Gender Equality Work Programme.

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*Item 4: Climate Change – Wednesday 22 October 1500- 1600*

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**First Speaker:** Tonga

**Objectives:**

- **Exchange views** on how SPDMM can contribute to enhancing climate change resilience in the Pacific.
- **Demonstrate** New Zealand Defence's commitment to building Pacific resilience to the impacts of climate change.

**Proceedings**

1. Chile will present a publication from Academic Cooperation Network (10 minutes), which is focused on the topic of climate change.
2. Members will be invited by Chile to share their remarks.
3. Chile will then screen a video on the making of Pacific shirts for SPDMM 2025.

**Talking points for agenda item 4 (5 minutes per member)**

- Thank you, Chile, for your presentation on climate change. It is great to see civilian-military coordination occurring through the Academic Cooperation Network and through the articles in this valuable publication.
- This presentation helps enhance our collective understanding of the effects of climate change in the South Pacific.
- While strategic competition in the Pacific is increasingly challenging, it threatens to distract from the **region's most acute priority: climate-change**.
- The impacts of climate change will **exacerbate existing fragilities** within Pacific Island countries and across the region – and these stresses may require greater external support – which in a context of increasing strategic competition increases the region's vulnerability to influence and coercion.
- I would like to share my thoughts on how SPDMM nations can collectively contribute to enhancing climate change resilience in the Pacific by sharing New Zealand's approach.
- For New Zealand, our approach to engaging on climate change and Defence with our partners has been centred around 'understand', 'partner' and to act.'

*Understand*

- First is to understand the impact climate change is having on our region, and on our Defence Forces.

- The New Zealand Defence Capability Plan 2025 recognises that climate change and growing strategic interest in the Pacific region is contributing to a more challenging security environment.
- Climate change impacts will place growing demands on Defence Forces, requiring militaries to respond to increasingly complex humanitarian and disaster relief operations, both now and into the future.
- Climate change may also decrease operational effectiveness and change the type, timing and locations of operation. We need to be ready in the face of these challenges.
- This also means we need access to climate intelligence that can describe the future physical operating environment for our personnel.
- Changing weather patterns may disrupt access to essential resources such as food, water and energy, increasing the risk of instability and conflict. These are not just environmental issues; they are security challenges that demand our attention.

#### *Act*

- Which brings me to 'Act'. How will or should Defence Forces behave? To prevent insecurity in our region, we ought to improve our region's resilience to climate induced disasters.
- New Zealand has sought to enhance our collective resilience through exercises such as Tropic Twilight.
  - For example, in Tonga last year (April-May) the NZDF helped build accessible and secure places to gather in natural disasters, with durable infrastructure providing power and clean water.
  - This year (September-October), the NZDF helped undertake maintenance and upgrades to the solar farm, water infrastructure, and school of the small island of Ma'uuke s9(2)(g)(i) in the Cook Islands.
- In addition to this, having a regular series of exercises annually, under the Povai Endeavour Framework all help to enhance our preparedness and interoperability. This is a collective endeavour.

#### *Partner*

- New Zealand is focussed on working with Pacific partners to build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
- This includes through supporting regional defence and security forces in building capacity and capability to act in more complex environments. One example is Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), through the PRG.
- Last year, the PRG was deployed for the first time in response to the large Earthquake that struck Vanuatu in December.
- In May this year, NZ contributed two NZDF officers to deploy with the PRG to support Exercise Croix Du Sud s9(2)(g)(i) (in New Caledonia). This year's scenario of a hypothetical cyclone striking the islands of Wallis and Futuna, was highly

valuable for testing regional cooperation in a large-scale natural disaster and **developing interoperability**.

- On top of the need for humanitarian assistance, the challenges for HADR include **interoperability, co-ordination, funding, and personnel safety**. These are areas that we, as SPDMM nations work together on by regularly exercising together and supporting each other: whether it be through the PRG, other multilateral exercises or bilateral resilience enhancing efforts.

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## TAB THREE: BILATERAL MEETINGS

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*Chile: Hon. Adriana Delpiano, Minister of Defence, Thursday 23 October, 1530-1555*

## Hon. Adriana Delpiano, Minister of Defence (Equivalent Associate Minister)

s9(2)(g)(i)

### Purpose

- Establish a relationship with Chile's Minister of Defence, Adriana Delpiano.
- Understand Chile's defence and security priorities, particularly in the Pacific.

### Biography



Adriana Delpiano s9(2)(g)(i) has been the Minister of Defence since March 2025. She has had an extensive political career, forming part of the last four leftist governments, including as Minister of Education (2015-2018), and Minister of National Assets (1994-1999). Other government roles have included Director of the National Women and Gender Equity Service (2003), Undersecretary of Regional and Administrative Development (2003 and 2006), and Metropolitan Regional Governor (2007-2008), amongst others.

She holds a Degree in Social Work from the Universidad Católica and a Master's Degree in Education Sciences from the Centre for Advanced Studies in Mexico. She began her professional career in the Agrarian Reform Corporation and was a member of the political party Popular Unitary Action Movement (MAPU) which formed part of Salvador Allende's government, leading to her exile to Mexico during the Chilean military dictatorship. Later, she was one of the founders of the Party for the Democracy (PPD).

