



PIANGO

Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations

Association des ONGs des Iles de Pacifique

P. O. Box 17780, Suva, Fiji. 256 Waimanu Road, Suva. Phone: +679 330-2963

Web: <http://www.piango.org>

MEDIA STATEMENT

PIANGO RESPONDS TO PACIFIC FORUM'S COMMENTS

For Immediate Release

Suva, Fiji Islands (14 May, 2010) – The Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) has applauded comments by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) on its commitment to working with regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and its desire to “continue to engage with CSOs” via its various mechanisms.

However, PIANGO’s interim Executive Director, Emele Duituturaga-Jale has called the PIFS dismantling of the position of Non State Actor (NSA) Liaison Officer a regressive step for the Pacific Islands Forum and one which had severed CSOs ability to stay engaged with the Forum.

“The dismantling of the post of NSA Liaison Officer in early 2009 has not helped as it was a CSO focal point within PIFS and its disestablishment has effectively prevented CSOs from any direct policy engagement with the Pacific Islands Forum,” Ms Duituturaga said.

“Having gained consultative status, PIANGO’s efforts to seek accreditation (to the Forum) have been denied and PIANGO who is a member of the PRNGO Alliance (Pacific Regional Non Government Organisations) has not had any formal dialogue with the PIFS Secretary-General since he took up office, apart from a welcome morning tea by the PRNGOs hosted at the PIANGO offices.

“While PIANGO, as the regional peak body for NGOs in the Pacific region, is reassured by PIFS recent comments in the media re-stating its commitment to CSOs, we would very much like to see the post of NSA Liaison Officer reinstated and would welcome an open-door policy for CSO dialogue and engagement with the Forum,” she said.

Last week, Political Adviser and Press Secretary to the Tongan Prime Minister Mr Lopeti Senituli, called the disestablishment of the position of PIFS NSA Liaison Officer “a backward step” for the Forum. Mr Senituli made the comments at a meeting of Pacific CSOs in Tonga, organised by PIANGO. He went on to say that he personally felt that the current Secretary General of the Forum should have been “the last person” to dismantle mechanisms which allowed CSOs access (to Forum processes) because as the former Ambassador of Samoa to the United Nations, he had done much to help CSOs gain access to a series of UN conferences ranging from the environment to human rights. (ENDS)

Contact: Debbie Singh, PIANGO Communications Adviser. Tel: (679) 994-3678. Email:
deb.singh@yahoo.com