

## **FEASIBILITY PAPER ON HOW TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE AT THE NOUMEA CONVENTION CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

In 1990 the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and Related Protocols (the Noumea Convention) entered into force, the same year as the Apia Convention.

In 1991 the First Noumea Convention Conference of the Parties (COP) was held back to back with the First Apia Convention COP, in the week preceding the 4th SPREP Meeting, in Noumea, New Caledonia. It is reasonable to assume this arrangement was made for logistical and financial reasons.

The practice has continued down to the present meeting. Three changes that have been made in that time:

1. in 1998, the amalgamation of the Apia and SPREP meetings, so that the meetings would be held together on the same day;
2. in 2002, the addition of the Waigani COP, so that that there would now be three COPs held over a two day period; and
3. in 2006, the suspension of the Apia Convention so that the Noumea Convention would in future be held on its own.

The date and location of successive Noumea Convention COPs is produced in Table 1. The SPREP Meeting is held annually. The venue of the SPREP Meeting alternates every two years between Apia and a venue other than Apia. The timing and venue of the Noumea COP occurs when the SPREP Meeting is held in a venue other than Apia.

TABLE 1: Date and location of Noumea Convention COPs

Noumea COP	Yr	Location	SPREP Meeting
1st	1991	Noumea	4 <sup>th</sup>
2nd	1993	Suva	6 <sup>th</sup>
3rd	1995	Apia	8 <sup>th</sup>
4th	1998	Apia	10 <sup>th</sup>
5th	2000	Agana	11 <sup>th</sup>
6th	2002	Majuro	13 <sup>th</sup>
7th	2004	Tahiti	15 <sup>th</sup>
8th	2006	Noumea	17 <sup>th</sup>

Reconsideration of the current arrangement arose at the 8<sup>th</sup> Noumea Convention COP when the meeting failed to achieve a quorum resulting in discussions on how attendance might be improved. The record of attendance by Parties to meeting of the Noumea Convention COP is produced at Table 2.

TABLE 2: Parties to the Noumea Convention and record of attendance at COPs

Party	Ratified or acceded	COPS attended
Australia	1989	12345678
Cook Islands	1987	145678
FSM	1988	1345678
Fiji	1989	12345678
France	1990	12345678
Marshall Islands	1987	125678
Nauru	1995	345
New Zealand	1990	1235678
PNG	1989	1356
Samoa	1990	1234567
Solomon Islands	1989	124
United States	1991	12345678

There are no doubt various reasons why a Party might not attend a COP. One reason cited for non-attendance, was that it creates too long a meeting if put back-to-back with the SPREP Meeting. Other reasons could be:

- travel problems (visas, itineraries, etc.)
- not a priority
- unavailability of relevant staff
- clashes with another event
- funding
- communication breakdown with the Secretariat

The objective of the options below is to find an alternative time slot for the Noumea Convention in order to see if a reduction in days can be achieved. Consequently the Waigani meeting will have to be moved as well, as the idea is to have no meetings at all in the week prior to the SPREP Meeting. This subject might also need to be raised in that forum.

In all of these options, flight availability is the biggest determinant of how long any given delegate will spend at a meeting. Flight availability varies widely amongst countries, and the region is so wide flight scheduling likewise varies greatly from country to country, particularly as between countries in the north and countries in the south.

**OPTION 1: Hold the COPs during the SPREP Meeting**

- a) On the current cycle, when the venue is at a place other than Apia, a Ministerial Meeting is also scheduled to be held. With 4 days set aside for the SPREP Meeting and 1 day for the Ministerial meeting, there is no space to fit in two COPs.

OPTION 2: Hold the COPs during the time when the SPREP Meeting is held in Apia

- b) When the SPREP Meeting is in Apia, no Ministerial meeting is held, thus making 1 day available. Monday is the best day to hold the Noumea COP as it allows time for translation of the proceedings which can then be tabled at the SPREP Meeting. The meeting also can be completed in 1 day.
- c) The Waigani COP will have to find an alternative time and venue.

OPTION 3: Hold the COPs during the weekend preceding the SPREP Meeting

- d) This will mean the same number of working days as is currently the case without a break for rapporteurs, translators/interpreters and delegates.
- e) Timelines for the translation and production of COP reports will be compressed.
- f) One or more extra translators/interpreters may have to be recruited.
- g) Holding the COPs the weekend after the SPREP Meeting presents even more difficulties.

OPTION 4: Hold the COPs during the evenings of the SPREP Meeting

- h) There will be more work for everyone. Bigger delegations will cope better than smaller delegations.
- i) It's likely that more translators/interpreters would need to be recruited.
- j) Free evening time and evening functions will be eliminated for most participants.
- k) After-hours use of facilities and transport will have to be arranged.

OPTION 5: Search for another meeting to which the COPs can held back to back

- l) The synergies of holding the COPs and SMs together will be lost. It will also cost more (translators/interpreters costs alone would be prohibitive) and mean more time expended than under the current arrangement.
- m) Difficulty of finding a meeting that is held regularly, that is also funded and which is compatible with the Noumea COP.
- n) For the Waigani Convention process, the COP could be held with meetings of the STAC and the Steering Committee of the PRC, but funding for these latter meetings is not assured.
- o) Unless the delegates to both meetings are the same, there will be no cost savings.

OPTION 6: Maintain the status quo

- p) None of the options appears to offer as cost and time effective savings as the current arrangement. Holding the meetings together in the current sequence provides synergies and efficiencies and a tolerable workload. The funding mechanisms are also well established.