### Key messages

- Buen día (*bwen dee-ah*) Minister. Mucho gusto (*mu-cho gu-stow*).
- Thank you for hosting this year's SPDMM in your beautiful country. I appreciate the warm hospitality that has already been extended to our delegation.
- New Zealand appreciates Chile's cooperation in the South Pacific, including through attendance at regional fora and conferences, such as SPDMM.
- While there is a lot of distance between us, I think there are many similarities between our two countries, including with the defence issues we face. New Zealand and Chile are both Antarctic gateway nations and share many of the same challenges in the Southern Ocean. We also both have significant Exclusive Economic Zones and, I

venture, face similar broad challenges resulting from the impacts of climate change and strategic competition.

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

## Background

### *Bilateral defence relationship*

- s6(a)

similar challenges we face as small Antarctic gateway nations, both with extensive search and rescue coordination responsibilities and large Exclusive Economic Zones. Reflecting this, our main areas of collaboration with Chile are through our respective Navies, which hold talks every two years. We face similar challenges as Antarctic gateway nations, and both have extensive search and rescue responsibilities in the Southern Ocean.
- The Chilean Navy offers courses on Antarctic operations which are highly valued as no other navy offers courses focused on preparing mariners for Southern Ocean operations.

## SPDMM 2025

- Chile and New Zealand participate in a range of multilateral defence and security fora, including the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM), the Pacific Army Chiefs Conference, the Pacific Armies Management Seminar and the Pacific Area Senior Officer Logistics Seminar. There are shared interests with both nations having forces deployed on UN peacekeeping operations in the Golan Heights.

*International Branch, Ministry of Defence*

*Strategic Commitments and Engagements, New Zealand Defence Force*

*September 2025*

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s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a)

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*Australia: Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, Thursday 23 October, 1700-1725*

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### Purpose

- **Highlight** New Zealand's recently released Defence Industry Strategy
- **Understand** Australia's long-term vision for the Pacific Response Group

### Biography



Hon Richard Marles is the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Minister for Defence. His previous appointments include Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and Shadow Minister for Defence; Immigration and Border Protection; and Trade. Born in 1967, Richard was raised and educated in Geelong and went on to study Law and Science, achieving a LLB (Hons) and a BSc from the University of Melbourne.

You last met Deputy Prime Minister Marles at SPDMM in Auckland 2024.

### Talking points

- As we grow closer to the 75th anniversary of the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Security Agreement, it is important to take stock of the great strides we have made to progress our vision of a more integrated ANZAC force.

### Defence Industry Strategy

- Share updates on the New Zealand Defence Industry Strategy and plans for Australia, New Zealand integration.

### Pacific Regional Group (PRG)

- New Zealand is looking forward to hosting the PRG Headquarters from 1 July 2026 with many thanks to your team for providing excellent guidance and lessons from their experience.
- We see the group as an important contributor to regional security and a valuable complement to existing civil response mechanisms, providing timely, scalable, and cooperative military support.

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s6(a)

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

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*Tonga: Crown Prince Tupouto'a Ulukalala. Thursday 23 October, 1730-1755*

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**His Royal Highness Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Tonga,  
Minister for His Majesty's Armed Forces and Foreign Affairs**

**Address as: Your Royal Highness the Crown Prince.**

s9(2)(g)(i)

**Purpose**

**Reaffirm** the importance of New Zealand's defence relationship with Tonga.

**Biography**

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala is heir to the Tongan throne. He studied at the Australian National University, graduating in 2021 with a Master's degree in Military and Defence Studies and in Diplomacy. He has undertaken NZDF Leadership courses and worked in the Palace Office on secondment from the Armed Forces. He is married to Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Sinaitakala Tuku'aho. They have four children.

s6(a)



His Royal Highness was formally appointed to the role of Minister of His Majesty's Armed Forces (and Foreign Affairs) in January 2025.

You last met at SPDMM in Auckland in October 2024.

**Key messages**

- Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Defence and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a)

- Our Defence relationship continues to deepen across a number of key areas and activities. This includes the last two iterations of the Tropic Twilight Exercises which Tonga hosted in 2023 and 2024. HMAF's hospitality was integral in successfully delivering on the exercise objectives.

s9(2)(g)(i)

### *Pacific Response Group*

- New Zealand looks forward to hosting Papua New Guinea and other Pacific partners as part of the Pacific Response Group HQ in New Zealand from July 2026 (pending approval at SPDMM).
- To me it appears that the PRG has been very beneficial in streamlining military HADR contributions and strengthening our coordination in our region to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency. It is also a great demonstration of the efficacy of Pacific-led responses to Pacific regional issues.

s9(2)(g)(i)

### **Background**

#### *Royal Protocol*

Refer to the Crown Prince as “Your Royal Highness” or “the Crown Prince of Tonga”.

s9(2)(g)(i)

#### *Bilateral defence relationship*

s6(a)

Tonga and New Zealand frequently engage on common regional challenges at the ministerial and military level, reinforcing the benefits of working together to address regional solutions to issues. We are actively seeking to advance defence capability building efforts, and a focus on improving interoperability. Current engagement spans the defence portfolio, and includes HADR support, and individual, collective and leadership training.

Minister Peters recently visited Tonga as part of the Pacific Mission and met with His Royal Highness (who is also Foreign Minister). [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

s6(a)

*International Branch, Ministry of Defence  
Strategic Commitments and Engagements, New Zealand Defence Force  
September 2025*

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*Papua New Guinea: Hon Dr Billy Joesph. Thursday 23 October, 1800-1825*

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## **Hon Dr Billy Joseph – Minister of Defence, Papua New Guinea**

### **Purpose**

- Reaffirm the importance of New Zealand's defence relationship with Papua New Guinea.

