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Évènements en 2021

During 2021, the Rapa Nui people continued to face the same pandemic situation that has affected the rest of the world. Through prudence and use of their traditional knowledge, they have managed to keep their island free from COVID-19, thanks to the decision of their authorities to close the airport (the only way onto the island) to all commercial flights.

In February, mainly through a self-organised movement of Rapa Nui women, the people made a series of demands aimed at preventing the national authorities from allowing tourists to enter their territory. The decision to prioritise the health of the local population had the inevitable consequence of creating an economic crisis due to a lack of tourism, the main activity of the island, which in pre-pandemic times used to account for a flow of more than 120,000 people to the island every year.

This situation has been a particularly difficult one for the Indigenous community of Ma'u Henua, the Rapa Nui community responsible for running the Rapa Nui National Park, as this work provides a source of income for hundreds of its members.

To overcome these difficulties and the resulting mass unemployment, the Rapa Nui municipality once more (as in 2020) implemented a successful programme of emergency job creation and territorial conservation based on five key areas:

- boosting food security;
- renovating and maintaining public spaces;
- safeguarding and promoting cultural values;
- supporting entrepreneurs, mentors and local contractors; and
- strengthening the Information, Security and Social Protection System.

This programme has helped more than 800 families who lost their income as a result of the crisis. The socio-economic crisis has been seriously exacerbated by the hike in the cost of air cargo transport on the part of the only airline operating into Rapa Nui and thus, since the second half of the year, the island has been limited to just one cargo flight per week. This has resulted in tremendously high consumer prices which, coupled with the lack of income, has badly affected much of the community. It should be noted that the Chilean government has refused to send food or donations to the Rapa Nui people, despite several requests from local leaders.

In this context, the State of Chile has also been requested to provide air force planes to transport people who need to travel to the continent and return to the territory, mainly for health reasons, but no positive response has been received.

New Chilean Constitution

For its part, during July 2021, Chile began an unprecedented process of drafting a new Constitution, the work of which has been entrusted to a Constitutional Assembly, a body that has nine months in which to complete its work, extendable for a further three months (one year in total). The new Constitution will need to be ratified by a nationwide referendum.

The main feature of this 155-member body is that it has been established on a parity basis and has 17 seats reserved for representatives of the 10 Indigenous Peoples recognised in Chile. One of these is an elected representative of the Rapa Nui people.

Under Chile's current Constitution, the territory of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is protected by a special provision in Article 126(a). Faced with the imminent possibility that this regulation will disappear during the second half of the year, the Rapa Nui people have –through the participation of their leaders and main traditional bodies– initiated work to reach a consensus on a regulatory proposal. The objective is to submit an article to the Constitutional Assembly that sets out the foundations for the State's fulfilment of the Rapa Nui's historic demands, based primarily on Chile's recognition and fulfilment of the international treaty known as the Agreement of Wills. The agreement was signed by the Rapa Nui nation and the State of Chile on 9 September 1888, marking the start of the Rapa Nui's relationship with Chile. The agreement represents the legal basis of the bond existing between the two.

The content of the Agreement of Wills relates to four fundamental issues: the Rapa Nui people's cession of sovereignty over the island; in exchange, an obligation on the part of the State of Chile to respect the investitures enjoyed by the ancestral chiefs, meaning respect for their self-government and autonomy over the island; a right of collective ownership of all the land reserved for the Rapa Nui people; and, finally, an undertaking on the part of Chile to protect and provide for the welfare and development of the inhabitants of Rapa Nui, acting as a "Friend of the place" (Repahoa).

In turn, the Rapa Nui people demand recognition of their status as a Non-Self-Governing Territory, under the terms of Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter, and resolutions 1514 and 1541 of its General Assembly, which grants them the right to embark on a decolonisation process and to fully exercise their self-determination.

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