

**SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME****Eighteenth SPREP Meeting***Apia, Samoa*11-14 September 2007

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**Agenda Item 8.1.2: Capacity Building through the Pacific Invasives Learning Network: Turning words into Action****Purpose of Paper**

1. To provide the Meeting with notable progress being made by the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) since its inception in 2005.

**Background**

2. The Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) is an innovative new initiative in the Pacific region. The network was established in 2005 by SPREP, the Nature Conservancy, the Cooperative Island Initiative on Invasive Species, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, National Park of American Samoa, Conservation International, the Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, University of the South Pacific, US Forest Service, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. A full time coordinator was appointed under SPREP auspices and the network formally launched in May 2006 by the Honorable Elias Camsek Chin, Vice President of the Republic of Palau, who gave the network its unofficial motto "Failure is not an option". PILN is a 2-year pilot which will finish in 2008. The PILN is based in SPREP.

**What PILN is About**

3. PILN is a network of multi-agency, multi-sector country teams who agree to share skills and expertise in the management of invasive species, one of the greatest threats to sustainable development and biodiversity in the region. Teams include members with a long-term commitment to conservation, strong cultural understanding and the potential to act as innovators to increase invasive species management and prevention in their nations. PILN is participant-driven, its activities and agenda are determined by the individual and shared needs of the participants. From the 6 initial founding teams, the network has now grown to include 13 teams: American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Kosrae State (FSM), Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Pohnpei, Samoa and Yap State (FSM).

4. An issue raised at the launch by participants was the need to turn words into action - to get out of the meeting room and get on with the job - recognizing that there is not enough implementation of action plans and that the various national strategic plans tend to lack a “road map” to guide under-resourced and over-tasked agencies towards achieving their goals. Specific needs identified included capacity building in technical and social marketing skills, production of simple and realistic action plans for priority species and opportunities to share practical skills. PILN was seen as offering a means of meeting these needs.

5. PILN is a very successful initiative which is highly replicable. It serves as a model for other groups working on invasive species and other sectors, namely invasive species workers in Meso-America, invasive species workers in the UK Overseas Territories and the SPREP waste management project.

6. Since the launch, the network has gained great traction. Technical and planning advances are shared among the teams, raising interest and generating ideas. Two examples illustrate how the network is functioning:

- Strategic action planning. The Pohnpei invasive species team drafted simple and realistic multi-agency action plans for their key priority species in November 2006. This activity is being used as a model by Kiribati, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, Pohnpei and Palau, who have produced their own priority multi-agency invasive species action plans, facilitated through the PILN partnership.
- Rodent eradication in a tropical environment. Invasive species workers from 6 PICTs learned how to plan and implement a rat eradication project by working together to do this on 6 atolls in FSM, in a PILN-partnered project. Subsequent expert exchanges between participants is allowing them to gain further practical experience and confidence in addressing this common issue of regional concern and share their skills with additional PICTs.

7. PILN supported activities are shown on the following map.

8. It is planned that towards the completion of the PILN Pilot Phase in May 2008, an independent evaluation would be conducted and its findings and recommendations would determine the future of the Network. SPREP Members would be informed in due course.

### **Recommendation**

9. The Meeting is invited to:

- **consider** the work of PILN and **note** its progress towards the completion of its Pilot Phase.