



SPEECH



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42nd Pacific Islands Forum



Wednesday September 7th 2011
Auckland, New Zealand

Mr prime minister of New-Zealand,

Mr Secretary general of the Forum,

Mr Seceretary general of the UN

Members of the Forum and all associates and members,

To the organizing staff, And to the great People of te Aotearoa,

kia ora,talofa, fakalofa, alii, bula vinaka, Kam na mauri,
iakwe, Gaoi, Ran Allim, Kotaka, Tiabo, Malo e lelei, Yokwe, Halo
olgeta, la orana, ...

This Forum is about converting potential to prosperity. Our call
is slightly different for we have yet to be allowed to reach our
potential...My country used to be free, and my People used to be in
charge of their destiny.

That changed in the 19th century, after the Europeans so-called “discoverers” reached our shores.

At that period of time, the Spanish, Germans, British and French were dividing our great Pacific Ocean in parts, that they would rule, as colonies. Most of the Pacific, came out of it to retrieve your freedom, and the right to call themselves “men and women of the land”.

In my country, the late queen Pomare IV found herself cornered under pressure from French Admiral Dupetit Thouars.

She unwillingly asked for protectorate from France. But soon, France tricked that protectorate into annexation, forcing few among our high chiefs to sign a shameful treaty; half of them could not even read when they signed that treaty.

Followed an unfair war period. Maohi warriors opposing wooden sticks and spears to firearms and canons. Undoubtedly the French eventually overpowered those who they called “rebels”, and whom we call heroes.

In order to be able to seize the land of the Maohi People, and to establish the colons, France imposed the Napoleon code, replacing our traditional and community based land sharing system, with the European approach of private ownership of land.

Even though the annexation act of June 29th 1880 clearly states that land affairs should remain in the hands of traditional courts, the French never respected that, and instead decided to stick to the Napoleon code and their own courts.

This caused a major disruption which effects still negatively ripple nowadays with many native Maohi people struggling to get ahold of the lands once taken care of by their ancestors.

Yet, during both world wars, our fathers and grand-fathers fought alongside the French army. This may appear as a paradox, after our ancestors fought against France to remain independent.

But, the very idea of freedom is rooted deep in our hearts. And when France was deprived of it, maohi people, within the famous “pacific battalion” did not hesitate.



In 1945, after reflecting on the horrors of the two world wars, the world super-powers decided to establish the United Nations. One of their first initiatives was to engage in a proper decolonization process, hence establishing a list of territories yet to be decolonized.

New Caledonia and French Polynesia, were on that list. But in 1947, without consulting our People, France asked for us to be withdrawn from that list.

One cannot but ask, “WHY” this unilateral decision was made ? **The answer was to be found in the sands of Moruroa and Fangataufa, just a few years later...**

In 1958, France held a referendum among it’s colonies asking for a double question : “Do you want to stay French, and keep De Gaulle as head of state ?”.

In Tahiti, one man stood up against the might of France. Pouvanaa a Oopa, called Maohi People to vote “NO”. He instantly became France’s number one enemy in Polynesia.

Again, the fight was unfair. Pouvanaa was a poor man with no access to French-owned media, and no possibility to tour the remote parts of our huge country, unlike his opponents.

Still, he was relentless, and managed to get elected in the French parliament. He was gaining momentum, and his ideas of a Maohi country governed by Maohi People were starting to pose a serious threat to France’s plans to establish its nuclear testing in Moruroa and Fangataufa after Algeria’s rise to independence.

The enemy of the State had to go. Pouvanaa was setup by France, accused of trying to burn the capital down. With a parody of a trial, and despite no serious evidence against him, Pouvanaa was sentenced, banned, and sent into exile in France.



The path was now free for France’s next move.

In 1964, only three out of 22 representatives, all of French descent, were forced to impose the will of De Gaulle, and to start 30 years of French nuclear testing, with not less than 193 bombs exploding upon, or inside the atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa.

According to the long hidden testimony of one of these men, they did not have a real choice: either they voted yes, or France was to establish a military government in French Polynesia.

In 1976, it took the embargo imposed by Australian and New Zealand trade unions on all French products to force the French government to switch from aerial to underground testing.

The first time I went to Moruroa, I saw with my own two eyes, the giant signs saying “No fishing, or drinking coconuts, highly contaminated area”, all around the island.

