

Twenty Fourth SPREP Meeting

17-19 September 2013
Apia, Samoa

AGENDA ITEM 9.4.3: Update on National Environment Management Strategies and Environment Impact Assessment in the Pacific

Purpose of Paper

1. To inform the Meeting of the activities carried out by SPREP (Environmental Monitoring and Governance Division) to review the National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) and strengthen the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process.
2. To seek guidance on SPREP's current and future work in this area.

Background

3. In the early 1990's SPREP in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) undertook a project to draft NEMS for all its members. This was the first time that national integrated environment strategies were put in place. In the intervening years almost no countries have reviewed their NEMS but instead have focussed their attention on formulating and implementing thematic plans linked to Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) such as the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP), National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) and the National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Land Degradation and Desertification. This has led to a theme/sector specific approach that meets MEA obligations but not necessarily focuses on national priorities.
4. Under the ACP MEAs project we revised the NEMS for two pilot countries to come up with a regional approach to NEMS. Unlike in the early 1990s where the NEMS were formulated within a legal, policy and planning void, NEMS development now has to take into account the various environmental legislation, institutions, policy and planning instruments that have been developed over the last 20 years. The approach taken in the pilot countries will be replicated in other members on request and this process has started in Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu with a request recently received from Tuvalu.

5. The EIA process is the primary mechanism for development control from an environmental perspective. Most Pacific countries now have legislation, policy or processes for EIA. Under the ACP MEAs project SPREP is taking steps to strengthen the EIA process, and the national capacity to manage the EIA process, by revising the regional guidelines for EIA, integrating MEA obligations into EIAs and by providing technical advice and support when requested. Countries face increasing and new challenges due to population growth, urbanisation, industrialisation, new challenges, such as deep sea mining and climate change, that need to be addressed through strengthened national EIA processes.

6. Both NEMS and EIA initiatives contribute to strengthened environmental governance as an important contribution to facilitate sustainable development.

Review of National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS)

7. The two countries piloted were Kiribati and the Cook Islands. In both countries the key thematic areas addressed through the revised NEMS are climate change, biodiversity, waste and pollution, resource management and environmental governance. In both countries the NEMS were linked directly to National Development Plans and serve as a guide for to national work planning and budget processes. The NEMS are also linked to and complemented the SPREP Strategic Plan.

8. In Kiribati the NEMS is called the Kiribati Integrated Environment Policy (KIEP) a combined policy and strategic plan that further elaborates on the environment focal area of the Kiribati Development Plan (KDP). The KIEP went through a thorough 2 year national consultative process including outer island consultations. The KIEP was endorsed by Cabinet in July 2013.

9. The Cook Islands NEMS is called the National Environment Strategic Action Framework (NESAF). The revision has again been a long 2 year consultative process including those outer islands subject to the Cook Islands Environment Act. The NESAF is linked directly to the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) and is ready to go through the formal Cabinet endorsement process.

10. We have replicated this process in Samoa and have also started internal consultations in Fiji with the Department of Environment before more detailed consultation within the country. Tuvalu has also indicated interest in starting a NEMS review process.

Strengthening Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Processes

11. All Pacific members except Tokelau have legislation or policy/practice on EIAs. Most countries need technical advice, assistance and strengthened capacity to manage their EIA process. In the early 1990s SPREP put together Regional Guidelines for EIA. These guidelines are currently being reviewed in partnership with the New Zealand Association of Impact Assessment (NZAIA) and the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA). This partnership seeks to ensure that the regional guidelines will follow current best practice internationally, and also to establish a network that regional EIA process managers and regulators can utilise to seek technical advice and assistance. The partnership with the NZAIA will also look at building capacity in various sector specific EIAs in key areas such as mining – deep sea bed and conventional, tourism and roading, as well as Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA)

12. SPREP assisted the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) at the federal and state level with integrating within their EIA process criteria aimed at national obligations under various MEAs. This approach will be developed into regional approach that will be part of the regional guidelines.

Future Work

13. The second phase of the ACP MEAs project will allow the Secretariat to continue to assist countries through the revision of their NEMS and also strengthen the EIA process over the next 4 years. SPREP through its EMG Division will seek to carry this out in-house and through key partnerships to ensure we build the institutional capacity to provide this assistance to members in the long term.

Recommendation

14. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the progress with NEMS and EIA activities; and
- **provide guidance** on future work of the EMG Division regarding NEMS, EIA and related activities

31 July 2013