

FOREWORD

*Gerard A Finin**

It is with pleasure that this cooperative publication comes to fruition, representing the results of a long-term effort to enhance collaboration among scholars of Oceania. The roots of this endeavour can be traced to the mid-1990s, when the Consulate of France in Honolulu began working closely with the East-West Center to facilitate an exchange of scholars. Exploratory trips by East-West Center researchers to French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Paris and Rennes provided deeper insights regarding the extensive array of undertakings that were in progress at various research institutes and universities. Subsequent visits by French researchers representing an array of disciplines provided knowledge of activities and projects based at both the East-West Center and the University of Hawai'i.

Another important dimension in understanding how the strengthening of bonds has evolved hinges on the active participation of leaders and policymakers from French Polynesia and New Caledonia in the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders and its Standing Committee. The Conference's Secretariat, the East-West Center's Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), has served as a hub for ensuring that voices from across the entire French Pacific are heard at regional fora and meetings convened in Hawaii and beyond. PIDP has also hosted a number of the researchers and

* Deputy Director Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Center (Hawaii).

visiting scholars who have come to Hawai'i for various periods of residency.

Perhaps the most exciting new element of the relationship in recent years is the presence of French researchers working at the East-West Center over more extended terms, thereby allowing for longer term planning and sustained research endeavours. One outcome from such efforts is this publication, which represents a first step in highlighting how the organisation of conferences for the exchange of ideas and research findings about social and economic issues in Oceania has the potential to break new ground.

All of these uplifting developments suggest that there is now a collaborative dynamic at work that is steadily gaining momentum. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed, and we look forward to seeing how our collective activities can be advanced in the years ahead.