

# Macron pushes new agreement securing France's grip over New Caledonia

John Braddock  
25 January 2026

After four days of talks in Paris between French President Emmanuel Macron's team and representatives of New Caledonia's political parties a new document, the Élysée Oudinot Accord which proposes to chart a new constitutional future for the Pacific colony, was signed on January 19.

The talks involved Macron, Overseas Minister Naïma Moutchou and leaders of five parties from New Caledonia's Congress; the pro-France Les Loyalistes and Rassemblement-Les Républicains; Calédonie ensemble; Eveil Océanien; and two "moderate" pro-independence groups from the Union Nationale pour l'Indépendance (UNI). The latter recently formalised their breakaway from the main Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) umbrella.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Macron expressed his "gratitude" for the participants' sense of "compromise" and "responsibility." He hailed their "courage" in the face of "unacceptable threats" on social media that he claimed some had been subjected to, warning that individuals who had posted them would be prosecuted.

The summit was called by Macron to break through the impasse surrounding the draft Bougival agreement, signed in Paris last July, which was gazetted by the French government in September. According to the official Élysée-Oudinot statement, the agreement is designed to "complement" and "clarify" the Bougival text.

The FLNKS initially boycotted the talks but a late request by them to attend remotely was declined. The FLNKS rejected the Bougival document at a special conference in August 2025 as offering the "lure of independence" but not full sovereignty. Before the latest talks FLNKS President Christian Tein had declared: "Paris is deaf, it doesn't want to hear anything, it only understands the balance of power, which is why we will not go to the meeting."

Macron's officials insisted that in the absence of the FLNKS the process should still move ahead, claiming that if agreement could be reached it would represent 75 percent of New Caledonia's Congress. Moutchou bluntly denounced the FLNKS, telling the French National Assembly: "Nobody has a right of veto on the territory of New Caledonia."

The contentious negotiations over both agreements followed the seven-month uprising in 2024 by indigenous Kanak youth against French colonial rule. Widespread rioting saw 15 people killed, mostly by French gendarmes, 6,716 people taken into police custody and damage estimated at €2.2 billion. Fuelled by social inequality, unemployment and economic desperation, the rebellion brought alienated youth into conflict, not only with colonial oppression, but with the territory's political establishment, including the official Kanak pro-independence parties.

France's ruling elite was not going to loosen its more than 170-year grip on the strategically important colonial possession—especially under conditions of growing inter-imperialist rivalries and the US-led militarisation of the Indo-Pacific region in preparation for war against China.

Under the Bougival agreement, France retained control of policing, the courts, currency and defence, but with new structures enlisting a wider layer of the indigenous political elite to insulate the established system from further social revolt.

Bougival proposed a "state of New Caledonia" within the French Constitution, including a New Caledonian "nationality," and the transfer of limited powers to the territorial administration. Above all, New Caledonia was to remain embedded within French strategic interests in the Pacific, including France's military base on the main island and its commitment to the US-led buildup to war.

The Élysée Oudinot agreement repeats the pattern of the Bougival project and previous stabilisation measures

instituted by Macron after the uprising. Behind the constitutional wording, the capitalist socio-economic order, including a labour market that discriminates against indigenous Kanaks and extreme social inequality, remains firmly in place. France may convert loans of €1 billion into grants, but this will still be insufficient to alleviate the economic collapse, high unemployment, destruction of businesses and social costs from the unrest.

The transfer of limited powers from France to the territorial administration will require passing a new constitutional law in the French parliament followed by a consultation of Caledonian nationality voters and an organic law in the second half of this year.

Crucial provincial elections, postponed three times since 2024, will once again be rescheduled to the last quarter of 2026. The “unlocking” of restricted provincial electoral rolls to give voting rights to later residents in the colony—the issue that triggered the Kanak uprising—will proceed after the ratification consultation.

The Elysée-Oudinot Accord has responded to a key demand of the anti-independence Loyalist bloc, opening the way to increase the financial and administrative powers for the three provinces. The agreement states that it “may provide for a new division of powers between New Caledonian institutions in order to promote economic attractiveness,” which will likely favour the better-off capital Nouméa.

The agreement declares the signatories “reaffirm their commitment to the principles of recognition of Kanak identity” to underpin a strong “common identity.” This is a transparent attempt to paper over the oppression of the working class and youth. Its purpose is to enmesh a broader layer of the Kanak and local political elite in administering and policing the status quo.

A separate statement was devoted to economic issues and propping up the critical, but failing, nickel industry. It reaffirmed “that only a stable institutional situation offering long-term prospects for New Caledonia will enable sustainable economic growth, a return to balanced public finances in New Caledonia and new opportunities for all economic and social actors.”

That is, to safeguard vital strategic assets, including reconstruction and support to the nickel sector, an anti-working class program of fiscal tightening and structural reforms must be carried through. According to an analysis by *Islands Business*, the plan is likely to require “cuts to public sector employment, restructuring of state-owned enterprises, and reduction of social benefits—an austerity drive that will hit the most vulnerable members of the

community, and may drive further social conflict.”

Accordingly, Élysée-Oudinot will be imposed under ongoing heavy police and military supervision. Currently 15 squadrons of French mobile gendarmes are deployed in the islands, alongside 1,200 local gendarmes and police. According to National Gendarmerie commander General François Haouchine, another five mobile gendarmerie squadrons are on permanent standby, “ready to be deployed to New Caledonia in case of emergency or necessity.”

The FLNKS continues to insist, publicly at least, that political solutions should be found “not in Paris, but here in New Caledonia.” In a media release on Wednesday, it rejected the Élysée-Oudinot document “unequivocally,” saying it was signed “without the Indigenous people” of New Caledonia. The statement further condemned the agreement’s “forceful passage” as incompatible with what the FLNKS deems to be Kanaky’s “decolonisation path.”

In fact, the FLNKS’ failed last-minute attempt to join the Paris talks revealed its real role—along with that of its offshoots in the UNI—as a petty bourgeois nationalist force manoeuvring to maximise its share of state and business power amid the sharp economic crisis. It is not an instrument for working class emancipation.

Formal independence for New Caledonia, while it might boost the status and privileges of sections of the territory’s elite, would solve none of the problems facing the working class and impoverished rural population. Like other fragile Pacific Island countries, it would remain heavily in debt and under the control of France and other imperialist powers.

The colony’s working class must establish its political independence from all bourgeois parties—the nationalists and the loyalists—and must link their struggle to that of workers in metropolitan France and the wider Pacific. Only a socialist program that unites workers across borders can oppose imperialist domination and plunder, and tackle unemployment and social infrastructure collapse.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**