

## GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON SELF-DETERMINATION AND DECOLONISATION

### Role of Churches and Faith Communities

Te Ao Māōhi, Papeete, Māōhi Nui | 1–5 March 2026

### STATEMENT

*Ia Atua te Atua. Ia fenua te fenua. Ia taata te taata. Ia mau te pito o te here. Ua maità roa ia. PARAU MAU! (May God remain fully God; may the earth remain faithful to its vocation; may humankind fully embody its humanity; may the bond of Love be strengthened; all is profoundly good. Amen.)*

#### 1. PURPOSE

Gathered under the auspices of the Ētārētia Porotetani Māōhi (EPM), the **Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)**, and the **Council for World Mission (CWM)**, we convene in Papeete to discern, in prayer and public responsibility, the role of churches and faith communities in advancing **self-determination and decolonisation** in a world marked by enduring coloniality, racialised injustice, occupation, dispossession, and economic violence. We are joined by church and ecumenical leaders, customary and traditional authorities, academics, human rights advocates, and — most importantly — those who carry in their bodies and communities the wounds of occupation, nuclear harm, militarisation, and extractive control.

We meet in Te Ao Māōhi not as observers, and not as “ecumenical tourists of justice”, but as participants in a **kairos moment** — a decisive, Spirit-weighted time of truth-telling and alignment. The **fenua** (land) remembers; the **moana** (ocean) and the **vai** (waters) remember; the **rai** (sky) remembers. Reefs remember explosions; bodies remember radiation; languages remember being disciplined; and God remembers. In this place, memory is not passive: **memory is resistance**.

Therefore, we offer this Consultation Statement as:

- a shared confession that neocolonialism, **empire-building, necropolitics, and ecological violence** are incompatible with the Gospel.
- a public theological declaration that **self-determination is sacred right and responsibility of peoples, in accordance with the principle that all are created equal**
- a set of **non-negotiables** for an authentic **Ocean of Peace** in Oceania; and
- a call to **reparative practice, transformative action, and sustained accompaniment**.

#### 2. METHOD

In keeping with CWM’s strategic commitment to **Life-Flourishing Communities and Living God’s Justice**, and shaped by the theological vision of **Mission from the Margins**, this consultation adopted a participatory and dialogical process that moved beyond analysis toward prophetic alignment.

Our methodology included:

- testimonies from communities living under occupation, political dependency, militarisation, nuclear contamination, and extractive economies.
- biblical and theological reflection “from the margins”, where those most affected are not objects of concern but subjects of history and agents of God’s transforming work;
- small-group discernment, collective listening, and drafting processes aimed at convergence rather than competition;
- engagement with people’s movements, customary and traditional authorities, and community leaders; and
- liturgical spaces for lament, resistance, and hope, recognising that worship and witness belong together.

This statement therefore carries both the urgency of lived experience and the discipline of shared discernment. It is offered in humility, knowing that the communities most harmed must remain central in correcting, expanding, and owning what follows.

### 3. FRAMING

#### 3.1 A Māōhi starting point: land, ocean, and Indigenous spirituality as moral ground

We begin where we are: on sacred oceanic soil, in the wider Māōhi homeland (**Māōhi Nui**), within **Moana Nui** (the Great Ocean). Here, land and ocean are not commodities or “real estate”. They are living relations — kin, teacher, covenant partner — entrusted for care across generations.

In French Polynesia, this relational world has been violated by **nuclear coloniality**. Between **1966 and 1996**, France conducted **193 nuclear weapon detonations** at **Moruroa** and **Fangataufa**. The harm is ecological, bodily, spiritual, and political: carried in sickness, contested compensation, displaced communities, damaged reefs and lagoons, and the continuing struggle for truth, remediation, and dignity. French Polynesia remains on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories (re-inscribed in **2013**), yet decisive powers over defence, foreign affairs, currency, and strategic decisions remain external. The “autonomy without sovereignty” offered by empire is not peace; it is managed dependence.

From this Ma’ohi context, we name coloniality in Oceania as more than a legal status. It is a system that normalises domination through territorial governance, militarisation, extractive control of land and sea, demographic engineering, debt dependency, and the slow erosion of language and communal authority. We name this as **necropolitics**: regimes that calculate acceptable levels of Indigenous sickness, displacement, and exposure to contamination, deciding who may live fully and who must die slowly.

