



Reflecting on a Decade of the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM)

Achievements and Future Pathways

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▶ Key Takeaways

- The South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM) is a unique multilateral forum addressing maritime security, the impacts of climate change, and the training of armed forces for disaster response (HADR). Even after a decade, it still lacks widespread recognition.
- SPDMM discussions facilitate lesson sharing, especially as extreme weather events intensify in the region, calling for improved coordination for HADR.
- France makes an original contribution to the SPDMM, particularly on the nexus between climate and defense, and through the significant engagement of its repositioned forces in Nouméa and Papeete in regional cooperation.
- The future of SPDMM hinges on its ability to navigate power rivalries and streamline itself with other dialogues and security mechanisms in the region.

Introduction

The South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM) is taking place in Nouméa (New Caledonia) from December 4th to 6th of this year. Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the SPDMM brings together defense ministers and senior military officials from South Pacific countries – Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Tonga – as well as representatives from the three observer countries – Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The SPDMM, its purpose, and its achievements are not well-known. Nevertheless, it stands as the sole multilateral forum bringing together defense ministers from the extended South Pacific, including Chile. It stands out with its high level of representation and its agenda focused on climate change and its impacts, maritime security, and the training of armed forces for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

While security cooperation initiatives are abundant in Oceania, there is no regional collective security agreement to address the increasingly numerous and diverse risks and challenges.¹ Certainly, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) brings together Pacific Island states, fostering oceanic solidarity, but it only marginally touches upon defense matters. Moreover, only three island countries in the Pacific (PNG, Fiji, and Tonga) have armed forces, while others maintain paramilitary forces (such as the Vanuatu Mobile Force) or police forces. Therefore, the SPDMM is a unique dialogue and coordination platform in the region.

This briefing seeks to offer a preliminary evaluation of the SPDMM's ten-year journey, emphasize France's role in hosting the ministerial meeting for the first time this year, and provide a broad overview of the institution's future. The challenge in the coming years will be for the SPDMM to reposition itself in light of the resurgence of power rivalries and the proliferation of security initiatives in the area.

Evolution of the SPDMM

The SPDMM was initially proposed by the Australian government, specifically by its then-Minister of Defense, Stephen Smith, who mentioned at the 2012 Shangri-La Dialogue the establishment of a dialogue and cooperation framework among defense authorities and military forces in the South Pacific.² For Australia, this initiative represented, to a certain extent, a continuation of the defense cooperation established with the military forces of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon

1. J. Wallis, H. McNeill, J. Batley, and A. Powles, "Mapping Security Cooperation in the Pacific Islands", *Research Report*, Department of Pacific Affairs, Australian National University, 2021.

2. Minister of Defense, Speech in the plenary session on Deterrence and Regional Security at the 11th International Institute for Strategic Studies Asia Security Summit, The Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, June 2nd, 2019, www.parlinfo.aph.gov.au.

Islands (RAMSI). RAMSI,³ an international security force composed of military and police personnel from Pacific nations and coordinated by Canberra since 2003, was set to conclude its military component in 2013.

Tonga signaled its commitment to ongoing defense cooperation and, as a result, hosted the inaugural SPDMM summit in 2013, with significant organizational support from Australia. This new group brought together, in addition to these two countries, New Zealand, PNG, Chile, and France.⁴ Fiji, then under military rule, was not invited and only joined the group in 2017. Only two states were invited as observers: the United States and the United Kingdom.

Originally, it was agreed that the SPDMM would convene biennially at ministerial and chief-of-staff levels, rotating among different countries, with each meeting resulting in a joint communiqué. A permanent secretariat was established in 2019, hosted by the Australian Ministry of Defense in Canberra. Primarily tasked with logistical support and meeting organization, it does not have the mandate to formulate cooperation proposals or set an agenda. The primary objective of the SPDMM is to provide a platform for dialogue and information exchange among defense ministers, fostering mutual understanding, coordinating approaches, and enhancing interoperability through joint exercises.⁵ In addition to multilateral dialogues, these meetings also serve as opportunities for significant bilateral discussions.