### **Biography**

Dr Billy Joseph was appointed as Minister of Defence in January 2024 following a Cabinet reshuffle. He was elected to Parliament in 2022. This is his first term as an MP and first time holding a Ministerial portfolio. He is close to the Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape.

Before his political career, Joseph was a medical doctor. He graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of PNG in 2008. Joseph s9(2)(g)(i) follows rugby union.



You met Minister Joseph at SPDMM in Auckland 2024

### **Key messages**

- Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence this year. I am pleased that Minister Peters was able to be in Papua New Guinea to commemorate this important event on New Zealand's behalf.
- We were honoured to be invited to take part in Papua New Guinea's Defence Force hosted military week at the start of September.
  - It was great that New Zealand Army Band could join the military tattoo, and our aircraft could contribute to the static displays and flypast.
  - It was also an honour to help with the transportation of Pacific bands from Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu to and from Port Moresby to take part in the tattoo.
  - I am pleased to hear it was a great success and is an excellent example of the cooperation and partnership between Pacific defence forces.
  - This sense of cooperation between the Pacific defence forces and defence ministers is one that we are keen to promote through the SPDMM discussions.

- Congratulations on the signing of the Australia-Papua New Guinea defence treaty.

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

#### *NZ – PNG Defence Relationship*

- I also want to acknowledge this year marks 50 years of New Zealand-Papua New Guinea diplomatic and defence relations. Our defence relationship has gone strength to strength and is underpinned by our strong people-to-people connections.

s9(2)(g)(i)

- I am pleased that our expanded cooperation in defence policy through our respective defence ministries has been a success, with the seconded from New Zealand now well embedded into the Department of Defence.

s9(2)(g)(i)

#### *Pacific Response Group*

- New Zealand looks forward to hosting Papua New Guinea and other Pacific partners as part of the Pacific Response Group HQ in New Zealand from July 2026 (pending approval at SPDMM).
- The PRG has been very beneficial in streamlining military HADR contributions and strengthening our coordination in our region to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency. It is also a great demonstration of the efficacy of Pacific-led responses to Pacific regional issues.

s9(2)(g)(i)

## Background

### *Papua New Guinea Defence Relationship Overview*

Papua New Guinea is an important relationship for New Zealand Defence. s6(a)

[Redacted text block]

The NZDF engagement during the Bougainville crisis in 1998 is a major point in New Zealand's shared history with Papua New Guinea. The NZDF and the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) then deployed alongside one another to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands from 2003 – 2017.

s6(a)

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*International Branch, Ministry of Defence  
Strategic Commitments and Engagements, New Zealand Defence Force  
September 2025*

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*Fiji: Hon Pio Tikoduadua. Thursday 23 October, 1830-1855*

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## **Hon. Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs**

s9(2)(g)(i)

### **Purpose**

- Reinforce the centrality of the New Zealand – Fiji defence relationship in responding to a deteriorating strategic environment in the Pacific.
- Highlight Fiji's recent strategic and military developments and reinforce New Zealand's actions to support and partner with Fiji in support of mutual aims.

### **Biography**

Hon. Pio Tikoduadua was sworn in as Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration in late December 2022. This portfolio covered defence, policing and immigration. In January 2025, the Policing and Immigration portfolios were reassigned to other ministers. Minister Tikoduadua retained the Defence and Veteran Affairs portfolios. Tikoduadua's published priorities in the portfolio include building trust in defence and security institutions, enhancing civilian-led policy and strengthening traditional defence and security partnerships. Before politics, Tikoduadua served in the Republic of Fiji Military Forces for 26 years.



You last met at SPDMM in Auckland in October 2024.

### **Key messages**

- Congratulations on your first National Security Strategy released in August. New Zealand stands ready to support Fiji in pursuing your strategic priorities.
- I am so pleased that the NZDF Pacific Leader Development Programme has received funding to begin building the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Leadership Centre in Suva, further advancing our two countries' cooperation on military leadership and individual training. This is an exciting development that will benefit leadership development in Fiji and the region.
- I am proud of the successful collaboration between our militaries during Operation CALYPSO from July to August this year. The deployment of our Uncrewed Surface Vessels Tahi and Rua and King Air Aircraft, jointly operated by our militaries, was a proud display of our mutual commitment to regional interoperability.
  - It is important that Fiji and New Zealand continue working together toward our shared priority of improved maritime security and domain awareness.

- Congratulations on the official opening of the Vuvale Maritime Essential Services Centre at the beginning of October. I am positive that this will be a valuable asset to coordinate interagency efforts to combat trans-national organised crime in and around Fiji's EEZ.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

#### *Pacific Response Group*

- New Zealand looks forward to hosting Fiji and other Pacific partners as part of the Pacific Response Group HQ in New Zealand from July 2026 (pending approval at SPDMM).
- The PRG has been very beneficial in streamlining military HADR contributions and strengthening our coordination in our region to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency. It is also a great demonstration of the efficacy of Pacific-led responses to Pacific regional issues.

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

#### **Background**

##### *Bilateral defence relationship*

New Zealand and Fiji have a strong defence cooperation relationship. Fiji is one of New Zealand's most important partners, demonstrated in our broad collaboration with across a wide range of defence operations and activities.

s6(a)

s6(a)



*RFMF Leadership Centre*

The RFMF Leadership Centre will provide a dedicated training facility for the ongoing development and delivery of the RFMF Veiliutaki Framework, developed with support from the NZDF Pacific Leader Development Programme. The NZDF-managed building project follows on from the successful delivery of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force Leadership Centre in 2022, and His Majesty's Armed Forces of Tonga Leadership Centre in Jul 24. Construction is planned to begin before the new financial year.

