

**SECOND PACIFIC COMMUNITY CONFERENCE
NOUMEA, 19-20 NOVEMBER 2001**

**DRAFT WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. THIERRY LATASTE
GOVERNMENT DELEGATE
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
IN NEW CALEDONIA**

To begin, please allow me, on behalf of the Government of France, to wish you all a warm welcome to New Caledonia.

France is, indeed, both happy and proud that the Pacific Community has chosen to hold the Second Pacific Community Conference here in Noumea today.

I would recall that not many Conferences have been held at the Headquarters of the South Pacific Commission, now known as the Pacific Community, at either its original Headquarters just down the road or, over the past decade, in these warm and magnificent buildings.

I am well aware of the reasons and circumstances which led to the Headquarters being designated to host the Second Pacific Community Conference this year, but New Caledonia is both fortunate and honoured to be able to welcome the delegates to such a familiar setting in Anse Vata.

I hope that this Conference will allow our guests, particularly those who have come to Noumea for the first time, to discover New Caledonia, its capital and, if time permits, its different provinces with all their charm.

This will also be an opportunity for you to learn more about the strength and wisdom of the path of peace, balance and development chosen by this country through the Noumea Accord.

I wish you and the Pacific Community Secretariat a most fruitful working session and I am looking forward to meeting you this evening at the informal reception being held at the High Commissioner's Residence, where I hope to be able to offer each of you a more personal welcome.