One of the most significant achievements of the SPDMM is the *Povai Endeavour* framework, proposed in 2013 and ratified in 2015. Its aim is to enhance interoperability among partners in maritime security and HADR operations.⁶ The schedule of major training exercises is streamlined to avoid redundancies. *Povai Endeavour* originally encompasses three capstone exercises: *Croix du Sud*, organized by the Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC); *Southern Katipo*, led by New Zealand; and *Operation Kuru Kuru*, coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA). The framework gradually expanded to include the *Longreach* exercise organized by Australia and the *Marara* exercise organized by the Armed Forces in French Polynesia (FAPF).

One of the most significant achievements of the SPDMM is the *Povai Endeavour* framework

In its early stages, the SPDMM appears to function as a *de facto* amplifier for defense cooperation initiatives led by Australia in the region, as third-party powers, such as China,

3. See the website of the RAMSI mission: www.ramsi.org.

4. "Defence Minister Smith Attends Inaugural South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in Tonga", *APSM*, May 2nd, 2013, www.asiapacificsecuritymagazine.com.

5. H. Goiran, "The Role of the French Military on Key Issues for Oceania", *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 416, East-West Center, March 26, 2018, www.eastwestcenter.org.

6. "Minister Reinforces Pacific Relationships at Second Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in Papua New Guinea", Australian Government-Defense, May 1st, 2015, www.minister.defence.gov.au.

are increasing their influence in the area.⁷ Canberra remains the historical security partner for the PICs and continues to wield significant influence. For instance, through its Patrol Boat Program, Australia provided 22 patrol boats to its neighbors from 1987 to 1997, enabling them to monitor their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).⁸ A second program, the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP), was launched in 2014 to provide around twenty upgraded Guardian-class vessels, along with maintenance and crew training. In the second SPDMM in 2015, Australia additionally proposed two initiatives to enhance the role of women and the younger generation in the armed forces: the Women in Pacific Defence Forces and the Future Leaders Summit on Security in the Pacific.

Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Operations

SPDMM discussions facilitate the sharing of experiences and call for improved coordination in HADR, especially as climate change-related extreme weather events intensify in the region. The second SPDMM, held in PNG in 2015, discussed Cyclone Pam and the assistance provided to Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

During the fourth SPDMM in Fiji in 2019, it was decided to intensify meetings, now held on an annual basis. The joint communiqué emphasized the SPDMM members' commitment to combat climate change, recognized as the primary threat to the Pacific in the 2018 Boe Declaration.⁹

In 2020 and 2021, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings were held in a virtual format. The 2020 meeting discussed the necessary cooperation in the face of the pandemic, which transformed the security environment, as well as the bushfires in Australia and cyclones Tino and Harold.¹⁰ For the 2021 edition, the agenda expanded as strategic competition in the region intensified.¹¹ A primary objective was the development of a regional framework for HADR, a project led by Fiji. A set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for HADR operations was then approved in 2022, and a multilateral crisis management exercise (table-top exercise) was conducted at the Blackrock training camp.¹² To facilitate coordination, a framework for the exchange of sensitive information was developed.

In 2022, the SPDMM¹³ noted with satisfaction the success of recent deployments to provide assistance to Tonga, devastated by the volcanic eruption of Hunga Tonga in January

7. B. Chandramohan, "Australia's Pacific Ambiguity", *The Diplomat*, November 5, 2010, www.thediplomat.com.

8. S. Pasandideh, "Australia Launches New Pacific Patrol Boat Program", *The Diplomat*, July 1st, 2014, www.thediplomat.com.

9. Joint Communiqué, South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, Fiji, May 8-10, 2019, www.climateandsecurity.files.wordpress.com.

10. Joint Communiqué, South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, July 9, 2020, www.minister.defence.gov.au.

11. Joint Communiqué, South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, October 8, 2021, www.minister.defence.gov.au.

12. "Ensuring Readiness for High-risk Weather", Australian Government, Defence, August 2nd, 2022, www.defence.gov.au.

13. Joint Communiqué, South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, Tonga, October 25, 2022, www.pmo.gov.to.

