

Papua New Guinea completes mapping of its maritime boundaries

Written by

Tuesday, 15 September 2015 16:04 - Last Updated Sunday, 20 September 2015 20:07



Media release

8 September 2015

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea – The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon Peter O’Neill, and the President of Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), H.E. Peter M. Christian, have formalised an update to the Maritime Boundary Agreement between the two Pacific nations.

Given the importance of the ocean to economic development in the Pacific region, this agreement concludes an essential step in securing national jurisdiction over marine resources.

This significant milestone was achieved with technical training, support and advice from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) spanning more than a decade.

“I’m proud of the assistance that SPC has provided to our member countries to help them conclude this latest maritime boundaries agreement,” the Pacific Community Director-General, Dr Colin Tukuitonga, said in congratulating the two Pacific states at a signing ceremony in Port Moresby yesterday.

“Of the 49 overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones in the Pacific region, 36 of these boundaries have now been signed in the form of treaties. This means that nearly 75% of the maritime boundaries between neighbouring countries in the Pacific have now been concluded.”

The agreement between the two Pacific states is an amended version of a treaty that was signed in July 1991 but never formally ratified by either country or supported by the exchange of

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diplomatic notes that would enforce the treaty. The 1991 document also did not contain an illustrative chart clearly depicting the EEZ boundary line.

With the significant improvement of technical survey standards over the past two decades, supported by high resolution satellite imagery rather than reliance on topographic maps or navigational charts, field work for the amended treaty was completed in July 2014.

SPC's Regional Maritime Boundaries Unit has been in operation since 2001, and contributes to combined efforts to implement the regional strategic priority of formalising maritime boundaries and securing rights over ocean resources, as identified under the Pacific Oceanscape Framework.

Much of SPC's current regional work on maritime boundaries is carried out in partnership with Geoscience Australia and Australia's Attorney General's Department, under the Enhanced Pacific Ocean Governance (EPOG) grant from the Government of Australia. Other contributors include the University of Sydney, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and UNEP-GRID Arendal.

However, the Papua New Guinea government largely funded their own activities leading to his amended agreement, including significant contributions from national stakeholders such as the Department of Justice and Attorney General's Office, Department of Foreign Affairs, National Fisheries Authority, National Maritime Safety Authority and Department of Lands.

Consequent to the country's *Maritime Zones Act 2015* coming into legal effect, Papua New Guinea will deposit its charts with the United Nations and become the eighth Pacific Island state to declare information about its territorial sea baselines, maritime zones and the outer limits of its EEZ, in accordance with the Law of the Sea.

Other Pacific states to do so are Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau and Tuvalu.

By completing the mapping of its maritime boundaries, Papua New Guinea puts itself in an ideal position to embark on a separate national process to map out the coastal waters of the Maritime

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Provinces and the autonomous region of Bougainville.

SPC is also currently supporting the governments of FSM, Palau and Marshall Islands with further work on maritime boundaries. See [SPC News](#) .

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