

Twenty Third SPREP Meeting of Officials

4-6 September 2012
Noumea
New Caledonia

Agenda Item 9.4.2: A Framework for Regional State of the Environment (SoE) Assessment and Reporting

Purpose of Paper

1 The purpose of this paper is to seek the SPREP Meeting's endorsement of a draft framework for conducting regular regional state of the environment assessment and reporting. It also provides an update on progress towards developing regional state of environment indicators and support for national state of environment reporting.

2 The presentation of this paper will also include a report on the Pacific Environment Forum, to be held prior to the SPREP Meeting on 3 September, which will focus on monitoring environmental outcomes.

Background

3. The state of the environment report is recognized as an important periodic review of the conditions and trends of change to the environment due to impacts of social, economic and natural drivers. It is not only a reporting mechanism but can be used as a management tool to facilitate good environmental governance and "best practice".

4. SPREP's work on this area is anchored in the 2011 to 2015 SPREP Strategic Plan, which includes the following targets for the Environmental Monitoring and Governance (EMG) strategic priority:

EMG 3.1 "By 2012, a framework for conducting regular regional SoE assessment and reporting together with data access and sharing arrangements established".

EMG 4.1 "Baseline of regional environmental indicators established, including headline indicators for climate change, biodiversity and waste and pollution, regular monitoring implemented, and a 2015 report on regional biodiversity status produced".

By 2015:

- (i) ...national and regional database systems for environmental inventories and monitoring established..."
- (ii) ...a first report on the region's SoE developed and disseminated..."
- (iii) ...procedures for data and information management and reporting established..."
- (iv) ...at least five PICT members have produced national SoE reports..."

The Framework for Regional State of the Environment Assessment

5. The framework for regular assessment of the region's state of environment report that is being tabled for endorsement was an outcome of a regional workshop *"Streamlining Regional Agency Reporting and Linkages to Mainstreaming of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Regional Ecosystem Condition Reporting, 20-21 March 2012"*. This system aims to integrate and streamline national and regional reporting requirements with a view to streamlining and reducing reporting requirements.. The framework is **Attachment 1** *"A Vision for Effective and Streamlined Reporting in the Pacific"*.

6. The regional SOE assessment framework flows from the principles of Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) and, specifically: (a) assesses the state of priority components of the natural environment; (b) identifies the nature and scope of pressures from social and economic activities on natural resources; (c) assesses the effectiveness of different policies and plans; and (d) outlines strategies for addressing environmental pressures and for achieving sustainable development. The IEA process therefore provides answers to five fundamental questions for assessing the current and future state of the environment:

1. *What is happening to the Environment and why?*
2. *What are the consequences for human wellbeing and the environment?*
3. *What has been done and how effective is it?*
4. *Where are we heading?*
5. *What more can be done to achieve sustainable development?*

7. The **Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook (PECCO) 2012** report is part of a series of regional assessments being undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The draft PECCO was circulated in July 2012 to SPREP members for comment and will be jointly published by SPREP and UNEP. The draft PECCO can be downloaded at the following web link: http://www.sprep.org/attachments/reports/Draft_PECCO_June_2012.docx Please inform us if you are not able to access and download the report and we'll make arrangements to send you the report by other means as soon as possible.

Status of the Development of State of the Environment Indicators

8. The key requirement for the state of the environment assessment and reporting is the availability and accessibility of reliable data and information on the natural environment. Data and information need to be collected on the priority components of the environment. Work on developing indicators and related datasets have started with the assessment of the state of Samoa's environment this year. The publication enclosed as **Attachment 2** is an initial report card on the state of Samoa's environment that demonstrates an example of the selection and assessment of priority natural environmental components and cross-cutting issues based on selected relevant indicators and datasets. The PECCO report also provides a list of recommended indicators and related datasets in the "Appendix" section of that report. We will use these and other relevant guidance documents to develop regional state of the environment indicators.

Recommendations

9. The Meeting is invited to:

- **Endorse** the proposed framework for regular regional SoE monitoring and reporting **Attachment 1**;
 - **Note and endorse in principle** the PECCO report as an official regional state of the environment report;
 - **Note** progress on the development of appropriate indicators and related datasets for state of the environment monitoring and reporting such as in Samoa's State of the Environment assessment in **Attachment 2**;
 - **Note** the report of the 2013 Pacific Environment Forum; and
 - **Provide advice** on future directions for the development of the regular regional SoE monitoring and reporting.
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