This to me was a brutal awakening, to the lies of the French state to our People, and the start of my political engagement. My main concern at that time was the health of our People.

In the following years, we founded the “Tavini huiraaatira o te ao Maohi”, and started demonstrating against the French Nukes and educating our People about our rights to self-determination.

At that time, many New Zealanders, Australians and Pacific cousins were among us, during these demonstrations.

All this active lobbying finally decided president François Mitterand, in 1992, to suspend French nuclear testing in Moruroa and Fangataufa.

In 1995, with news of president Jacques Chirac wanting to resume the testing, the protestant church organized demonstrations; its president, Rev. Jacques Ihorai flew to Paris to ask Chirac to change his mind. But the answer was an irrevocable “NO”.

This led to the biggest demonstrations yet in Tahiti, and ensuing riots that set the city of Papeete and the Faa’a airport ablaze.

Seventy maohi were thrown into jail, many of them pressured to lie about myself being the mastermind between the incidents that led to the burning of the city and the airport.

In 1997, Chirac and France eventually decided to put an end to its nuclear testing in Moruroa. But as they did so, they broke the promise made by De Gaulle, in 1963, to give Moruroa and Fangataufa back to us, in their initial state after the last test.

To this day, why this promise is still pending is a classified topic. France doesn't want anyone to know the truth about what lies beneath its former nuclear playgrounds of Moruroa and Fangataufa. Truth is that these atolls are now nuclear waste dumpfill.

Three days ago I read a statement by Marie-Luce Penchard, minister of French overseas territories, bragging about voting a law entitling victims of French nuclear testing to compensation.

That is French hypocrisy and biased sense of dialogue in its worst form. France is both judge and party. They rule the committee that judges the claims. To this day, not one single maohi has been granted any decent compensation, while some French workers have.

And Ms Penchard forgets to tell you something about that law... As they passed it; and despite a unanimous vote by our Parliament, **the French decided to close the nuclear archives of Moruroa and Fangataufa forever.** Depriving us from ever knowing the truth about our people who worked or lived there.

This background setting of these years of French nuclear testing is key to a better understanding of evolution of our country since the 1970s.

To pursue its testing without disruption, France needed to control and contain, if not erase, the raise of any “nationalist” consciousness among maohi People.

In a well-established colonial schema, they needed to increase our dependency towards them so that we would not envision our future without France, and its nuclear testing. Now, our People are dying of several nuclear related illnesses that are bound to be passed to many generations to come.

As they dropped their nuclear bombs, France also dropped huge amounts of cash on our People. Our traditional way of life was torn upside down. Fishermen would not fish anymore, and native fruits and roots would end up not cultivated anymore.

Shops, with imported goods, and easy money from the nuclear testing facilities rapidly dismantled the basis of our traditional way of life that used to make us virtually self-sufficient.



In the meantime, the French had to let the dog loose on its leash from time to time, to avoid its bite. They had to give us the illusion of freedom... It smells like freedom, it tastes like freedom, but make no mistake: French version of “autonomy” is not freedom. We are no more than a French collectivity, governed in reality from Paris.

From 1977 to 2011, we have been granted six updates of our “constitution”. But none of these are in fact more than a “political sandbox” for kids to play in. Indeed, our so called “State of

autonomy” is no more than one organic law within France’s own body of laws. One that is written and changed by Paris.

Who would ever seriously call this a “constitution” ?

In fact, it was a clever way for France to make sure that her local allies, the pro-french “Tahoeraa huiraatira” party, led by former president Gaston Flosse , the self-proclaimed “brother of Jacques Chirac” ,would stay in power, thus blocking the rise of the pro-independence movements.

But self-determination movement kept gaining momentum.

In 1986, two of us stepped in our Parliament. At each election, the number of our representatives grew up...

In 2004, the unthinkable happened : France’s champion, Gaston Flosse was beaten, and for the first time in our history, a maohi independentist was elected President of French Polynesia.

France’s colonial reaction was swift. Mrs Girardin, then minister of overseas territory for France declared that “the election process was not over” and that France would “Shut the faucets closed”...

Indeed, a few weeks after, France decided to cancel the election because of the color of the blinds in the city hall of Mahina ... New elections were held, and we won again, by an increased margin.

But France still would not let the dog go free. They tightened the leash.