*International Branch, Ministry of Defence*

*Strategic Commitments and Engagements, New Zealand Defence Force*

*September 2025*

## **TAB FOUR: ANNOTATED AGENDA – CLOSED SESSION**

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*Item 5: Regional Security Response Mechanisms – Friday 24 October 0830-0950*

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**First Speaker:** Tonga

**Objective**

- **Note update** on the Regional Security Response Mechanisms, with a focus on the Pacific Response Group.
- **Register** New Zealand's support for the Pacific Response Group and New Zealand's intent to host the Pacific Response Group from 1 July 2026.

**Proceedings**

1. You will receive an update from the Commander of the Pacific Response Group (10 Minutes)
2. Members will be invited by Chile to discuss and asked to endorse Phase 2 of the Pacific Response Group (PRG)

**Talking points for agenda item 5**

- I am pleased to hear of the progress of the Pacific Response Group. Despite being operational for only a year, the PRG has changed how our region's Defence Forces responds to HADR events.
- In the spirit of this year's theme of an 'integrated South Pacific,' and greater cooperation New Zealand is pleased to share that we will host the next iteration of the PRG from July 2026 in New Zealand.

s6(a)

**Background**

- The Pacific Response Group (PRG) is a regionally deployable military capability that seeks to streamline military HADR contributions in the Pacific by removing duplication of effort and strengthening coordination between Pacific Island countries. The PRG comprises of personnel from New Zealand, Australia, PNG, Fiji, Tonga, and France.

s6(a)

- Originally established to come together only during the high-risk weather season (October to March), the PRG has recently transitioned to a full year standing entity. The Australian Defence Force has hosted the PRG since its inception in October 2024, operating from Brisbane.
- The PRG HQ is tasked to liaise, advise, and assist Pacific military forces and affected nations disaster management agencies. When activated, the PRG HQ supports host nations by contributing to disaster response planning and identifying potential follow-on tasks for military and civilian support.

s6(a)

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*Item 6: Outcome of the Joint Heads of Pacific Security Meeting – Friday 24 October 0830-0950*

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**Objective**

- **Note** the outcome of the JHoPS 2025 meeting

**Proceedings**

1. Papua New Guinea will present on the outcomes of the Joint Heads of Pacific Security Meeting. There will be an opportunity for members to discuss.

**Talking points for agenda item 6**

- Thank you for the update on the JHoPS. New Zealand is supportive of a regional deployment framework for the South Pacific.
- It is a welcome and encouraging development to hear this update from regional meetings such as the JHoPS, which involves not only Defence Forces but other operational agencies.
- This update speaks to the value and spirit of greater coordination. All of which enables us to develop a common picture of our operating and strategic environment.
- It is impressive to see that there are discussions occurring across the operational agencies of 25 Pacific Island countries on this regional operational deployments' framework.

s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

**Background**

- JHoPS brings together representatives from member nations' operational agencies: Defence, Police Customs and Immigration services.

s6(a)

s6(a)

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*Item 7: SPDMM Status of Forces Agreement* s6(a) – Friday 24 October  
0830-0950

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## Objective

s6(a)

## Proceedings

1. The Secretariat will briefly present a paper on this topic and its members to consider recommendations.

## Talking points for agenda item 7

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- There is clear value in the development of a regional SOFA - whether it be across SPDMM members or across the Pacific Islands Forum membership. Both are helpful developments that emphasise Pacific-led Defence approaches to the region.
- As we heard, currently, not all SPDMM members have a bilateral SOFA between each other. And I believe that a regional SPDMM SOFA would be a helpful first step in addressing this immediate gap.
- As members of the PRG, I think it makes sense to address this gap. This would help support the effectiveness of the PRG itself and make multilateral exercises amongst our nations easier by increasing certainty and reducing administrative burden.
- The JHoPS' deployments framework would also support this goal, across a wider number of countries and could support the combined efforts of militaries, police and civilian deployment. This will also rely on the pace and support of police, customs and immigration as well as foreign affairs agencies.

s6(a)

## Background

s6(b)(i)

A SOFA typically provides the legal framework for ongoing military cooperation between two parties, and is a standard way of setting out the legal conditions and practical arrangements for joint military activities in each other's territories.

2. Currently, New Zealand has bilateral SOFAs with SPDMM members including Australia, Fiji, France (for New Caledonia), Papua New Guinea and Tonga. A regional SOFA is likely to take some time to develop as legal considerations, including for New Zealand, would also have to be considered. For New Zealand, this would include how a regional SOFA would work with our existing bilateral SOFAs.

3. Notwithstanding the enormity of this task, a regional SOFA, if enacted, would remove some of the administrative burden required when undertaking joint military activities, especially as the PRG operationalises. s6(a)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

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*Item 8: Update on Concept for Coordinating Defence Architecture – Friday 24 October 0830-0950*

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**First speaker:** New Zealand

**Objective**

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- **Normalise** the flow of information across meetings and Secretariats to increase coordination.

**Proceedings**

1. Chile will invite you first to speak about this topic.
2. Chile will then invite other members to provide remarks on your update.

**Action**

3. Invite members to refer to the South Pacific Regional Defence Meetings Linkages and Membership A3 Placemat.

**Talking points for agenda item 8 (10 mins)**

- Thank you for the opportunity to discuss where the SPDMM fits into broader regional security architecture, and to update you on our approach to coordinate regional Defence meetings and activities.

s6(a)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

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s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this initiative and the proposed next steps.

