



Cook Islands commits to improve connectivity

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Slow broadband faced by many on Rarotonga could be a thing of the past after Prime Minister Henry Puna committed the country to improve connectivity during his recent visit to New Zealand.

Puna, who met with the leaders of French Polynesia, Niue and Tokelau, together with New Zealand's Foreign Minister Murry McCully, signed the Cooperation Arrangement relating to a Pacific International Connectivity Project.

Representatives from the Samoan government and the Asian Development Bank were also part of the meeting which was held last Thursday in Auckland.

The signed arrangement is focused on improving the international telecommunications infrastructure for the participating countries and the resulting economic and social benefits that improved connectivity will bring to the participating countries.

Puna in a statement yesterday said they were making strides in achieving their goal of improving connectivity.

"We have been talking about improving connectivity for many years. Finally, we are taking concrete actions to further connect our people and business with others and benefits that this will bring," he said.

"This is extremely positive and we will definitely work with our partners to make this happen."

The statement says government officials from the countries involved are anticipated to work together to agree on joint requirements and contributions to regional connectivity projects.

By the end of July this year, they will present to leaders solutions for a submarine cable and satellite infrastructure for islands which cannot be served by the cable.

"It is anticipated that the Cook Islands will be part of a submarine fibre optic cable solution. This project will agree on actions to achieve the governments' shared vision of providing reliable, affordable and high speed broadband," the statement said.

“This will ensure that our people and businesses, including those on remote islands, can benefit from planned initiatives such as telemedicine and digital education solutions.”

Telecommunication company Bluesky which controls the industry in the Cook Islands had proposed this submarine cable system as one of the solutions for improved connectivity between these countries.

Bluesky Group chief executive officer Adolfo Montenegro has signed a contract with Alcatel-Lucent to roll out the Moana Cable, a submarine cable system, to connect New Zealand with Hawaii by 2018.

The Moana Cable will connect New Zealand to Hawaii through Samoa and American Samoa, while also linking the Cook Islands to the Samoa hub.

Bluesky plans to expand the Moana Cable to reach Niue, Tokelau and French Polynesia.

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