2022. The extensive international aid required enhanced coordination,¹⁴ and Australia established an International Coordination Cell, *de facto* bringing together representatives from the member and observer countries of the SPDMM.¹⁵ A report from the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), a US-based think tank, underscores the clear advantage that SPDMM partners have in these HADR missions compared to China. China encounters more significant logistical challenges, must secure *ad hoc* stopover points, and lacks the operational coordination familiarity that the partners in the region benefit from.¹⁶

The Nouméa Summit: France's Role and the Future of the SPDMM

The upcoming SPDMM meeting in Nouméa holds a dual symbolic significance: not only is it being hosted in France for the first time, offering an opportunity to highlight France's role in regional security, but it also commemorates the 10th anniversary of the SPDMM. As this summit reaches a new milestone, it must continue to adapt and redefine its role amidst the growing landscape of security cooperation initiatives in the region.

A significant contribution from France

The renowned expertise of the French Forces in the Pacific

France is the only European country to maintain permanent armed forces in the region. The 2,800 French military personnel permanently deployed in the South Pacific¹⁷ actively participate in regional cooperation initiatives, in addition to their missions of anticipation, sovereignty (territorial protection, EEZ), crisis prevention, civil security, and, when needed, support and logistics for HADR. They also serve as crucial support and logistical bases for increasingly ambitious deployments in the area.

France has 60% of its extensive EEZ (the second largest in the world) in the Pacific. The rich waters attract fishing fleets from Asian countries, which are increasingly moving away from their traditional fishing grounds as fish stocks decline rapidly due to overfishing and shifting transit zones caused by climate change. International cooperation is, therefore, crucial.

The French forces assist the nations of the Pacific Islands in protecting their extensive maritime territories. For instance, France collaborates with Australia, the United States, and New Zealand within the Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group (Quad Pacific) for maritime surveillance missions and combating illegal fishing,

14. J. Wallis, H. McNeill, and A. Powles, "Tongan Disaster Highlights Lack of Coordination in Regional Response", *The Strategist*, ASPI, January 28, 2022, www.aspistrategist.org.au.

15. Coordination crucial for Tonga mission, Australian Government, Defence, February 2nd, 2022, www.defence.gov.au.

16. B. Waidelich, "Tonga Aid", *In.Depth*, CNA, February 16, 2022, www.cna.org.

17. 1,650 military personnel within the Armed Forces of New Caledonia and 1,180 within the Armed Forces of French Polynesia.

in support of the Pacific Islands FFA.¹⁸ Since 2021, France annually organizes a South Pacific Coast Guard seminar aimed at enhancing regional coordination.¹⁹

Each year, the FANC and the FAPF alternately organize multinational exercises with a focus on HADR

In the Pacific, as the impacts of climate change intensify, HADR operations have become a crucial part of military missions. Each year, the FANC and the FAPF alternately organize multinational joint exercises with a focus on HADR, namely, *Croix du Sud*²⁰ and *Marara*,²¹ as part of the *Povai Endeavour* cycle.²²

This regional solidarity is not new. Since 1992, under the FRANZ agreement, French, Australian, and New Zealand forces have regularly intervened in support of the South Pacific Island States and their populations following natural disasters. Under this agreement, France has participated in more than twenty humanitarian operations in the South Pacific,²³ most recently in Tonga in 2022 and in Vanuatu in March 2023 after the passage of two cyclones.²⁴ The agreement includes the sharing of information (early weather alerts), pooling of civilian and military resources (supply of equipment, deployment of personnel and materials), and trilateral coordination in the event of a major natural disaster.

France, a pioneer in the climate-defense nexus

France has made an original contribution to the climate-defense nexus in the region. At the third SPDMM in 2017, it proposed to coordinate a study through the Directorate General for International and Strategic Relations (DGRIS) of its Ministry of Defense on the impact of climate change on defense cooperation in the South Pacific and the role of the armed forces.²⁵

The DGRIS has been leading a Defense and Climate Observatory²⁶ since 2015, conducted by French think tanks. The first publication, in March 2017, documented the

18. For example, through the operation NASSE : “FANC – Opération NASSE 2022, mettre la pression sur la pêche illégale”, August 11, 2022, www.defense.gouv.fr.

