

**Media Note****Office of the Spokesman**

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United States-Pacific Islands Meeting

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas R. Burns met September 29 with heads of government, foreign ministers, and other senior officials from Pacific Island nations on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York. Under Secretary Burns hosted similar meetings on the margins of the previous two UN General Assembly sessions and during the May 2007 Pacific Island Conference of Leaders meeting in Washington. The United States has initiated these annual high-level meetings to underline our continued commitment to the Pacific Islands region.

During the September 29 session, Under Secretary Burns briefed the senior officials on broader U.S. strategic goals outside the Pacific and their impact on the region. He expressed appreciation for Pacific Island countries' support in the UN and their contributions to peace-keeping operations. The Under Secretary also underscored U.S. concerns regarding the military coup in Fiji and the lack of concrete progress by the military and interim government in restoring human rights, civil liberties, and democratic rule in that country. He welcomed initiatives by the region, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, to encourage a return to democracy in Fiji and noted U.S. support for those efforts.

Under Secretary Burns and Pacific Island leaders discussed a number of other regional and global issues and had a lengthy exchange on environmental issues. Under Secretary Burns highlighted President Bush's current initiative on energy security and climate change and discussed how the U.S. and Pacific countries can work together on those issues.

Participating Pacific Island countries included: Fiji, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga. Australia and New Zealand were invited as observers. Under Secretary Burns was accompanied by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Glyn Davies, and Director of the Office of Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island Affairs Steven McGann.

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