



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Will the real Pacific leaders please stand up? NGOs call for tougher negotiating stance**

**Regional NGOs meeting in Tonga have issued a strong statement to Pacific Leaders calling on them to stand up for the rights of Pacific peoples in negotiations for a new trade deal with the EU.**

Pacific NGOs, meeting in Tonga this week as part of the 2007 Pacific Regional Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Forum, have issued a statement urging Pacific Ministers to adhere to 'red line' minimum negotiating positions in discussions with the EU for a new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The statement stressed the 'absolute necessity' for Pacific unity in the EPA negotiations, to prevent bilateral agreements dividing the Pacific's position. It also called on Pacific trade ministers to take enough time for consultation and scrutiny of the implications of the EPA, including incorporating the results of a recent social impact assessment.

Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) coordinator Roshni Sami, who delivered a scathing presentation on the EPA negotiations at the forum, said it is time for Pacific leaders to show real leadership. "Twenty-two years after the negotiation of the Lomé Agreement, which secured significant wealth for the region, Pacific leaders are struggling in today's cut-throat free market environment to gain trade deals that secure the Pacific's economic future," said Ms Sami. "We need visionary leadership at a time like this, and the regional CSO statement to Pacific leaders challenges them to push for the Pacific's real development interests."

Ms Sami said the EPAs as envisioned by the EU are not in the Pacific's development interests, but are instead simply about free trade. "Pacific leaders and people seriously need to start asking themselves, 'why would we sign a new trade deal at all, if we are being offered so little,'" said Ms Sami. She said the EU was piling on the pressure towards the close of the year, and was trying to add "grossly inappropriate" clauses to the EPA – especially the EU's demand for a Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause. "The MFN clause will mean that if we negotiate any trade concessions with other nations in the future, we will have to extend them to the EU as well," said Ms Sami. "It's staggering, because they would have to offer us nothing in return."

The EU has made commitments under the Cotonou Agreement to provide market access to Pacific nations at least as favourable as is currently available, no matter the outcome of the EPA negotiations. "Pacific leaders need to remember there are alternatives to the EPA, and it's better to have no deal than a bad deal," said Ms Sami.

**For more information contact PANG coordinator, Roshni Sami.  
Ph: 331 6722 - Mob: 999 5702**

**“Make Trade Fair in the Pacific”**

**Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) is a Pacific Islands regional fair trade organisation based in Suva, Fiji.**