19. “Lancement du 1^{er} séminaire du réseau garde-côtes du Pacifique”, Haut-Commissariat de la République en Polynésie française, November 17, 2021, www.polynesie-francaise.pref.gouv.fr.

20. Armée de l’Air et de l’Espace, “‘CROIX DU SUD 2023’ : Réagir en cas de catastrophe naturelle dans le Pacifique”, April 26, 2023, www.defense.gouv.fr.

21. “Marara 2022 : Manœuvre logistique des forces armées en Polynésie française pour l’exercice multinational MARARA 2022”, Cols bleus, May 13, 2022, www.colsbleus.fr.

22. H. Goiran, “The Role of the French Military on Key Issues for Oceania”, *op. cit.*

23. Rapport d’étude No. 7, “Synthèse de la contribution française au rapport SPDMM”, December 2018, p. 23, www.archives.defense.gouv.fr

24. “FANC – Opération d’assistance aux populations au Vanuatu”, Ministère des Armées, March 10, 2023, www.defense.gouv.fr.

25. Joint Communiqué, South Pacific Defence Ministers’ Meeting, April 6, 2017, Auckland, New Zealand, www.scoop.co.nz.

26. Observatoire géopolitique des enjeux des changements climatiques en termes de sécurité et de défense, DGRIS, September 30, 2021, www.archives.defense.gouv.fr.

impacts of climate change on Vietnamese fishing fleets.²⁷ As overfishing in the South China Sea drives blue boats to exploit fishery resources further south, their incursions into the waters of Micronesia increased in 2015, as well as in 2016 in Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and New Caledonia, causing security tensions and diplomatic frictions. The FANC actively participated in coordinating regional action, directly assisting the Solomon Islands in apprehending three Vietnamese vessels operating in their EEZ.

Published in 2019, a report coordinated by France and supported by the SPDMM examined the impact of climate change on the security of critical infrastructure.²⁸ It emphasized that crisis management and civil security capabilities are woefully inadequate, necessitating the intervention of the armed forces for support.²⁹ The report also draws attention to the importance of enhancing disaster forecasting capabilities, implementing plans for the prevention of natural risks, and the need to pre-position resources for civil security to address natural disasters. The study's findings were presented at an international conference organized in Nouméa ahead of the 2019 SPDMM in Fiji.

The future of the SPDMM

The SPDMM and US-China rivalry

The regional security landscape has changed since the establishment of the SPDMM. Chinese financing opportunities, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, have increased dependency relationships, undermining the economic, social, and political ecosystems of PICs while strengthening China's influence. In September 2019, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati decided to break ties with Taiwan in favor of closer relations with Beijing. Subsequently, the signing of a security treaty between China and the Solomon Islands in March 2022 raised concerns among regional actors, particularly Australia and the United States, about the risks of Chinese military presence in the archipelago or the closure of its maritime space to the transit of ships. In June of the same year, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi embarked on an unprecedented ten-day tour of the area. However, the regional cooperation treaty he planned to propose to the members of the Pacific Islands Forum was rejected even before its official submission.³⁰

27. "Impacts du changement climatique sur la pêche hauturière vietnamienne", Note d'analyse No. 1, IRSEM, March 2017, www.irsem.fr.

28. "Synthèse de la contribution française au rapport SPDMM", Rapport d'étude No. 7, Observatoire défense et climat, December 2018, p. 5, www.archives.defense.gouv.fr.

29. F. Gemenne, B. Alex, and A. Baillat, "Implications of Climate Change on Defence and Security in the South Pacific by 2030", Defense and Climate Observatory, May 2019, www.archives.defense.gouv.fr.

30. M. Julienne, "Un coup d'épée dans l'océan. La tournée de Wang Yi dans le Pacifique insulaire, *Lettre du Centre Asie*, Ifri, No. 97, June 3, 2022, www.ifri.org.

In response to China's expansion in the region, the United States and their partners have reinvested in the area. Washington unveiled its first Pacific Partnership strategy, and President Biden hosted his counterparts from Pacific Island nations in highly publicized forums in 2022 and 2023. These initiatives were accompanied by the opening of embassies in the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Kiribati, as well as in the Cook Islands and Niue, along with an increase in funding for sustainable development in Oceania.³¹ Australia announced its "Pacific Step Up" in 2017, New Zealand its "Pacific Reset" in 2018, the United Kingdom its "Pacific Uplift" in 2019, and Japan has made the Pacific islands a cornerstone of its Indo-Pacific strategy since 2018.

