

SPREP Director General's report to the 2013 SPREP Meeting

It is my pleasure to report on progress over the last year. Our achievements are detailed in the 2012 Annual Report which will be tabled at the 2013 SPREP Meeting and in the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) which will be discussed at this meeting. As you can see we have had a busy year working in support of SPREP Members.

I have outlined our change management process to previous SPREP meetings. This process aims to make SPREP a more relevant, effective and focused organisation responding to Member priorities. This report focuses on the outcomes, not the process, which have included a major increase in the level of support to Pacific Island countries and territories to assist in addressing environmental and sustainable development priorities. In particular, financial and technical support from SPREP to Pacific Island countries and territories has more than doubled over the last 3 years. This is clearly shown in Annex A of the Director General's report which outlines all projects implemented in Pacific Island Member countries and territories in 2012 and compares this with support in 2010 and 2011. SPREP's direct financial and technical support Pacific island countries and territories has increased from US\$ 2.4 million in 2010 to US\$ 5.4 million in 2012, while support for SPREP Member regional level activities increased from US\$ 6.8 million in 2010 to US 8.3 million in 2012.

SPREP's budget has increased from US\$7 million in 2008 to US\$19 million in 2013. We anticipate this budget will increase to around US\$ 22 million in 2014. It is noted that this increase is in project funding, rather than SPREP's core funding, which has remained static since 2003. The increasing budget has been allocated to practical programmes in Pacific Island countries and territories. It is not going towards building up a SPREP empire in Samoa: in fact, salary costs as a percentage of the total SPREP budget have dropped, from 45% in 2008 to 27% in 2013, reflecting the fact that extra funding for SPREP is going directly to programmes in Pacific member countries.

The increase in SPREP's budget reflects the increasing confidence of donors and partners in our work. SPREP values this trust and commits to working hard to ensure we deserve it. The landmark decisions in 2012 by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to support SPREP through multi-year rather than annual funding significantly increases the ability of SPREP to plan and implement long term programmes in SPREP's Pacific Members. This multi-year support is acknowledged with appreciation and it is hoped that other "Metropolitan" Members of SPREP will also consider shifting their support to SPREP to a multi-year basis.

SPREP significantly strengthened its governance in 2012 and 2013 with major reforms and improvements in the areas of executive governance, financial management, and human resource management to improve effectiveness and accountability. SPREP's senior management processes are effective, open and based on consultation. We regularly meet as a full Secretariat and our Senior Management Team is reporting regularly to staff in an open and transparent manner. SPREP's new structure, reflecting the priority areas in SPREP's Strategic Plan, was introduced in 2012 and is working well.

SPREP is now, for the first time in its history, invested in training and capacity building of SPREP staff, with programmes starting in 2012. Our aim is to attract and retain the highest calibre of staff and I am pleased to report that staff retention rates have increased from 76% in 2008 to 93% in 2012. Our accountability has been enhanced through recruitment of an Internal Auditor in 2012 and establishment of an independent Internal Audit Committee. We are the first CROP agency to have this function. SPREP has progressed, slowly but surely, with its application to become an Implementing Agency under GEF and the AFB¹. This process is important for the region as SPREP is fully owned and accountable to Pacific Members.

The "bottom line" from improved governance is that SPREP is better able to support our Pacific Island members in addressing their pressing environmental challenges.

We have increased our technical support and advice to Pacific Members and there have been many visits by SPREP staff to your countries over the last year. It has been my pleasure to have visited 23 SPREP Member countries and territories since starting at SPREP 4 years ago, including 18 of the 21 Pacific island Members of SPREP. I would like to thank all involved most sincerely for your warm hospitality. These visits have provided me with the opportunity to see at first hand the many environmental challenges faced in Pacific Island countries and territories and to discuss how SPREP can best assist.

The ever increasing challenge of waste and pollution poses major environmental, health, and social concerns for Pacific islands and is a major barrier to sustainable development in the Pacific. Recent SPREP Meetings have directed the Secretariat to increase attention to waste management and pollution. SPREP has significantly increased resources at SPREP to this area and have joined forces with the Governments of Japan and France, and the European Union, amongst many others, to help Pacific Island countries and territories better address this issue.

SPREP's 2012 campaign theme of "Clean Pacific" underlined the challenges of waste and pollution, which pose major threats to the sustainable development of the Pacific region due to impacts on the environment, health, water and quality of life. Clean Pacific raised awareness through a range of community based activities in many Pacific countries and emphasised that "every action counts".

SPREP accelerated its efforts during 2012 to support Pacific countries with the management of solid waste through the innovative J-PRISM project, implemented by Japan International Cooperation Agency in collaboration with SPREP. Capacity for waste management was also strengthened in Pacific countries through support from the Government of France. SPREP has also accelerated efforts to help Pacific Island countries and territories better manage hazardous waste, including waste oil, electronic waste (e-waste) and asbestos. Efforts on marine pollution were also accelerated through various activities associated with the review of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN).

¹ Adaptation Fund Board of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Climate change remains the major challenge in our region, with enormous impact on the way of life and livelihoods of Pacific peoples. SPREP has worked closely with partners, particularly the SPC, in developing the Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) approach to ensure climate change and disaster risk management considerations are mainstreamed into national, sectoral and community development processes. SPREP played a key role in convening the Joint Meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change in Fiji in July, 2013, jointly with SPC and the UNISDR² This meeting was a "world first" and has set a clear path and direction towards an Integrated Strategy and Policy Framework for the Pacific region from 2016.

The Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) Project, a joint initiative between SPREP and UNDP, shifted gears in 2012 and 2013, with increasing emphasis on delivering practical on ground climate adaptation projects in SPREP Member countries and territories, in key sectors such as water, agriculture and coastal infrastructure. PACC welcomed a number of other key donors and partners in 2012, including the Governments of Australia, through AusAID, and the United States, through USAID.

Ecosystem protection is proving to be an effective frontline response to climate change, as we have seen in the Choiseul Province in Solomon Islands where many partners are coming together to support the people and government of Choiseul to adapt to climate change. In 2012, SPREP, USAID, GIZ and SPC collaborated on a community-based vulnerability and adaptation assessment in 27 villages throughout the province. SPREP's focus on ecosystem-based adaptation, including coastal protection and ridge-to-reef management planning, aims to support sustainable livelihoods by maintaining intact ecosystems.

SPREP has moved quickly to support implementation of the Pacific Islands Meteorology Strategy (PIMS 2012-2021), following directions from SPREP Members, and have strengthened our capacity to support Pacific National Meteorological Services in managing and disseminating weather and climate information. Progress with these areas was assessed at the second Pacific Meteorological Council Meeting in Fiji in July, 2013. A major programme of support for Meteorological Services in the Pacific started during 2012, with support from the Government of Finland, which will strengthen the capacity of National Meteorological Services in the Pacific. In these areas we work closely and effectively with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and have greatly appreciated their support and partnership.

Work also continued on our renewable energy project, PIGGAREP, which supports countries in achieving their national renewable energy targets. SPREP actively participated in the landmark Renewable Energy Summit in Auckland in March 2013 and this has provided a major stimulus to renewable energy efforts in the Pacific region.

² UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Despite excellent efforts by SPREP Members the loss of biodiversity represents a regional crisis with long term implications for the peoples and environment of the Pacific. Conserving our unique biodiversity and fragile ecosystems has been a major focus of SPREP's work in 2012 and 2013. These issues will be "put under the microscope" at the 9th Nature Conservation and Protected Areas Conference to be held in Fiji in December 2013. This landmark conference will clarify the issues facing Pacific biodiversity and identify the strategies needed to ensure Pacific countries can better manage and protect their biodiversity in the future.

One of our main areas of work is the conservation of threatened and migratory species. In 2012 we were proud to launch the 2013-2017 Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme, incorporating marine species action plans for whales, dugongs, dolphins and marine turtles. This new programme was built on the momentum generated by previous plans and presented new directions based on lessons learnt.

At SPREP the name Lui Bell is synonymous with marine species. All involved with marine species in the region, and internationally, joined with the SPREP family in 2012 to mourn his tragic passing. We have committed to doing all we can to ensure that Lui's enormous legacy is carried on for the benefit of the marine species and people of the Pacific region.

During the year SPREP increased its support for a wide range of environmental monitoring and governance activities in our Pacific members. These were carried out primarily through the EU funded ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) MEA project. The mid-term review of this singled out SPREP as the best performer amongst all participating regions, in terms of capacity built and long term sustainability of approach. SPREP supported the development of new legislation in a number of countries, including drafting new meteorology legislation for Vanuatu as well as the development of National Environment Management Strategies for Kiribati and the Cook Islands.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines were further developed and applied during the year, including in the Federated States of Micronesia and Tokelau. State of Environment (SoE) frameworks for the region were also further developed during the year.

The challenges facing the Pacific are vast and require better cooperation between SPREP and its partners and donors. We recognize the critical role of partnerships to SPREP's work.

Over the last year relations were strengthened through signing MoUs with a number of key partners, including the Secretariat of Convention on Biological Diversity and with UNEP. New and innovative partnerships, such as with Westpac on the Clean Pacific Campaign and with the 5Cs³, are delivering positive and tangible benefits to Pacific members of SPREP and the Indian Ocean Commission to ensure better cross regional cooperation. We have also strengthened cooperation with line agencies and ministries with SPREP's Metropolitan Members and during the past year have welcomed secondments supported by the Governments of France and Australia. Better partnerships such as these are dramatically improving SPREP's efforts to support efforts in Pacific Island countries and territories on environmental management and sustainable development.

³ Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre

I would also like to thank you the staff at SPREP for their dedication and hard work over the last year and also thanks SPREP's host, the Government of Samoa, for its strong and generous support. SPREP would like to thank all donors and partners for supporting and working with SPREP to make the Pacific environment a healthy and sustainable one. We value your support and increasing trust in our organisation. We will work hard to ensure that we have earned your trust and confidence. Thank you to SPREP Members who we as a Secretariat have worked hard to support. We appreciate your wise guidance and your partnership.

In conclusion, SPREP has made considerable progress over the last year in supporting our Pacific island members. We have achieved many practical on ground outcomes for the environment and for sustainable development in the Pacific region but many challenges remain. We will continue our efforts to make SPREP a more efficient and effective organizations that can better serve the needs and priorities of our Member countries and territories.

Annex A - List of all projects implemented in SPREP Member countries and territories in 2012, 2011, and 2010