

Joint communiqué from Vanuatu and France on their commitment to maritime delimitation.

Posted on 23 July 2025

Mr Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, welcomed Mr Jotham Napat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, for a working visit to Paris, France, on 23 July 2025.

During the visit, the two leaders held bilateral discussions on several topics of mutual interest. These discussions focused in particular on the delimitation of the maritime boundary between Vanuatu and France and sovereignty over the islands of Umaenupne/Matthew and Leka/Hunter. Vanuatu and France had already engaged in two rounds of bilateral negotiations on the delimitation of the maritime boundary in February 2018 and June 2019.

The President of the French Republic also visited Port Vila, Vanuatu, in July 2023. At that time, it was agreed to resolve the maritime boundary issue, including in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Matthew/Umaenupne and Hunter/Leka Islands.

The two States expressed their willingness to identify a rapid and pragmatic solution. Reaching agreement on these issues will promote regional cooperation and bring stability to the already close bilateral relationship, while strengthening it and offering new opportunities for partnership and cooperation.

In Paris, France and Vanuatu committed to maintaining an open, transparent and constructive dialogue on issues of sovereignty related to the islands of Matthew/Umaenupne and Hunter/Leka, as well as maritime delimitation, and to working together to reach an amicable resolution.

The two leaders agreed to instruct their (technical and legal) negotiating teams on maritime delimitation to engage in discussions as soon as possible, with a full mandate to negotiate all outstanding issues.

The two leaders agreed that the first round of resumed negotiations would be held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, this autumn, and that a second round would then be held in France before the end of the year.