



Workshop PACIFIC FEMINIST FORUM KNC

Summary report

Introduction

Within the framework of the third Pacific Feminist Forum and under the aegis of the Movement for a Smiling Melanesian Village, the Union of Francophone Women and the World March of Women, a workshop was organised on **Saturday 1st October 2022 at the CPS (Community of the Pacific)**. This meeting brought together around 60 women and three men.

Because our country is confronted by a situation **stemming from increasingly concerning climatic deregulation, amplified by a new political context of armed conflict between the great powers such as the United States and China**, the organisers positioned these two questions from the perspective of awareness-raising and prevention of violence against women, children and the population in general.

This reflection is intended to be participative within a context of decolonisation and the deconstruction of patriarchy.

Problems

The experts laid out an alarming situation and its consequences as much from a geopolitical perspective as from the perspective of climate change.

1. Climate change and its consequences on Living Conditions in KNC (Kanaky-New Caledonia)

a. An overall view at the planetary level.

Climate change is provoking “dangerous disruptions” to nature and is affecting people’s lives, especially those who are not sufficiently prepared to adapt to the new climate.

For example, certain illnesses are becoming more frequent and food security is decreasing. Climate effects are multiplying threats to food production, water supply, human health and coastal infrastructure. According to the World Bank, climate migration will affect 49 million individuals pushed by impossible living conditions within the Pacific and East Asia zone.

b. At the level of Kanaky-New Caledonia

Climate deregulation is becoming more and more noticeable in Oceania and particularly in Kanaky-New Caledonia. It is subjecting the population to increasingly difficult conditions. Ouvéa and Thio [Translator’s Note: islands in KNC] are directly threatened by rising sea levels while no overall reflection is being undertaken in order to, on one hand, prepare the population to immigrate to other places and, on the other

hand, to save the inhabited places and cultures which are increasingly tending to be drowned by the rising waters.

It is evident that the Communes with more financial means are more easily able to face the problems of erosion. This situation inevitably leads to unequal situations bringing poverty and misery with them.

Taking the example of the construction of the Bay of Anse-Vata for a cost estimated at more than 1.5 billion, the question is: will this construction and investment be sufficient to stop the effects of rising water levels? The workshop highlighted the failure of public authorities to anticipate these problems in order to reflect generally on the consequences of climate change to consider equity measures and solidarity among all the communes impacted by this phenomenon.

Although it is true that the effects of climate change are the same for everyone, it is nonetheless evident that certain factors reveal that women are more affected than men due to their status (gender) and their rights.

Several observations of movement of women and their children lead us to examine the solutions for and housing conditions of “climate migrants” within our own country (territories governed by customary law, territories governed by common law)

2. Militarisation, KNC women’s concerns

A participant invited the workshop to define the position to take between acceptance, that is to apply the resolutions as they are, or to directly oppose militarisation. The workshop did not respond exhaustively to these two axes but prolific discussions took place.

The debate particularly emphasised concerns and questions about the end goal of these global issues: the Oceanian region in the Indo-Pacific is currently threatened by a war which one participant identified as “imperialist” between the great military powers under American leadership to counter the influence of China in the Pacific region.

New Caledonia and French Polynesia under French colonisation will be directly affected by the reinforcing of weaponry and military forces in the three years to come (2025).

The expert asked the question in her presentation: during the previous war, New Caledonia being French, was the natural ally of the Americans; would it be prepared today to ally with China? Knowing that we know what we would lose but we do not know what we might gain?

The debate provoked several comments on the juridical and “protector aspects” of guardian states.

➤ Political and legal strategy

- What is the American strategy in the Pacific (Pacific Island Summit in Washington with, as an added bonus, a budget of 97 billion CFP)
- The Marshall Islands had to leave the Summit in protest against the destructive effects of 67 nuclear tests undertaken by the United States in the Pacific Ocean between 1946 and 1958 with serious consequences for health, human rights and culture. They now want reparations and justice. But what about the French tests in Mururoa, keeping in mind that thyroid cancer affects 90% of Oceanian women?

