

## **Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG)**

21 Marion Street, C/- GPO Box 17105,  
Suva. FIJI ISLANDS.  
Ph: (679) 3316 722 Fax: (679) 3318 927  
Email: [coordinator@pang.com.fj](mailto:coordinator@pang.com.fj)



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PANG Press Release:

### **Are our Trade Negotiators Hypocrites?**

The Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) calls for courage and consistency from Pacific Island leaders in trade negotiations. “Our families, communities, cultures, economies, democracies and environment cannot afford any more mistakes made under pressure from dominant powers pushing their neo-liberal policy interests” said a representative from PANG. These comments come after recent contradictory statements from Pacific leaders.

At a workshop in Brussels on the 12-13 October 2006 Fiji’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, and the Principal Negotiator for the Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), Kaliopate Tavola stated:

“The EPA can overwhelm the basis for regional integration especially if it opens up markets too early. The main concern of Pacific countries is that the EPA will trigger off a [free trade agreement] with Australia and New Zealand, under the terms of [PACER] another agreement that the Pacific countries have with these two countries. If this were to happen, Australia and New Zealand would dominate the Pacific economies and “we will face de-industrialisation and loss of jobs.”

Yet only two weeks later at the Pacific ACP Leaders meeting in Nadi on 23 October, Pacific leaders released a statement saying they supported a proposal that Forum Island Countries prepare for negotiations with Australia and New Zealand for an even more comprehensive framework for trade and economic cooperation called PACER-plus!

Pacific ACP leaders must not risk letting the EPA trigger PACER or the new PACER-plus. This is sure to be a development disaster from the perspective of the Pacific, but a windfall for Australian and New Zealand exporters and investors. If negotiating PACER is of such grave concern to Pacific Island Countries why have Pacific Island leaders supported negotiations with Australia and New Zealand?

Pacific people need to start asking: Whose side are our negotiators on?