### **Background**

This concept is a New Zealand initiative which was proposed to SPDMM Ministers during the SPDMM in Auckland, in October 2024. It recognises that there have been few connections between the various defence meetings, including into and from the SPDMM.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

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*Item 9: Regional Security Response Mechanisms – Friday 24 October 1015-1100*

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**First Speaker:** Australia

**Objective**

s6(a)

**Proceedings**

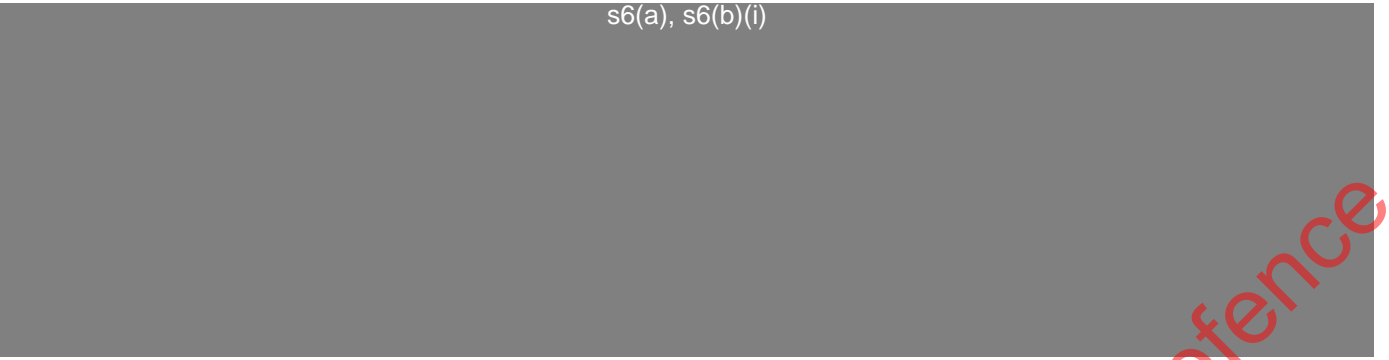
1. Members will be invited to share their views (5 mins per country)

**Talking points for agenda item 9**

- New Zealand thinks that **strengthening the Defence and security** architecture of the region can help us respond to complex problems that impact on regional security but are not always Defence-led.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)



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*Item 10: Information Sharing Framework – Friday 24 October 1015-1100*

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**Objective**

- **Endorse** France's information Sharing Framework initiative.

**Proceedings**

1. France will briefly present a paper on this topic
2. There will be an opportunity for members to thank France for their initiative and discuss the framework.
3. Members will be asked to **endorse** the information sharing framework

**Talking points for agenda item 10**

- Thank you, France, for your presentation of the Information Sharing Framework. This is a useful initiative that sets out the benefits of sharing information and provides guidance on how this is to occur between SPDMM members, other regional organisations and third parties.
- We've been talking about the importance of developing a common picture of the regional security environment and reducing inefficiencies.
- I think that this Framework will help us to achieve these aims. It is broad enough to enable a wide range of information to be shared with parties that contribute to strengthening greater coordination amongst members and with other regional meetings.
- This Framework is a timely and welcome development and has my endorsement.

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*Item 11: Meeting closure – Friday 24 October 1100-1130*

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**Objective**

- **Reflect** on discussions from SPDMM 2025
- **Congratulate Fiji** who will host SPDMM in 2026.
- **Endorse** the SPDMM 2025 Joint Communiqué

**Proceedings**

1. Each member will be invited to make concluding remarks
2. Members will endorse the SPDMM host for 2026 (5 mins)
3. Members will then finalise the Joint Communiqué (5 mins)

**Talking points (3 minutes per member)**

- Thank you all for the frank discussions this morning, and across the last three days.
- The South Pacific is the most important region for New Zealand. New Zealand is a Pacific nation, and our security is directly connected to that of our Pacific partners and of the region.
- It has been encouraging to exchange views on enhancing regional integration and making progress on interoperability, coordination and joint effectiveness in the face of evolving challenges.
- I wish to extend my gratitude to Chile for hosting the 10th SPDMM as such gracious hosts (Muchas gracias) and for an excellent programme.
- I have sincerely valued this year's theme of an 'integrated Pacific' and seeing our region from a different vantage point here on the other side of the Pacific.
- Over the last few days, members and observers have highlighted a range of important issues that merit our collective and integrated efforts: ranging from climate change, geopolitics, women peace and security to regional security mechanisms and coordination.
- New Zealand congratulates Fiji as the next host of the SPDMM.

s6(b)(ii)

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s6(b)(ii)

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s6(b)(ii)



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## TAB SIX: BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS

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## *Background - Regional Pacific Defence Meetings and the Pacific Islands Forum*

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This brief gives an overview of regional defence meetings and security-related meetings of wider relevance to Defence and the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting.

### **Key Pacific Defence Meetings**

#### *Indo-Pacific Command Chiefs of Defence Force (INDOPACOM CHODs) Meeting*

- Convened by the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, the INDOPACOM CHODs meeting brings together heads of defence forces from across the Indo-Pacific, including Pacific forces. The discussions often focus on wider Indo-Pacific issues including freedom of navigation issues and strategic competition. SPDMM CHODs meet in the margins of this meeting to discuss the upcoming SPDMM.