#### 3.2 An Ocean of Peace requires non-negotiables

We affirm without hesitation: a true **Blue Ocean of Peace** must be **decolonised, demilitarised, denuclearised, and decarbonised**. Anything less becomes vocabulary that baptises postponement.

Our non-negotiables are:

- self-determination as the right and responsibility of peoples, including meaningful authority over political status and control of economic, social, cultural, and natural resources;
- peoples’ security and solidarity in place of militarised “national security” frameworks that deepen fear and silence affected communities.
- nuclear truth and justice, including recognition of harm, reparations, and environmental remediation;
- resistance to extractive economies on land and in the ocean and a just transition beyond fossil fuels, where land theft, debt dependency, and ecological destruction are no longer treated as “development”;
- truthful naming and identity, where reconciliation never demands that Indigenous peoples surrender name, memory, or belonging as the price of peace; and
- commitment to international law and a rules-based order, even as we build stronger island-led strategies beyond weakened multilateral habits.

#### 3.3 What we have named together: shared patterns across distinct struggles

Across Oceania and beyond, self-determination remains contested, unevenly recognised, or actively suppressed. We named these patterns through concrete struggles, including:

- **Kanaky/New Caledonia**: re-inscribed on the UN list in 1986, yet experiencing “managed decolonisation” where procedures can be acknowledged while substantive sovereignty is constrained. We recognise the profound contestation surrounding the 2018–2021 referenda, including the legitimacy crisis of the final vote held during COVID-19 and boycotted by many Kanak communities. We also received the church’s witness in naming: the 2013 decision to hold together “Kanaky” (sovereign identity) and “New Caledonia” (inherited colonial reality) as a vocation of truthful encounter and reconciliation.
- **West Papua**: where denial of self-determination is intertwined with militarised repression, demographic transformation, and extractive violence. We heard the church’s costly witness as a theology of life against what many describe as a slow-motion genocide.

- **Guåhan/Guam and the CHamoru people:** where militarisation becomes intimate, shaping land, water, housing, health, disaster response, and the everyday dignity of life, compounded by contamination, rising extractive threats, and the continuous erosion of Indigenous CHamoru sovereignty.
- **Hawai'i:** where a presentation argued that credible pathways for self-determination have been constrained by historical and international processes, and called for renewed UN attention to ensure peoples are not “locked out” of peaceful and lawful avenues for self-government.
- **American Samoa:** where we affirmed that self-determination includes a people’s right to determine the timing and form of political change — rooted in the self-determination of our forefathers that secured our communal lands, seashores, and people — while safeguarding communal land and cultural systems of governance.
- **Oceanic kinship - Taiwan as an ancestral horizon in our Pacific story:** Our Pacific identity is not only local; it is ocean-wide. Many of our languages belong to the Austronesian family, and linguists and archaeologists widely locate the earliest diversification of Austronesian languages among the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan, before movements south through the Philippines and onwards into Island Southeast Asia and Oceania). This does not erase older and deeper ancestries in Near Oceania, nor the complex interweaving of peoples along the way; it names one strand of kinship that links us across Moana Nui and strengthens our commitment to solidarity across the oceanic family.

We also acknowledged the role of regional platforms, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group, their consensus decision-making process, convening power, and in sustaining high-level political dialogue on related issues. This includes on the importance of cultural and customary leadership in keeping relationship with land and ocean — and with one another — at the centre of political imagination. By extension, we uphold traditional conservatory practices of terrestrial and oceanic resources, within our lands, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and support implementation of the 30/30 principle, where practically possible.

## 4. THEOLOGY, BIBLE AND CHURCH

### 4.1 Self-determination as gospel truth

For the church, self-determination is not merely juridical. It is grounded in the conviction that every person is created in the **image of God** (Genesis 1:27) and bears a God-given dignity that cannot be traded away for political convenience or economic gain. The biblical witness refuses systems that normalise domination: the Exodus story declares God’s desire for liberation from bondage; the prophets denounce those who trample the poor and seize land and livelihood; and Jesus announces good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18–19). Christ came that life may abound (John 10:10); therefore, regimes that organise slow death are contrary to God.

To bear God’s image is to have dignity, responsibility, and the ability to help shape community life. Systems of domination that prevent people from influencing their political, economic, and cultural affairs oppose this divine purpose. The biblical story of the Exodus reminds us that God does more than just relieve the suffering of oppressed people; He frees them from bondage so they can become a community capable of living in covenant. Liberation restores agency, responsibility, and the chance to live faithfully before God.

