

Vème Sommet France-Océanie

19 juillet 2021

President of Government of New Caledonia

H.E Louis MAPOU

Session 1: oceans management, use and conservation

Mr Emmanuel MACRON, President of the French Republic,

**Mr Kausea NATANO, President of the Pacific Islands Forum and
Prime Minister of Tuvalu,**

Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN, President of the European Commission,

Dear Colleagues Leaders of the "Blue Pacific Continent",

Mr Henry PUNA, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum,

**Directors of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and good evening,

1. It's an honour and a privilege for me to attend this high level political dialogue between France and Oceania as the new president of the Government of New Caledonia, which has recently been sworn in in the midst of great challenges facing our Bleu Pacific continent and the world.

2. Since the Nouméa Accord, and with France's support, New Caledonia has strengthened its regional action.

4. The accession of New Caledonia in 2016 as a full member of this honourable institution of the Pacific Islands Forum is a political and historical turning point for our country.

5. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight two recent declarations which are for us the pillars of our commitment to the protection of the Blue Pacific.

6. The first is the Declaration on Oceans adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in February 2021. On behalf of New Caledonia, let me reiterate our commitment to promote a common vision of sustainable preservation of our Blue Pacific by 2050.

7. The second is the new founding charter known as the "Vemööre Declaration" resulting from the 10th Pacific Islands Ministerial Conference on Nature Conservation, which New Caledonia had the privilege of hosting in 2020. This declaration was adopted by thirteen states and 11 international organisations.

8. Based on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Vemööre Declaration sets out a strategic framework that reaffirms the importance of the ocean-climate nexus, but also and above all, the link between traditional knowledge and science.

9. These two declarations shall form the moral basis of our roadmap for the protection of our oceans. That is why I hope that they will be endorsed by all Pacific Islands Forum members and partners, including France, and be advocated at upcoming international negotiations in Marseille and then in Glasgow.

10. Mr President of the French Republic, Chair of the Forum, dear colleagues,

11. Like in all our islands, in New Caledonia the ocean represents the cradle of Kanak civilisation, the indigenous people of our country who have welcomed and embraced other cultures. The ocean envelops geomorphological, biological and human history in all its dimensions and forms the basis of our common future.

12. To preserve its seas, New Caledonia decided to establish the Coral Sea Natural Park. This marine protected area located in the heart of the largest "closed" lagoon in the world - a lagoon classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site - has enabled us to develop our relations with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and also Vanuatu.

13. These initiatives provide New Caledonia with a framework for the protection and promotion of our resources, and represent a real laboratory for research and innovation in the service of blue economies.

14. We, the leaders of the Blue Pacific continent, must take responsibility for the sustainable use, management and conservation of our ocean. Today, it is important to preserve the greater marine ecosystems, both for a sustainable fishery sector and for future submarine exploration for which a moratorium seems to be necessary.

15. In this respect, although our regional technical cooperation mechanism has proved its worth, its political and diplomatic coordination needs to be strengthened.

16. We belong to this immense ocean of the blue Pacific which has shaped our civilisations as great travellers and which extends beyond our borders now threatened by rising sea level.

17. Mr President of the French Republic, Mr President of the Forum, dear colleagues, we are collectively the custodians of this heritage, our oceans. Our duty is to make it sustainable for the continued use and development of our peoples in the Pacific. It is in this respect that this high-level political dialogue foreshadows the contours of the next United Nations conference on oceans; the major challenge is to save the oceans and protect our future.

18. Thank you.