#### *Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHOPs) Meeting*

- Established by Australia, the JHOPs is a meeting that brings together heads of Pacific security agencies for discussions on operational security. Involved agencies include militaries (where Pacific countries have these), police forces, customs, and immigration. [REDACTED] s6(a)

#### *Oceania Directorate of Military Intelligence Meeting*

- A capacity building and networking opportunity for Pacific Military Intelligence personnel, as well as select Pacific Police Forces. The Oceania Directorate of Military Intelligence Meeting briefs SPDMM members on the outcomes of the meeting. The meeting is conducted annually.

#### *PACANZ / Totara Retreat*

- Established by New Zealand, this meeting (known by different names) brings together Chiefs of Defence from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu (paramilitary force) annually. Participants build networks and create frameworks for sharing challenges and experiences.

#### *Pacific Small Armies Forum*

- Established by New Zealand Army, the Small Armies Forum is an informal, lower level meeting of land forces from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu (through its paramilitary force). The focus for the group is on information sharing between small forces and the development of a common Pacific

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*South Pacific Heads of Maritime Forces (SWPHMF) Meeting:*

- Established by New Zealand during our last hosting of SPDMM (in 2017), The aim of the SWPHMF is to create strong and enduring relationships between the Heads and Chiefs of South West Pacific (SWP) maritime forces, in order to facilitate better cooperation and coordination and ultimately further maritime capability within the SWP maritime domain.

*South Pacific Secretaries of Defence Dialogue*

- Established by New Zealand, this meeting brings together the Secretaries of Defence (or equivalent) from around the region to develop the relationships between Secretaries and create the framework for the sharing of challenges and experiences. This usually occurs annually.

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*POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework*

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**Background**

The POVAI ENDEAVOUR is a cooperative exercise framework, first agreed to at the SPDMM in 2013 and later endorsed in 2015. It was initially established to maintain familiarity and interoperability after the conclusion of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

**Strategic Intent**

1. The POVAI ENDEAVOUR intends to facilitate enhanced cooperation among participating states, and de-conflict activities to ensure that partners cooperate in the most efficient and effect manner, to develop greater interoperability and facilitate the transfer of skills.
2. The POVAI ENDEAVOUR is focussed on building capacity across three themes deemed most relevant to the Pacific:
  - a. Maritime Security;
  - b. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR); and,
  - c. Peacekeeping and Stabilisation Operations.

**Capstone Activities**

3. There are three capstone activities identified in the POVAI ENDEAVOUR:
  - a. Maritime Security: Op KURUKURU, conducted under the auspices of the Forum Fisheries Agency;
  - b. HADR: Ex CROIX DU SUD; and,
  - c. Peacekeeping and Stabilisation Operations: Ex TALISMAN SABRE.
4. Of the above capstone activities, New Zealand since the SPDMM in 2024 has participated in Ex CROIX DU SUD and Ex TALISMAN SABRE and is planning to participate in Op KURUKURU.
5. These activities are at the heart of the POVAI ENDEAVOUR, and represent the culmination of ongoing skills training, capability development, and increased interoperability across regional forces. Activities in each stream are identified as contributing to these routine and relatively large-scale capstone operations and exercises, distinguished by the fact that they involved a high degree of coordination across regional forces.

6. In addition to the three capstone activities, New Zealand has since the SPDMM in 2024 attended the listed POVAI ENDEAVOUR exercises and operations:
- a. Op RAI BALANG
    - Hosted by the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in March, this is the second in a series of four annual Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU-F) operations that seeks to counter IUU-F in participating Pacific Island Country EEZs.
  - b. Op ISLAND CHIEF
    - FFA hosted OP Island Chief in August 25, this is another of the FFA's IUU-F operations.
  - c. Ex LONGREACH
    - This is a regional HADR exercise that seeks to refine the path for Pacific militaries to come together to contribute to rapid and effective civilian-led regional responses at times of crisis. Tonga hosted the iteration of the exercise.
  - d. Ex PACIFIC KUPE and Ex PACIFIC MANAIA
    - The first iteration of Ex Pacific Kupe occurred earlier this year in Tokelau, and the second in Solomon Islands. Exercise Pacific Manaia is a tabletop exercise on HADR, conducted annually.
  - e. Ex TROPIC TWILIGHT
    - This is an annual exercise, funded by MFAT and delivered by the NZDF, that intends to increase the resilience of Pacific Island Countries to withstand the effects of climate change. The Cook Islands is the current host of Exercise Tropic Twilight.
  - f. Ex PUKPUK
    - This exercise was conducted in PNG earlier this year and focused on providing infrastructure support and the transfer of engineering skills.
  - g. Op RENDER SAFE
    - Operation Render Safe is an enduring Australia-led explosive ordnance disposal contribution to the South pacific, led by Australia's Joint Operational Command.

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*Background: Japan, United Kingdom, and United States in the Pacific*

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**Japan**

- The Pacific is a priority area of engagement for Japan, underpinned by its *Free and Open Indo-Pacific* policy. Driving Japan's Pacific focus is countering China and sees China's growing influence as a threat to the status-quo.
- New Zealand and Japan have a Statement of Intent on Defence Cooperation in the Pacific (SOI), signed in June 2023. The SOI focuses on opportunities for cooperation in the region, including ensuring both parties are consulted on upcoming activities. ■

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- Japan's Pacific interests has motivated its leadership in Pacific-focused regional fora, including the Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM10; foreign affairs led), and the Japan Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue (JPIDD).

