



June 14th, 2017

Civil Society Calls for Delay to PACER-Plus Signing

Over 30 groups and 449 individuals from the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand have called for a halt to the signing of the regional trade deal, known as PACER-Plus, until there has been proper time to assess its impacts and time to properly consult Pacific peoples. The petition is attached.

“These voices see PACER-Plus as a deal that will deliver the most economic benefits to Australia and New Zealand and limit in a legally binding way, how Pacific communities can determine their own form of development,” commented Mr Adam Wolfenden, Campaigner for the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG).

A signing ceremony is planned for June 14th in Nuku’alofa, Tonga. Australia, New Zealand and 11 Forum Island Countries are scheduled to be attending.

Papua New Guinea walked away from the negotiations in 2016 calling them a 'net loss' for PNG and Fiji harbours concerns about the lack of adequate infant industry protections and the details of the 'Most-Favoured Nation' clause. The Council of Ministers in Vanuatu decided that they will not participate in the signing ceremony and will await further assessments of the impacts before making a decision to sign.

“There is little evidence to suggest PACER-Plus will bring the benefits that its proponents constantly repeat yet we know there are real costs that will accompany it. What is really being asked for is time for all people to understand what PACER-Plus is going to mean for them. The rush to wrap up PACER-Plus is happening at the expense of the ability for people to be involved in the process”, added Mr Wolfenden.

This petition follows the recent presentation of a petition to the Tongan Prime Minister, the Honourable Samuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, by Tongan groups calling for a deferral in any decision to sign, and renegotiation of clauses they are unhappy with.

The 2016 report *“Defending Pacific Ways of Living: A Peoples' Social Impact Assessment of PACER-Plus”* was based on leaked legal text and found that PACER-Plus would pose significant restrictions on the ability of governments to regulate, have negative health implications and undermine the right to food.

“The legal texts of PACER-Plus have only just been released and there is no time whatsoever to actually sit down, look through the details, discuss them and then make a decision. Development doesn't happen by rushing through the signing of legally binding treaties but sadly this is what we are seeing happen here”, continued Mr Wolfenden.

“The signing ceremony is coming almost eight years to the day that Trade Ministers were pressured into agreeing to launch negotiations in Samoa in 2009. These negotiations were always started with Australia and New Zealand's interests at their heart and sadly they finish how they began”, concluded Mr Wolfenden.

For More Information

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