We also name **omnicide** as an anti-creation doctrine: nuclear arsenals, militarised oceans, extractive capitalism, and climate inaction together constitute a war against creation itself. In the Pacific, these are not abstractions. They are already tearing through coral, fisheries, subsistence economies, and the conditions for life.

We affirm peace as right relationship, not managed silence. The biblical vision of **shalom** rejects “the quiet of control” and calls for restored relationship — people with each other, with their lands and waters, and with God. The **Jubilee** tradition (Leviticus 25) interrupts permanent dispossession and insists that

land is ultimately God's, held in trust for community and future generations. The church cannot preach reconciliation while refusing to name land theft, occupation, nuclear harm, or militarisation.

A Christian theology of self-determination, therefore, affirms the right of peoples to resist domination and to shape their political and cultural lives, while also insisting that all nations remain accountable to the justice of God. Self-determination is not the final horizon of human destiny, but it can be an important expression of humanity's God-given dignity and responsibility within history. As the church, we are called to accompany peoples in their struggles for justice, to resist systems of domination, and to bear witness to the God who alone is sovereign over all nations and who calls the whole earth into a future of justice, reconciliation, and peace.

#### 4.2 Indigenous spirituality and Christian witness: not rivals, but sites of encounter

We reject the liturgical silencing of Indigenous cosmologies and oceanic spiritualities. In Ma'ohi and wider Pacific worlds, land and ocean are sacred relations; the moana is not an empty stage for imperial manoeuvres but a living body. Theologies that refuse to learn from Indigenous epistemologies participate in the same epistemic violence as colonial governance.

We therefore affirm: **Indigenous law, cosmology, and spirituality are sites of revelation and moral truth.** The Spirit honours many tongues (Acts 2) and does not require cultural erasure for communion. In John 17, unity is the credibility of witness; in Ephesians 2, Christ breaks down dividing walls not by erasing identities, but by reconciling them in justice.

#### 4.3 Repentance and decolonising discipleship

We confess that churches have too often walked with colonial forces — blessing flags, silencing Indigenous languages, disciplining bodies, and preaching spiritualised salvation while ignoring concrete chains. We name this as sin and call it what it is: complicity with empire.

We also honour another story: Indigenous prophets, catechists, pastors, women and men who, grounded in their lands, oceans, and ancestral wisdom, have taken the Gospel as a weapon against domination. Their witness calls the global church away from neutrality. The Gospel offers no refuge in false balance where life is being stolen.

We reject any theology that blesses empire, disguises occupation as “universalism”, or sanctifies nuclear and military “security” while our islands absorb the fallout. A truly Christian and oceanic faith must be **anti-colonial, anti-necropolitical, and anti-omnicidal** — or it risks idolatry in the service of power.

### 5. OUR CALL

In this Kairos, we commit ourselves to common action: accompaniment that is participatory and relational; public theology that protects life, land, and ocean; and advocacy that is disciplined, lawful, and courageous.

#### 5.1 Calls to states exercising colonial control and to the international community

We call on France, the United States, Indonesia, and all states exercising colonial power in Oceania to:

- acknowledge colonial realities rather than hiding behind legal fictions and euphemisms;
- enable the full exercise of self-determination through good-faith dialogue and negotiations with the relevant governing institutions on future political status, with credible international standards and oversight where requested.
- facilitate and ensure the implementation of educational programs to the local communities on the different options of self-determination under the meaning of the UN Charter and international standards.
- ensure fair electoral and consultation processes that respect Indigenous identity, participation, and consent.

- provide reparative justice for nuclear testing, military contamination, land dispossession, and human rights abuses, including health support, compensation, and environmental remediation;
- demilitarise and decarbonise, reducing military footprints, halting new base expansion that threatens communities and ecosystems, and committing to ambitious emissions reductions and a just transition; and
- ensure the permanent sovereignty of the peoples of the territories that claim their right to self-determination, over their data, knowledge systems, narratives and natural resources including terrestrial, marine, aerial, and seabed resources.

We urge the United Nations and Member States to defend and renew international law, including:

- strengthening and resourcing pathways for peaceful self-determination consistent with the UN Charter, human rights covenants, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- reactivating and reforming UN decolonisation mechanisms so that peoples are not excluded from credible and peaceful avenues; and
- supporting implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2021–2030) through regional platforms, including cultural organisations and cross-regional learning among island territories.
- facilitating visiting missions from regional intergovernmental or interparliamentary bodies, or from church international and/or regional organizations and platforms, in the relevant territories that claim their right to self determination.