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- Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA) Project provides funding, resources, and capabilities to its partners across the Indo-Pacific. Japan has recently focussed its OSA projects on Pacific countries in 2023-25, including Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. This work has been in consultation with both Australia and New Zealand.
- The Japanese Self-Defense Force has observed Exercise TROPIC TWILIGHT in 2024 and 2025, a New Zealand-led exercise intended to complete projects to build Pacific resilience. Japan-New Zealand collaboration is intended for future iterations of the exercise.
- The Japanese Self-Defense Force has been conducting an Indo-Pacific Deployment between April and November 2025, visiting 13 countries, including New Zealand. ■

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- The port visit to Wellington included the Japanese Ships SUZANAMI and the ICE.

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## United Kingdom

- The previous UK Government significantly increased the UK's economic, diplomatic and military presence in the Indo-Pacific, as part of a broader 'tilt' towards the region. This included an expanded diplomatic footprint, the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and achieving Dialogue Partner status with ASEAN. The 2021 and 2025 deployments of the UK's Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific have been visible manifestations of its defence engagement, however the UK has also established a resident Defence Advisor post in Fiji and has deployed two naval assets to the region 'in perpetuity'.
- The two River-class Offshore Patrol Vessels, HMS SPEY and HMS TAMAR, are deployed to the region for five years. The vessels alternate responsibility for covering Asia and the Pacific. TAMAR was stationed in the South Pacific for most of 2024, and visited New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, and Nauru in this time.

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- The Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) has worked closely with the Royal Navy, as well as SPEY and TAMAR in the Indo-Pacific on multiple occasions over the last four years. Most recently, the RNZN frigate HMNZS TE KAHA sailed as part of the UK's Carrier Strike Group as it transited from the Middle East into the Indo-Pacific earlier this year. Last year, an RNZN deployable boarding team also embarked on TAMAR alongside officers from Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries to monitor illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in Fiji's exclusive economic zone.

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- While the previous UK Government significantly increased the UK's presence in the Indo-Pacific, the current UK Government's Strategic Defence Review has re-prioritised engagement with the Euro-Atlantic as the UK's primary defence focus. The Review acknowledges that the global environment has changed drastically, and the UK now faces threats that are "more serious and less predictable than at any time since the end of the Cold War", with Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine being of particular concern to the UK. In light of this, the Review recommends that the UK "move to warfighting readiness" and lead in NATO with "strengthened nuclear, new tech, and updated conventional capabilities". Notwithstanding, the UK remains committed to the Indo-Pacific.
- The Joint Statement on Enhanced Defence Cooperation between the United Kingdom and New Zealand that you signed alongside UK Secretary of State for Defence John Healey in September, provides hooks for further engagement with the UK in the

Pacific. The statement “affirm[s] the centrality of Pacific-led responses to regional security challenges” and notes that the UK and New Zealand will “continue to explore opportunities to work alongside Pacific Island Countries to support their interests through defence activities”.

### United States

- The United States’ has a wide range of engagements in the Pacific ranging from but not limited to training, exercises, patrols and ship visits.
- The NZDF routinely cooperates with the US Coast Guard through our shared participation in the Pacific Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (PQUAD), alongside Australia and France. PQUADs members support the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) by conducting maritime patrols, training activities, and capacity building to counter against illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing in the region.
- The US Coast Guard has a number of shiprider agreements with Pacific Island Countries. These agreements allow defence and law enforcement personnel from partner nations to board US cutters to enforce their nation’s laws in their respective exclusive economic zones.
- INDOPACOM, Coast Guard and the Nevada National Guard also run a range of capacity building workshops and courses, and hold a range of high-level meetings and consultations across the South West Pacific
- New Zealand and the US regularly cooperate on exercises in the region. These include:
  - Exercise CARTWHEEL: A multilateral training exercise with the Republic of Fiji Military, Australian, New Zealand, and UK forces that builds expeditionary readiness and interoperability.
  - Exercise TROPIC TWILIGHT: A regular New Zealand led training exercise focused on humanitarian and disaster relief resilience with Pacific partners.
  - Exercise CROIX DU SUD: A French led large multinational joint humanitarian and disaster relief exercise held in New Caledonia.

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*Defence in the South Pacific*

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**Key Messages**

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- From the Defence side, our focus is:

- Building the strength of regional defence institutions and their connections to other parts of the Pacific security architecture. s6(a)  
s6(a) We see advantages in ensuring that their voices are heard across the broader Pacific architecture s6(a)  
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- Ensuring that the region is prepared to resolve its own regional security needs through mechanisms like the Pacific Response Group and deployments of NZDF when requested to support Pacific needs – including in non-traditional defence activities like logistics support, HADR and fisheries.
  - We are also taking opportunities to enhance and support Pacific leadership, to embed the sense of the Pacific helping the Pacific as the primary way in which the region responds to security needs. As an example, we have had Fiji forces assist in HADR events in New Zealand and we've utilised NZDF assets to transport Pacific forces for HADR responses in other Pacific countries.

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*FORMAL MESSAGE: SPDMM 1-3 OCTOBER 2024*

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**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING 1-3 OCT 2024 s6(a)

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## **RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY**

· New Zealand hosted the 9<sup>th</sup> South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) in Auckland from 1-3 October 2024. The annual SPDMM brings together Defence Ministers from the South Pacific (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Chile, France, Australia and New Zealand) and observers (Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) to discuss regional defence and security issues. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretary General attended as a special guest for the first time.

