



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa
E: sprep@sprep.org
T: +685 21929
F: +685 20231
W: www.sprep.org

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The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

Twenty Fourth SPREP Meeting of Officials

16-20 September 2013
Apia

AGENDA ITEM 8.5: Report of the Inter-sessional Working Group on the Retention Allowance

Purpose of the Paper

1. The purpose of the paper is to update members on the work of the Inter-sessional Working Group on the Retention Allowance and to note the recommendations of the Working Group.

Background

2. The 23rd SPREP Meeting (SM) in Noumea last year:

"Agreed that an intersessional working group be established to address the issue of staff retention that is consistent with agreed practices across CROP agencies and to report to the 2013 SPREP Meeting."

3. Members of the previous Working Group dealing with the Staff Regulations were invited to consider this matter again for a report to the SPREP Meeting. A circular was sent out on 24th July 2013 inviting any other Member who wished to participate in the Working Group.
4. The Working Group chaired by New Zealand met on 1st August 2013. Other Members who participated included Australia, Samoa, Tokelau and USA (via teleconference).

Report of the Chair

5. The Working Group considered the submission prepared by the Secretariat (*Annex 1*) on the retention allowance for staff and :
 - a) Noted that 3 of the 4 participating CROP agencies offer a retention allowance and noted there is no harmonised position in the payment of this allowance;
 - b) Noted that the Secretariat continues to demonstrate very high retention rates. It was also noted that the retention allowance should not be the only factor providing incentive for retention, e.g. the Secretariat could build on the Learning and Development for staff as well as continuing to strengthen its performance-based remuneration system.
 - c) Noted the growth in the Secretariat's numbers in the last 2 years. Based on this growth rate, it is expected that the funding required for a retention allowance could increase in next couple of years.

6. In light of these issues, the Working Group is of the view that the Retention Allowance is not a priority staff issue at the moment given that retention rates are quite high. It was noted that a Learning and Development budget was introduced in 2012 and that the Secretariat has implemented a performance-based remuneration system. The Working Group recommends that the Secretariat should build on continuous learning and development as well as strengthening its performance based remuneration system as incentives for retention of high performing staff.

7. Given all of the above, the Working Group agreed that it was not in a position to recommend approval of the retention allowance. It has however requested the Secretariat to continue to monitor staff retention for the next 2 years and report back to the SPREP Meeting in 2015 for reconsideration of the issue.

Recommendations

8. The meeting is invited to

- **note** the report of the Chair of the Intercessional Working Group; and
- **note** the recommendation by the Working Group for the Secretariat to monitor the retention rates for the next 2 years and to report to the 2015 SPREP Meeting

9 August, 2013