In 2004, the Pacific Forum Leaders called for action to address the low levels of women in decision making. In 2006, a regional workshop was held in the Cook Islands and one outcome of that workshop was to hold sub-regional workshops in the Pacific on special measures to promote women’s political representation.

The 2006 workshop outcome document recommended some concrete regional actions:

- The Pacific Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to establish a monitoring centre
- PIFS to facilitate continuity of support, including funding and legal advice to member countries
- PIFS to initiate and support further research on barriers and opportunities for women’s representation; local government and traditional leadership, including the roles of women; voting patterns; linkages between women, politics and media
- PIFS to organise sub-regional workshops on special measures for women and electoral reforms.

The September 2008 Port Moresby workshop was part of the Melanesia sub-regional activities, and the main objective of the workshop was to develop national action plans to move the women’s political representation agenda forward in Melanesia.

Papers and presentations from this workshop can be found online at: [http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/sustainable-development/gender/subregional-workshop-on-special-measures-women/](http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/sustainable-development/gender/subregional-workshop-on-special-measures-women/)

**Country Action Plan Summaries:**

**Papua New Guinea** identified short- and longer-term approaches:

- In the short term, working to implement the existing NEC (Cabinet) decisions on provisions to appoint women to 3 seats in Parliament;
- Working to put in place an Organic Law on Gender Equity, or reserved seats legislation of some sort to provide for the election of women to reserved seats in parliament, ready for the 2012 elections;
- As a longer term goal, encouraging a broader review of the electoral and political system in PNG;
- In addition, PNG proposed that a study be conducted to document the establishment of reserved seats for women and the experiences of women in the Autonomous Bougainville Government, for the information and reference of others in PNG and the region.

**Solomon Islands** noted the current Constitutional and electoral reform processes. The Ministry of women, youth and children recommended ten reserved seats for women to the reform review committee. Solomon Islands proposed the production of a simple report on options for special measures in Solomon Islands, which could be translated into the main languages of Solomon Islands for wide consultation. Possibilities to be canvassed may include the ten reserved seats to be elected by both women and men already proposed, split constituencies and other options.
**Fiji** identified that a coalition of government agencies, women’s machinery and NGOs should work together on both short- and long-term strategies to achieve the goal of a minimum of 30% of women in Parliament:

- In the short term, working towards making quotas mandatory through legislation, while at the same time lobbying political parties to adopt and implement voluntary quotas for women in their party manifestos, and lobbying for the appointment of more women to the upper house of Parliament;
- implementing the “gender elections cycle” presently being developed in cooperation with the Office of the Supervisor of Elections;
- a long-term approach to promote constitutional amendments to entrench party quotas in the lower house of the Parliament, as appropriate to the electoral system.

**Vanuatu** – The recent election saw two women elected (no change in terms of numbers of women). Vanuatu participants favoured the introduction of reserved seats in parliament for women. Options include introducing a reserved seat for women for each province and municipality, or reserving a set number of seats for women in each multi-member constituency. Vanuatu emphasised the importance of educating ni-Vanuatu voters to fully understand and support such measures, through mass media and voter education programs by Government and NGOs. Other key elements of Vanuatu’s strategy included building networks, identifying and working with male champions, lobbying and working through political parties and members of parliament, research, and obtaining technical assistance where necessary. Once public support was secured, necessary constitutional and/or legislative amendments should be clarified and pursued.

Vanuatu noted that each of its provincial governments included 4 appointed seats, one of which was for women. These seats for women are not filled due to budgetary constraints. These should be filled immediately following the November 2008 provincial government elections.