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This renewed interest has led to an increase in offers for security cooperation in the region. The Indo-Pacific Quad, bringing together since 2017 the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, is increasingly focused on the Pacific Island region, especially through its initiative announced in May 2022 for an Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA).³² The goal is to build a "common operational picture" of activities at sea. On June 24, 2022, Washington announced the launch of the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)³³ initiative to coordinate actions in support of the region by international partners. Other initiatives, such as a trilateral partnership between the United States, Australia, and Japan, aim to fund connectivity and critical infrastructure projects.³⁴ Furthermore, in May 2023, Washington concluded an unprecedented defense cooperation agreement with PNG.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) has observed this trend with concern, fearing that the renewed interest of major powers may compromise the PICs' approach to non-alignment, symbolized by the motto "Friends to all, enemies to none".³⁵ This geostrategic rivalry finds little resonance among states concerned about the risk of submergence of certain atolls, the plundering of natural resources, the effects of climate change, and pollution. The "Blue Pacific Strategy by 2050", published in July 2022, reaffirms the central role of the PIF in coordinating regional security and emphasizes the importance of the Pacific Way method, based on consensus, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs.³⁶ Referring to the Boe Declaration on Regional Security (2018), the "Blue Pacific Strategy by 2050" advocates for coordinated responses by Pacific

31. "FACT SHEET: Enhancing the U.S.-Pacific Islands Partnership", White House, September 25, 2023, www.whitehouse.gov.

32. "FACT SHEET: Quad Leaders' Tokyo Summit 2022", White House, May 23, 2022, www.whitehouse.gov.

33. "Statement by Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States on the Establishment of the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)", White House, June 24, 2022, www.whitehouse.gov.

34. M. Yamaguchi, "Japan, Australia, US to Fund Undersea Cable Connection in Micronesia to Counter China's Influence", APNews, June 7, 2023, www.apnews.com.

35. *The Pacific Security Outlook 2022-23*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022, p. 14, www.forumsec.org.

36. *The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022, p. 9, www.forumsec.org.

nations and calls for the establishment of a flexible and responsive regional security system, along with implementation processes ensuring that the Pacific can address traditional and non-traditional security challenges.³⁷

Henceforth, the future of the SPDMM will depend on its ability to maintain legitimacy and effectiveness in such a context. Its legitimacy, as perceived by the PICs and Chile, is contingent on its ability to remain distant from power competition, focusing instead on cross-cutting security issues and capacity-building. Australia, New Zealand, and France recognize the importance of respecting the non-aligned posture of the PICs. However, they argue that strengthening security cooperation with these countries also helps them make informed decisions and ultimately resist Chinese attempts at predation.

The effectiveness of the SPDMM depends on the ability of the PICs to take ownership of this cooperation platform, which, in turn, requires respecting the traditional process of consultation and decision-making by consensus. The current priority is to implement the decisions and recommendations adopted over the past decade.

Lastly, the question of the articulation of the SPDMM with other dialogues and security mechanisms in the region is still pending. The SPDMM does not maintain direct and structured relations with the PIF, which remains the predominant regional institution

The future of the SPDMM will depend on its ability to maintain legitimacy and effectiveness in such a context

in terms of security and policy in the area, nor with the Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHOPS) established by Australia in 2019. JHOPS addresses similar subjects to those of the SPDMM, involving military forces as well as regional agencies for police, customs, and immigration. Additionally, there is a potential convergence between the FRANZ framework, whose extension to certain PICs has been discussed, and the SPDMM, which, in practice,

brings together the PICs best equipped to provide assistance to other countries in the region when needed. Furthermore, on another note, the opportunity to develop the *Povai Endeavour* framework has been discussed to incorporate the *Longreach* TTX exercises and the operational exercises *Croix du Sud/Marara* as training and certification paths for PICs. The consolidation of dialogue and cooperation initiatives will, in any case, need to be built on strong relationships of trust among partners, where each party can benefit from this approach, whether in terms of efficiency, visibility, or influence.