## 5.2 Calls to regional leaders and institutions

We request that this Statement be conveyed to:

- Chairpersons of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), and their respective Secretariats, to take heed our of our call, and to ensure that these non-negotiables inform the Action Plan derived from the region’s Ocean of Peace Declaration;
- on the PIF and MSG to urgently follow-up with Indonesia on the outstanding visit by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Papuan Provinces of Indonesia;
- on the PIF and the MSG to review Indonesia’s participation in their platforms if the visit by the OHCHR does not materialise by the 55<sup>th</sup> PIFLM, to be held in Palau, from 30 August 2026;
- the PIF and the MSG to strengthen dialogue mechanisms for CSOs, especially churches, and Indigenous communities on self-determination and related issues, and ensure that issues raised are tabled at their annual leaders’ meetings;
- on the PIF and the MSG to urgently seek UN intervention, through *ad hoc* visits, especially to the Papuan Provinces of Indonesia and Kanaky-New Caledonia, leading up to and during UNGA81 in September 2026; and
- the Pacific Islands Parliamentary Assembly (PIPA) Chair and its Secretariat, with a request to present the outcome statement of this Global Consultation during its forthcoming inaugural meeting to be held in Tahiti, Maohi Nui, from September 1st through 7, 2026.

## 5.3 Calls to churches, ecumenical bodies, and theological institutions

We call the church to decolonise discipleship that does not spiritualise suffering but confronts its structural causes. We stand with what many in this consultation named as the **community of the crucified**: peoples and places treated as expendable so that others may benefit.

We commit to:

- truth-telling and repentance, including confessing where mission was entangled with empire, land seizure, and cultural erasure;
- accompaniment and protection of communities at risk, including those facing militarisation, criminalisation, and violence for non-violent advocacy;
- ecumenical alliances for reparations, remediation, and public witness at local, regional, and global levels;
- protection and renewal of language, culture, and memory as front-line dignity and resistance;

- formation for peoples' security: strengthening community resilience, non-violent accompaniment, and trauma-informed pastoral care; and
- integrating decolonisation theology and the incompatibility of empire with the Christian faith into theological education and ministerial formation.

In all follow-up actions, we insist on the full participation of women and young people, and we will strengthen interreligious alliances, including with Indigenous and traditional spiritualities, where this supports life, dignity, and justice.

#### **5.4 Follow-up and implementation**

We recommend a joint follow-up mechanism (CWM–PCC with EPM and impacted churches, including EPKNC), mandated to:

- finalise and disseminate this Consultation Statement / Call to Action;
- oversee development of theological and pastoral resources, including liturgies of lament and hope, and guidance for advocacy rooted in peoples' security;
- coordinate advocacy pathways (local, regional, global), including preparation for future convenings where invited; and
- report back through agreed ecclesial and ecumenical channels, with transparent timelines and resourcing commitments.

We further request:

#### **To CWM**

- continue to engage beyond this statement, including capacity for theological and legal advocacy;
- keep Mission from the Margins as method, ensuring impacted communities remain epistemological anchors, not symbolic gestures; and
- where invited, convene a future consultation in Kanaky/New Caledonia to strengthen solidarity and planning.

#### **To PCC**

- carry this statement as a regional ecumenical mandate, sustaining accompaniment and advocacy for fundamental human rights and self-determination across Oceania;
- continue and, where invited, expand solidarity missions and monitoring, building on precedents already undertaken with impacted communities;
- build on existing opportunities for cultural and artistic (artivism) advocacy; and
- equip member churches for public theology and non-violent accompaniment that protects life, land, and ocean.

#### **CLOSING RESOLVE**

We close as we began: refusing managed peace, refusing postponed justice, and committing ourselves to truth-telling, reparative practice, and courageous public witness, so that life may abound. This statement is not the end. It is a draft of courage — a call to deeper listening and bolder action — offered for Indigenous churches, theologians, activists, and communities to correct, expand, and own in the journey ahead.

***Ia Atua te Atua. Ia fenua te fenua. Ia taata te taata. Ia mau te pito o te here. Ua maitai roa ia. PARAU MAU!***

***Participants of the Consultation***

***Tahiti, 5 March 2026***