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PACIFIC PLAN A ``SHAM'' Wednesday, September 14, 2005

A NETWORK of South Pacific non-governmental organisations has condemned the Pacific Plan as a flawed document that ignores the real needs of island peoples.

The plan, drafted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, sets the agenda for regional development over the next 10 years. It will be presented for endorsement to the Forum Leaders Meeting in Papua New Guinea in October.

But members of the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI), an umbrella organisation for NGOs working in 10 Pacific Island nations, have rejected the plan and are urging national leaders to do the same.

FSPI executive director Rex Horoi said the community consultation process for the plan had been a sham.

Mr Horoi said the Forum, in its haste to have the Pacific Plan endorsed, had neglected to ensure the larger part of the population that would be affected by the plan's implementation, were consulted.

Consultations were held mostly in urban centres, thereby excluding the majority of the population, which lives in rural and isolated areas, from the process, he said.

``This plan should not be endorsed because it hasn't been participatory and hasn't addressed people's needs," Mr Horoi said.

``These consultations should not be confined to urban centres, but should reach into rural and isolated communities.

“We reject the plan because the process has not been participatory in nature. For this consultation process to capture the needs, desires and aspirations of the Pacific Island peoples, their needs to be adequate investment in time, money and resources.

“There has been a glaring lack of attention given to critical areas such as water and sanitation, literacy and access to employment and other income-generating opportunities.

“If the Pacific Plan is as important as its architects maintain, then we have much to gain from taking the time to get it right, but we have much more to lose by rushing to PNG and getting it wrong.”

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