Priorities of the Nouméa Meeting and Recommendations

The discussions at the Nouméa meeting of the SPDMM will build on the issues debated in previous sessions. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) for HADR operations must be established, along with an information-sharing system. Consideration for enhancing

³⁷. *Ibid*, p. 21.

the member countries' capabilities in cybersecurity and protecting critical infrastructure should be initiated, as well as exploring the opportunity to train PICs in the use of versatile aerial drones for HADR and transportation missions.

As the host country, France is expected to work toward the operationalization of some of the recommendations outlined in the 2019 study on the impact of climate change in the South Pacific.

Furthermore, in response to a longstanding request from the countries in the region, Paris is expected to adjust its ship-riding³⁸ practice with its SPDMM partners and other partner countries, including Vanuatu. Previously, the contribution of French vessels to fisheries control operations for third-party states was limited by France's absence from the Niue Treaty (1993), requiring the embarkation of agents representing the coastal state to witness violations in areas under their jurisdiction. France aims to broaden the legal framework to enhance the fight against illegal fishing while respecting the prerogatives of third-party states.

The details of the future Pacific Academy in Nouméa, announced by French president Emmanuel Macron in July 2023 during his regional tour, are expected to be clarified. An inter-ministerial project, the Academy aims to support the build-up of expertise among regional defense and security forces. In coordination with partners and the *Povai Endeavour* framework, the Pacific Academy aims to complement the training offerings available in the Pacific in HADR and civil security, targeting practical know-how or technical areas with direct utility for partner forces.

Recommendations for France:

- **Ensure a consistent, high level of representation**

In the past, France's representation at the SPDMM has varied (French Ambassador, DGRIS, Commander of the FANC), and it has never been at the ministerial level (in person). Elevating this level of representation over time will demonstrate the commitment and importance given to defense dialogue with Pacific partners. Designating a Minister's sherpa dedicated to the Indo-Pacific, for example, would provide a dedicated representative for this region, as is already the case within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, having defense attachés in Fiji and PNG on a permanent basis would be beneficial.

- **Respect the "Pacific Way"**

The legitimacy of the SPDMM is based on a sense of regional solidarity and the perception of a community of security interests. In this perspective, it is important to reaffirm the centrality of the PIF, as well as the principles highlighted by the "Blue Pacific Strategy by

38. Such activity provides training and experience to the embarked personnel and helps improve cooperation, coordination, and interoperability. In France, constitutional provisions prohibit any transfer of sovereignty to the authorities of another state.

the primary priority, as stated in the Boe Declaration. A consultation process must precede any decision, made by consensus.

- **Pacific Academy: Imperative for regional coordination**

The Pacific Academy, announced by President Macron during his speech in Nouméa in July 2023, is yet to be specified and developed. This project should be based on a series of consultations with PICs to better understand their training needs, position itself in areas not covered by existing centers, and coordinate with regional partners. The training catalog developed by the Pacific Coast Guard seminar, launched by France in 2021 after the last France-Oceania summit, could be a useful basis for a relevant and tailored offering for the benefit of PICs.

- **Improving communication on SPDMM achievements**

The SPDMM is a unique forum, yet relatively unknown. This lack of awareness may lead to redundant initiatives. It seems crucial to communicate in a balanced manner about the motivations, functioning, and achievements of the SPDMM. Establishing a website that centralizes joint statements from meetings, exercises within the *Povai Endeavour* framework, SPDMM-derived initiatives, and resources such as the 2019 joint study could be valuable to address the forum's lack of knowledge and visibility. This site could be launched concurrently with the release of a compilation of lessons learned, to be published soon by New Zealand, marking the 10th anniversary of the SPDMM.

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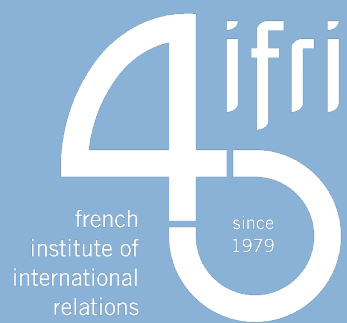
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