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

Twenty Fifth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Majuro, Marshall Islands
 30 September – 2 October 20014

Agenda Item 12.1: The Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and Pacific Ocean Alliance

Purpose of Paper

1. To provide an update on implementation of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, and the launch of a key priority initiative - the Pacific Ocean Alliance. This paper has been prepared largely on material provided by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

Background

2. Achieving sustainable development, management and conservation of the Pacific Ocean is a considerable challenge for the region, given that it is under significant pressure from a number of different threats. For example: illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, harmful subsidies and destructive fishing practises; pollutants entering the ocean from land and shipping; the impact of ocean acidification; and, warming ocean temperatures as a result of climate change, all have the potential to devastate marine ecosystems, economies and livelihoods. The ocean itself also poses a threat to the land and people of the Pacific through sea level rise and other hazard risk events that can result in disasters such as tsunamis, cyclones/typhoons, and associated inundation and flooding from storm surge.

3. 2014 is a pivotal year for the oceans, and for the Pacific Ocean and Region. 'The Ocean: Life and Future' was the theme for the 45th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting held in Palau last July. This was one of a number of key events that reflects growing international recognition of the important role of the oceans in sustainable development, as well as the growing concern regarding threats to ocean and coastal resources.

4. Leaders endorsed the Palau Declaration – *The Ocean: Life and Future, Charting a Course to Sustainability* (attached), which calls for increased action and integrated approaches to the sustainable development, management and conservation of the Ocean. In particular, the Forum Communiqué and associated Declaration call for action to address among other initiatives: fisheries conservation and management, including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; maritime boundaries delimitation; potential environmental impacts of extractive industries; unequal distribution of the costs of ocean management; and reporting and knowledge sharing.

5. In addition to being the theme for the 45th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting and the Palau Declaration, Oceans and Seas will be a key issue at the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS 2014). They have also been the subject of discussion in the Sustainable Development Goals Open Working Group, with Oceans and Seas proposed as a standalone sustainable development goal, under a Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Troika, comprising Palau, PNG and Nauru, who sit on the Open Working Group, in concert with Permanent Pacific Missions to the United Nations Head-Quarters, in New York, remain strong advocates for Oceans and Seas in these UN processes.

6. Leaders have long recognised that the ocean influences every aspect of life in the Pacific region, and that national efforts alone are not sufficient. The *Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy* (PIROP) and *Our Sea of Islands, Our Livelihoods, Our Oceania - a Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* (FPO) outline a vision for a secure future for Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) based on sustainable development, management and conservation of our Ocean. The PIROP is the regional commitment referred to by Forum leaders (endorsed in 2002) and the FPO (endorsed by Leaders in 2010) is the implementation plan and catalyst for action of the PIROP.

7. The FPO covers nearly 38 million sq km – an area larger than the moon – and provides a provides a framework for the integrated management of the Pacific Ocean and Islands. It also provides a framework for the various sub-regional initiatives that have been launched in recent years, such as the Micronesia Challenge and large Marine Protected Areas in the EEZs of Kiribati and the Cook Islands, and the western portion of New Caledonia's EEZ that is part of the Coral Sea. The FPO is a globally significant vehicle of international collaboration and provides an example of how the whole of the Pacific Islands region becomes much greater than the sum of its parts, through a collaborative approach by all SPREP members in the following areas:

- Jurisdictional rights and responsibilities;
- Good ocean governance;
- Sustainable development, management and conservation;
- Listening, learning, liaising and leading;
- Sustaining action;
- Adapting to a rapidly changing environment.

8. SPREP is fully committed to the implementation of the FPO, and is involved in several major initiatives that contribute directly to its goals and objectives. SPREP has the lead role within CROP agencies in the following key areas that are fundamental to achieving the objectives of the FPO:

- Marine protected areas;
- Conservation and management of threatened and migratory species;
- Marine pollution, including marine debris;
- Impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity, including ocean acidification;
- Developing new tools for sustainable development, including marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based adaptation.

9. Some notable examples of other work undertaken by PICTs since endorsement of the FPO include:

- Delimitation of maritime boundaries, which for some countries includes possible extension of the continental shelf beyond the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone. This work is crucial to regional stability and for national sovereignty by providing certainty to Pacific coastal States on the ownership and management of ocean resources.
- Initiatives to sustainably develop and manage both coastal and oceanic fisheries. With respect to oceanic fisheries, this includes activities undertaken by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement such as: implementation of the Vessel Day Scheme; closure of high seas pockets; and, various other measures to enforce fishing limits, increase the rate of return from fishing activities and prevent the loss of non-target species.

10. The Palau Declaration included an initial register, listing current and proposed initiatives and commitments on the ocean. As directed by Leaders, the office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, with the support of the Pacific Ocean Alliance, will maintain a register of initiatives.

11. As the Ocean is a cross-cutting thematic development priority, strengthened coordination and collaboration, across and between the various sectors of ocean development and by the range of many, different stakeholders, is necessary. Recognition of this opportunity led Leaders to endorse the development of a regional ocean alliance, facilitated by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, as outlined in the FPO. The establishment and early development of the Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) is being led by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (as host to the Pacific Ocean Commission) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (as co-Chair of the CROP Marine Sector Working Group).

12. The POA will be launched at SIDS 2014. The POA intends to support effective ocean policy coordination and implementation, facilitate regional cooperation of the high seas, and provide support for national ocean governance and policy processes. It will also develop and foster inter-regional cooperation and assess and explore emerging issues to ensure effective coordinated action.

13. Membership of the POA will be open-ended and voluntary, providing countries, private sector, civil society, academic and research organisations, donors, regional and international organisations and other key partners with a central platform to engage on ocean issues and embrace a more coordinated and coherent approach to ocean development, management and conservation at all levels.

Recommendation

14. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the progress made by SPREP and other agencies in implementation of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape;
- **note** the launch of the Pacific Ocean Alliance at the 3rd International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Apia Samoa, from 1st to 4th September 2014; and
- **encourage** SPREP members, observers and key development partners to join the Pacific Ocean Alliance, and assist in the maintenance of the register of ocean initiatives and relevant data and information under the Palau Declaration – The Ocean: Life and Future.