- What are France's intentions in New Caledonia, keeping in mind that there has been talk about New Caledonia becoming the "rear military base"? Will this topic be on the agenda for the 2023 meeting of Defence Ministers planned in Noumea?
- What is New Caledonia's situation, keeping in mind that the Noumea Accord will expire in 2025? Is there a policy of militarisation in the region and internationally? What has happened to the discussions over the transfer of sovereign powers?
- When it comes to armed conflict, New Caledonia has a long history with the imperialist and colonial system does it have a position and a strategy of its own within a protective France?
- How can we include safety in reflections on security? Security should not be dissociated from surety. These two concepts must be examined within a framework of prevention and mediation.
- The workshop highlights the lack of communication over the huge influx of military forces before, during and after the referendum. We wonder how neutral the media is?

➤ **A gendered approach to participation in decision-making spaces**

- What is the biggest challenge that Oceanian women, and particularly Caledonian women, would have to face in the context of armed conflict?
- Would it not be preferable to bring a gender perspective to the dialogue table instead of simply being satisfied with the presence of a small number of women, chosen by men??

➤ **Women are the major absence in the country's modern decision-making forums, including customary spaces.**

- How should the participation of Caledonian and Indigenous women be facilitated in the dialogues over the Country's institutional future, knowing that domestic and regional security will be on the Agenda?
- In what ways do women participate in the promotion of peace at the local level? At the regional level? And at the international level?

➤ **Legal instruments that require states and governments to integrate women**

- What mechanisms could be established to guarantee the adaptation of conventions and resolutions relating to the gender question?
- What about the national security council's Resolution 1325. Why are Caledonian and Indigenous women not taken into account in this resolution? What are the obstacles preventing their participation in these forums for dialogue to prevent conflict?
- Is the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Committee's General Recommendation 30 recognised and applied in KNC? knowing that it notes that "conflicts accentuate existing inequalities among the sexes" and in these cases invites States to include women in their dialogues for peace.
- Does an integrated gender strategy exist in the Action Plans of the Pacific Island Forum? Knowing that a joint declaration for male-female equality in the Pacific was adopted by the heads of State and of government of the member states of the Pacific Island Forum in 2012?

3. Conclusions

How can Oceanian women contribute to the preservation of their natural and cultural environment and to the defence and preservation of Peace in our geographic zone?

We know that everywhere in the world women make up the social group worst affected by climate change and by armed conflicts and this is primarily because of their gender.

Despite this sad observation and the fact that they represent half of humanity (CEDAW1), women are too often pushed aside when it comes to analyses of the impacts of climate change and armed conflicts. Hence the interrogations about the current situation which is raging in our Country and in our Region.

As Oceanian citizens we do not want to be passive actors and without recourse without being able to give our vision of the world that is a world in which nature continues to fulfill us with its marvels and a world of Peace without violence of any kind which we would leave intact for the benefit of future generations.

To support our action, we base it on legal instruments such as the CEDAW general Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, on the Security Council's resolution 1325 which recommends a broad approach taking gender into account in peace accords and on the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda determined by France for 2021-2025 where it is important to put in place resolution 1325 and its follow-up and finally the Pacific Action Plan (P.A.P.)

4. Recommendations

The Kanaky New Caledonia PACIFIC FEMINIST FORM workshop,

c. At the regional level

- Exhorts member States of the Pacific Island Forum to ensure a **greater representation of women in decision-making in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms** for the purpose of prevention, managing and regulation of climate change and conflicts.
- Exhorts States to integrate the gender dimension in all the Forum's strategies and action plans.

d. At the level of the French State

- Asks the French State to again take the gender dimension in the search for solutions to climate deregulation (COP 21 Paris) and to include in its third national action plan the contribution of Caledonian and Oceanian women to the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

e. At the level of New Caledonia

- Asks political and customary leaders to integrate women into all spaces and processes of decision-making.
- Asks the Government of New Caledonia to include in its action plan from the perspective of gender, Education in respect for the environment, the importance of prevention, safety, security and the need for conciliation. It will invite the combat against gender stereotypes.
- Asks the government for a Country Plan on the protection of the environment keeping in mind that each individual is asked to adopt lifestyle and consumer change (simplicity). When it comes to this aspect, where are the public authorities and businesses?
- Asks the Government to publish its CEDAW report and to make it available to feminist associations so that they can write their counter-report.

"The complete development of a country, the world's well-being and the cause of peace require women's maximal participation equal with men, in all domains." CEDAW

For the preservation of the environment, for Peace

The workshop commits itself to pursuing reflection and action within the Pacific Feminist Forum.

Noumea, 1 October 2022