

REPORT BY SECRETARIAT OF WORK PERFORMED IN THE PERIOD
JULY 2006 – JUNE 2008 IN FULFILMENT OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE NOUMEA
CONVENTION UNDER THE SPREP WORK PROGRAMME

Lack of funds under the SPREP Convention means that its implementation over the past 2 years has been carried out by proxy through marine and coastal conservation work carried out under the Islands Ecosystems Programme.

The two Protocols to the Convention on Dumping and Oil and hazardous substances spills are implemented by the Marine Pollution Adviser with funding primarily from the International Maritime Organisation, which focuses on ship-based pollution.

SPREP still participates in UNEP's annual Regional Seas meetings, through which process the Noumea Convention was created and continues to be a component of. Although important experiences are shared by the various regional seas programmes no funds are provided for the regions.

Other major processes or bodies which may be able to assist in the invigoration of the Noumea Convention exist, such as UNEP's GPA (Global Programme of Action for the protection of the marine environment from on Land-based activities) and UNICPOLIS (United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea) – however efforts to engage in these processes have met with limited success.

A start was made in finalising the text of the draft amendments to the Noumea Convention but no progress was made in convening a Working Group to consider the changes (see WP6.1).

A consultancy under the COP 8 budget (to explore linkages between the Noumea Convention and other strategic marine documents, eg. UNCLOS and associated processes) was delayed. It is intended to proceed with the consultancy this biennium in consultation with the new Coastal Management Advisor.

Species Conservation and Ecosystems Management

The following account summarises work carried out in 2006 and 2007, primarily in regard to the protection and management of the marine and coastal environment (article 1 of the Noumea Convention) and the Noumea Convention Protocols on pollution incidents at sea.

The Island Ecosystems Programme focuses both on species conservation and ecosystems management. In relation to the former: 2006 was designated Year of the Sea Turtle and a Campaign was held on that theme, ending in 2007. A series of Regional Memoranda of Understandings under the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals were discussed covering several marine mammals as well as turtles.

In relation to coastal and marine ecosystems the Coral Reef Initiative for the South Pacific (CRISP), with a focus (among other things) on enhancing institutional capacity for integrated governance of coastal and marine resources and enhancing capacity of coastal managers to access to appropriate information, methodologies and technologies for sustainable use of marine and coastal resources got under way in 2007 with the recruitment of a Coral Reef Management Officer to SPREP.

SPREP has begun work to develop a regional framework for the establishment and management of Marine Managed Areas (MMAs) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), in collaboration with SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), with the aim of strengthening the conservation of marine biodiversity of coasts and oceans in the Region. A draft concept proposal has been developed.

In addition SPREP is continuing to support PIC Parties to the Ramsar Convention with conservation and wise use of their wetland ecosystems. Wetlands as defined under the Ramsar Convention cover everything from freshwater lakes to mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs.

There are currently five Pacific Island Ramsar Parties to the Convention and six wetlands of international importance (called "Ramsar sites") listed.

The SPREP Convention Protocols and ship-based marine pollution

In 2006/2007, a number of significant milestones were reached for addressing shipping-related marine pollution issues across the Region. These are part of a long-term partnership between SPREP and its members to improve the environmental management of ports and shipping in the region.

The Dumping and Pollution Emergencies Protocols to the SPREP (Noumea) Convention were reviewed, in order to bring them in line with their equivalent global legal instruments. In Noumea September 2006, a Conference of Plenipotentiaries to the SPREP Convention adopted an amended Dumping Protocol and two new Protocols: Cooperation and Response to Oil Spills and Hazardous Noxious Substances Spills. The amended protocol and two new protocols would come into force once three quarters of the parties (i.e. 8 parties from the total of 12) ratifies the protocols.

Regional arrangements for spill response entered a new phase, with the secretariat providing training in oil spill response and preparedness in 12 Pacific island countries. All National Marine Pollution Contingency Plans (NATPLAN) have been revised and most are ready for approval by cabinet whilst a few only require minor inputs of local information.

The drafting of the Regional Strategy on Shipping-Related Introduced Marine Pests in the Pacific Islands (SRIMP-PAC) to address the threat of shipping-related invasive marine species from ballast water and hull fouling was completed. In Noumea September 2006, at the SPREP meeting all members unanimously adopted the strategy and were fully committed to its implementation. Implementation has begun with delivery of GloBallast Model Training Course in seven in-country workshops back-to-back with National Marine Pollution Workshops in 2007 in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, Tonga, Niue, Kiribati and RMI (SRIMP-PAC workplan TCB1). Other workplan activities could not be completed due to unavailability of funds and will be carried out in 2008 pending availability of resources.

Port Environmental management including Port Waste Reception facilities continued to be major issues in the region with the secretariat providing assistance to 4 Pacific island countries Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga with port environmental management. The six designated regional ships' waste reception centres for international shipping are now fully operational in Guam, Papeete, Noumea, Suva, Lautoka and Port Moresby.