They withdrew from several signed agreements that resulted in financial difficulties for our social security system. They decided to

lower the retirement wages of all Polynesian employees within its French State administration.

Since our “local laws” are in fact controlled by Paris’ state court, they cancelled a law passed in 2007 bound to protect local jobs by giving priority to natives.

Through their control of city laws, and security related matters, they gradually took the management of water, electricity, sewage and the airport away from local companies, to the profit of French big corporations.

Whenever the election results would not suit their needs, they would change the electoral law supposedly “for stability sakes” ...

In 2007, despite massive opposition from 44 out of 57 representatives, they did it, and more recently, in mid-august, they just did it again, without any real consultation either of our Parliament or government.

From 2004 to 2011, twelve governments followed, and this is my fifth term...

Three weeks ago, the French high commissioner has sued our own minister of education because he issued a statement to protect maohi undergraduate teachers from being sent away to France for their two years training, while bringing French teachers to Tahiti...

Why is France so eager to keep us under her stronghold?

Besides political considerations tied to Moruroa and Fangataufa, **it is us that make France the third largest maritime power in the world.** Without us, they would be number 46 ...

Having long overfished their seas, they are now lurking to exploit our ocean, from the fishes to the phosphates of Mataiva, and the huge mineral reserves found on our seabed.

France knows that the center of tomorrow's world has shifted to the center of the Pacific Ocean, Between Asia, America and Oceania.

You see my friends, this is yet another case of David against Goliath, and the reason why we want our country back on UN's list of territories not yet decolonized.

Without the UN as a referee between France and us, this is once again an unfair and uphill battle. Our political opponents try to present this request as an attempt from us to get independence without the People's vote. This is not what we seek. We seek a balanced evolution of our relations with France, under the observation of the UN.

Time will come when, this evolution will be mature, and the question of independence will need to be asked. But this will be through a referendum.

Our opponents want to rush things and ask for this referendum to be held now. Who shall be allowed to vote in such a decisive referendum? Currently, French law allows Europeans to vote only three months after they enter our country.

And at any given time, we have around six thousand French "expatriate families" that are staying for 3 year in our country. Should they be allowed to vote on our future?

We say that, without the international framework of UN scrutiny, this referendum will be no better than the 1958 one.

My government intends to re-develop the long forgotten primary sector, to restore fiscal equity, to regain self-sufficiency and to develop our economic relationships with our natural partners in the Pacific region. **There's a full social and economic paradigm shift to be operated.**

But to do so, we must be able to counter-balance the colonial weight, the natural inclination of France to keep us away from real development in order to maintain its presence.



Nations of this world , France included have stated in article 73 of the UN's charter, then in resolution 1514 their "sacred mission" to decolonize their remaining non self-governing territories. More recently, at the 50th anniversary of that resolution the UN secretary general called the international community to immediately and completely eradicate colonialism throughout the world...

Prior to my coming here, both the government of Tahiti Nui, and a majority of 30 representatives from our Parliament have voted resolutions to support our re-inscription on UN's list.

Last week, the Pacific Conference of Churches issued a clear support statement to this same quest

More recently, 11 leaders from the Pacific region, all members of this forum, gathered in Nadi, Fiji, also issued a support statement.

Yesterday, we received support from both the Maori King and the Maori political and cultural leaders.

Yet, I hear a few voices telling us that we should continue to seek dialogue with France, without the arbitration of the United Nations ...

My friends. A basic tenet of a healthy democracy is indeed open dialogue and transparency. But as France's harsh decolonization history shows, this kind of dialogue is not to be found under the strong shadow of their flag.

We have been trying to dialogue for 170 years now. Our quest is noble, and as natural as motherhood itself. No one on this earth should be denied fair treatment and the right to self-determination.

Since the 2004 Forum decision to encourage dialogue between France and us, facts, as I just recounted them have proven that fair dialogue to be a dead end, without any upper referee overlooking the process.

We hope that no single member of this forum isolates himself from the massive and resounding echoes that are supporting our humble request, from the whole Pacific region.

We also urge all forum members to be consistent throughout time. In 1986 you all supported Kanaky's return on the UN list. History would not understand that today, this Forum may decide otherwise.

And as the Maori proverb tells us, we invite you all to

“turn your face to the sun so that the shadows fall behind you.”

Mauruuru, Te aroha ia rahi.