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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 2014

### AGENDA ITEM 6.1: Strengthening Regional Linkages Update

#### Purpose of the Paper

1. The purpose of the paper is to update Members on the progress on Strengthening Regional Linkages, following the decision by Members at the 24<sup>th</sup> SPREP Meeting in 2013.

#### Background

2. The 2010 SPREP Meeting endorsed the concept of establishing a sub-regional presence for SPREP in the Pacific region and requested the Secretariat to investigate appropriate options. In order to facilitate this, the Secretariat engaged David Gowty and Associates to prepare a report on available options to be presented to the 2011 SPREP Meeting.
3. The 2011 SPREP Meeting considered the consultant's report and a Friends of the Chair Group was established to identify elements of the report which required elaboration, including the possible modality of service delivery and other issues. Following this direction the Secretariat drafted Terms of Reference (TOR) for another consultant to prepare a cost benefit analysis of the options for establishing a sub-regional presence. KVAConsult Limited were engaged and presented a report to the 2012 SPREP Meeting.
4. The 2012 SPREP Meeting considered this report and recommended the placement of SPREP contracted Desk Officers in Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands as a trial and subject to funding. The Meeting also recommended that the Secretariat explore partnership mechanisms with the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat to enhance coordination and delivery of services to South West Pacific Members. Furthermore the sub-regional presence was to be explored by the Secretariat in a cost effective manner, with funding from the core budget and other sources, along the lines of the SPC approach in the Northern Pacific.

### **Desk Officers- Terms of Reference**

5. RMI - As at July, 2014, a host government agreement has been signed with the Government of RMI based on thematic areas defined by the host government. A national of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Ms Moriana Phillip, was appointed to the position of SPREP Technical Expert (Water Sector) North Pacific and is based in Majuro, RMI. The SPREP Technical Expert started official duties on Monday, 10th February 2014, and is based at the Office of Environmental Planning & Policy Coordination (OEPPC).

6. The recruitment process for FSM of a SPREP Waste Management Expert is still in progress through mutual co-operation with the Government of FSM.

### **SPREP project based in-country officers**

7. On separate but related developments concerning the sub regional presence of SPREP, the Ecosystem-based Adaptation Officer of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management Division commenced duties on 9 June 2014. The EbA Officer is based in Honiara, Solomon Islands and will implement a USAID-funded EbA project in Choiseul Province in the Solomon Islands. The EbA Officer will also contribute to the implementation of other EbA projects in the region. A host country agreement with the Government of the Solomon Islands was signed on 8 July 2014 and is fully operational.

### **Host Country Agreements**

8. As at July, 2014, host country agreements have been completed with the governments of RMI and the Solomon Islands and are fully operational. The host country agreement for FSM is still in draft form.

### **Partnership Mechanisms for South West Pacific Members**

9. The SPREP Director General signed an MoU with the MSG in December, 2013. The MoU strengthens linkages between SPREP and MSG and is particularly focused on climate change and environment in Melanesian countries. SPREP carries out joint activities with the Environment and Climate Change Unit of MSG's Governance and Sustainable Development Programme.

### **Updated cost benefit analysis**

10. To date only RMI has an officer placed on the ground, whilst FSM is finalizing the recruitment of an expert, an updated cost benefit analysis should be deferred to 2015 to allow more time for a review.

## Recommendations

11. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the developments in relation to the placement of technical officers in RMI and FSM and their respective host agreements;
  - **note** the developments in relation to SPREP project based officers in the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu;
  - **direct** the Secretariat to follow-up with FSM on the recruitment and finalization of the host country agreement;
  - **direct** the Secretariat to continue strengthening its partnership with the MSG to enhance coordination and delivery of services; and
  - **direct** the Secretariat to review the effectiveness of the Desk Officers arrangement, including a cost benefit analysis, for consideration by the 2015 SPREP Meeting.
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18 July 2014