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LEADERS HAIL NEW DAWN FOR POLYNESIAN NEIGHBOURS NOW CONNECTING AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

– joint statement by leaders of French Polynesia and Cook Islands –

– ground breaking transnational partnership comes to fruition –

– Cook Islands consumers now benefiting from first ever international fibre connectivity –

– French Polynesia's OPT and Cook Island's Avaroa Cable in extended commercial deal –

RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS & TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA, 23 SEPTEMBER 2020:

Political leaders in the Cook Islands and French Polynesia today paid tribute to the fruition of a ground breaking international partnership that has created the Manatua One Polynesia cable.

The 3600km cable concept grew from a 'twinkle in the eye' of regional leaders into an International Treaty signed in April 2017, and a delivery and operating contract between the four national operators agreed in Auckland, New Zealand in November 2018. The cable installation was declared complete earlier this year, on time and within budget despite the prevailing global crisis.

Today, leaders celebrated the further collaboration between Avaroa Cable in the Cook Islands and OPT in French Polynesia which has put in place the first ever live fibre cable internet connectivity from the Cook Island to the global internet. This will enable the transformation of the internet user experience in Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the Cook Islands, supercharging their connections.

The Manatua One Polynesia Cable Project is the first international collaboration of its kind in the Pacific and has been seen as a future model for cooperation. The initiative aims to transform the affordability, speed, reliability and resilience of regional connectivity. For the Cook Islands, it has been described as a moon shot to the digital economy and a transformational information superhighway.

The complex partnership has been sponsored by the governments of the four Polynesian nations, and delivered by the four national operations. Regional development partners, including the New Zealand Aid Programme and Asian Development Bank, have also played a pivotal role both in facilitating and funding elements of the initiative.

The cable is expected to last for at least 25 years and connects Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the Cook Islands, Tahiti and Bora Bora in French Polynesia, Niue and Samoa.

Honourable Mark Brown, Deputy Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and the Minister of Telecommunications, said:

“The Manatua cable is a crucial investment for the Cook Islands. It immediately delivers on the ambition to provide faster, more affordable, resilient, and reliable connectivity to Rarotonga and Aitutaki. But the impact will be much greater. It’s a crucial first step in unlocking a global digital market for the Cook Islands. It enables frictionless collaboration in business, in government and every sector. It makes our friends and families closer – wherever they are around the world. It will enable our tourists to feel connected, enhancing their destination experience. And it will allow our economy to diversify into sectors previously unimaginable from our beautiful islands. Most importantly, it will open a new era of opportunity for future generations of Cook Islanders.

It is fantastic to see that through the hard work and strong partnership of our own Avaroa Cable and OPT, that the Cook Islands now have their first digital superhighway to the USA. Collaboration and partnership is at the heart of this endeavour. It’s a new and powerful way of working with important learnings for the future of our nation and our region. This agreement between ACL and OPT already shows how the trusted relationship formed delivering the Manatua cable is now being built upon in order to secure the full benefit of regional infrastructure. It’s smart. It’s efficient. And everybody benefits. It’s a triumph of Polynesian collaboration.”

Edouard Fritch, President of French Polynesia, said:

“The Manatua Cable is more than just a strategic and financial investment for my country. It goes far beyond that, since we all decided with determination to join into this venture on connectivity back in November 2018 in Auckland.

It was also a visionary and political choice for the sake of our outer island's population and our children in term of education, medical, aviation and maritime assistance.

This strong partnership between Avaroa Cable and OPT French Polynesia with the support of each respective Government is now able to offer a high quality International fiber connectivity to every individual in both of our Islands in spite of the Ocean that separate us.

This is also a testimony that we have become an advanced window's display not only to our Pacific Region but also to the World.

We might appear to be far from the rest of the world, nevertheless the world is looking on and is anxious to visit our friendly shores particularly in these times of Pandemic threats.

I am convinced that we have taken the right decision to embrace this optical fiber technology to stay in pace of our time.

The Pledge taken from the beginning of the Consortium was to improve international connectivity in the South Pacific Region is a strong desire of the government of the Independent state of Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands and French Polynesia as per the agreement taken on April 2017 between the contracting parties.

'Live long' Avaroa Cable of the Cook Islands and French Polynesia's OPT Group for Manatua Polynesia Connectivity.'

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Further information

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About the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands is an independent democracy comprising 15 islands in the south Pacific of c.17,500 people operating in free association with New Zealand.

About French Polynesia

French Polynesia is an overseas collectivity of the French Republic with 118 islands spread on a surface of over 5 million square kilometers, as vast as Europe. The population is more than 270,000 inhabitants and more than 70% are concentrated on the main island of Tahiti.

About the Manatua – One Polynesia Cable

The Manatua cable is 3600km long connecting Samoa, Niue, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Tahiti and Bora. The cable is capable of operating at up to 10 tera bits per second (= 10,000,000 megabits per second) using state-of-the-art fibre optic technology, enough speed to download 300 high definition movies every single second.

About the Manatua Cable Consortium

The ground-breaking Manatua cable consortium was formed following the signing of an International Treaty in November 2018 between the governments of the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and French Polynesia. The purpose of the consortium is to build and operate the Manatua cable. The consortium comprises Avaroa Cable Ltd (for the Cook Islands), Niue Telecom, the Samoa Submarine Cable Company and Office de Poste et Telecommunications (for French Polynesia). It is the first consortium of its type anywhere in the Pacific.

About Avaroa Cable Ltd (www.avaroacable.com)

ACL is the Pacific's newest international fibre operator providing wholesale connectivity services in the Cook Islands. ACL is a crown corporate entity (CCE) and manages the Cook Islands involvement in the Manatua Cable project and its commercialisation as an international and domestic wholesale operator. ACL has been established, and the independent board which oversees it is appointed by, the Cook Islands Investment Corporation, which is the government body responsible for crown corporate entities and state-owned enterprises. ACL's board is chaired by local business woman Tatiana Burn. Funding has been provided by the Cook Islands Government, the New Zealand Aid Programme and the Asian Development Bank.

About Office des Postes et Telecommunications (OPT) and ONATi (www.opt.pf)

OPT Group of French Polynesia is a government-owned company with 3 main subsidiaries. ONATi operates and delivers fixed line infrastructure and services, is the ISP and the mobile operator; Tahiti Nui Telecoms former international operator is still hosting equipment's such as satellites Teleport, Honotua, Natitua cable landing stations and now focusing on Data Centers and services, sells computers and provides IT services; Fare Rata provides postal and banking services. With its 87 stores spread on a surface as vast as Europe, OPT Group delivers services to all inhabited islands.