· The aim for this year's meeting was to agree a period of consolidation with members, focusing on the future of the SPDMM and how the SPDMM's role should evolve. Discussions on the key regional security issues revealed the strong similarities between members states on the significant challenges of their respective Defence Forces. There was strong alignment on the ways members could work better together, especially in terms of greater interoperability, training and information sharing. This also provided a hook for observers to share how they could support SPDMM members.

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· SPDMM 2024 resulted in 17 outcomes including tasking the SPDMM Secretariat (Australia) to develop s6(a) a regional Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) through the SPDMM; and for members to explore a mechanism to better coordinate regional Defence architecture, led by New Zealand.

· New Zealand delivered on a 2022 SPDMM outcome to produce a publication outlining how the SPDMM members work together to address non-traditional security challenges. This was launched at the conclusion of the meeting and is attached for reference.

- Ministers endorsed the Australian-led Pacific Response Group (PRG) concept of operations. The PRG is a regional military capability comprising of a small rapidly deployable forward-planning element - the Pacific Special Advisory Team (PSAT). It has been designed to respond to severe weather events and natural disasters by formalizing the assistance offered by Pacific militaries to our region. The PSAT will be co-located and operational for the upcoming high risk weather season (Oct 2024 - Mar 2025) and comprised of personnel from SPDMM members.
- The Chilean Vice-Minister of Defence announced that Chile will host the next SPDMM in 2025.

## HOHENGGA – ACTION

Hei titiro māu – For information

## PŪRONGO – REPORT

The South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) is the only annual meeting of Ministers of Defence from the South Pacific and is an opportunity to set regional priorities for Defence Forces and Defence policy agencies, and to discuss key defence and security issues affecting the South Pacific. [REDACTED] s6(a)

### Attendance

2. The SPDMM 2024 was well attended, with almost 100 participants. New Zealand's Minister of Defence, Judith Collins KC, chaired the meeting with participants including Australian Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister for Defence Richard Marles; Chile's Vice-Minister for Defence Riccardo Montero; Fiji's Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration Pio Tikoduadua; Papua New Guinea's Minister for Defence Dr Billy Joseph; and Tonga's Crown Prince His Royal Highness Tupouto'a Ulukalala (in the absence of a Tongan Defence Minister). France was represented by HE Laurence Beau, French Ambassador to New Zealand [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretary General, Mr Baron Waqa, attended for the first time as a special guest following a SPDMM 2023 outcome to improve coordination between the SPDMM and the PIF.

3. All SPDMM observer nations were represented as follows: Japan (Mr Naoya Morikawa, Director, Japan MoD), United Kingdom (Mr Nick Gurr, Director of International Security UK MoD), and the United States (Mr Andrew Winternitz, Director, Office of the Secretary of Defence).

### *Collectively looking to the future: our region in 2050*

4. The SPDMM 2024's theme was '*Collectively looking to the future: our region in 2050.*' This was the common thread that connected the three-day programme – from the Defence industry and capability displays on the first day of the SPDMM, to the intelligence briefing by the Oceania Directorates of Military Intelligence Meeting (ODMIM), and to the discussions across the meetings sessions.

5. The meeting commenced with a formal pōwhiri at the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) Te Taua Moana Marae followed by a visit to Devonport Naval Base for a Defence capability and industry showcase. The showcase featured 13 New Zealand companies including Beca, Boxfish Robotics, Dawn Aerospace, the Bluebottle and Starboard Maritime Intelligence. The displays set the scene for discussions on how emerging technologies can support our collective responses to security challenges in the region.

*A strong alignment on the region's key Defence and Security Challenges*

6. The meeting highlighted the strong alignment of SPDMM Members on the biggest challenges in the region, which were identified as climate change; maritime security; and strategic competition. [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] s6(a)

*Improving interoperability and collective action*

8. On the operational side of the discussion, members endorsed the Secretariat's annual report on the SPDMM Co-operative Exercise Framework, **POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework**, which outlines achievements from the most recent cycle of exercises and activities. They agreed to elevate the Australian Exercise TALISMAN SABRE as an interim capstone exercise for the stabilisation operations/peacekeeping theme [REDACTED] s6(a)

[REDACTED] s6(a)

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11. SPDMM members endorsed the detailed concept for the Australian-led **Pacific Response Group** (PRG) and called for its rapid deployment capability, the Pacific Special Advisory team (PSAT), to co-locate in Brisbane for the upcoming high risk weather season (Oct 2024- Mar 2025). It has been designed to respond to severe weather events and natural disasters by formalising the assistance Pacific militaries can offer to our region upon the request of the affected state.


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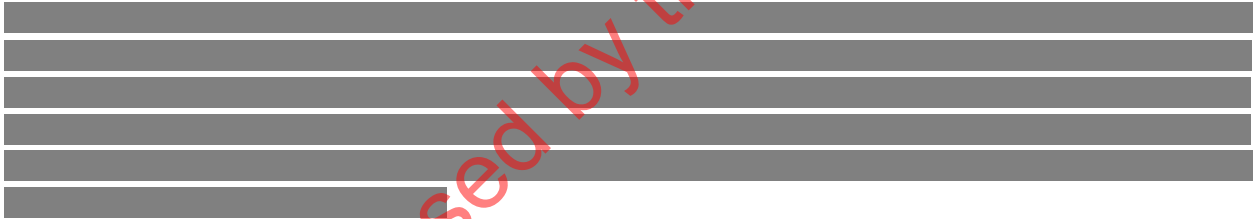
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*Observer participation*

18. Observers enthusiastically used the formal opportunities to share their reflections during the open session of the SPDMM. 



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**TAKAPU – COMMENT**

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**MUTU - ENDS**

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