

Annex 1

Communiqué

Journées Bleues (Blue Days) Regional Conference

on Iconic Marine Species Ecotourism

Hosted by the Government of French Polynesia, Tahiti

4 June 2015

THE PARTICIPANTS

1. Attending the Journées Bleues regional conference hosted by the government of French Polynesia and SPREP, with various cofunders, held in Tahiti in June 2015, dealing with iconic marine species ecotourism;
2. Aware of the importance of the growing economic value of ecotourism in the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories and of its potential to bring economic benefits to communities;
3. Aware of the importance of preserving iconic species to ensure the development of the marine ecotourism sector and the need to encourage sustainable tourism activities;
4. Aware of the commitment by our countries to reaching the Aichi Targets and to preserve the species and habitats which support ecotourism;
5. Aware that many of the marine species included in tourism activities are listed as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List or other nationally relevant criteria;
6. Noting that humpback whales and other marine mammals, including dugongs, marine turtles, sea birds, and many species of sharks and rays are given priority for the implementation of management measures by their inclusion in the texts or annexes of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS), and of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
7. Recognise the value and principles of MPAs to safeguard marine species targeted by ecotourism activities;
8. Recognizing that marine tourism may have irreversible effects on iconic vulnerable marine species and their habitat, as well as indigenous cultures, if the sector is not sustainably managed;
9. Recognizing that the long-term conservation of iconic marine species and their habitats and sustainable tourism development that involve watching, diving, swimming with these species requires a consistent and regulated framework that guides such activities at national levels throughout the Pacific Islands region;
10. Recognizing that well-managed ecotourism can benefit both species conservation and sustainable livelihood development at all levels;
11. Considering the need for the SPREP's member countries to collaborate in the field of tourism, to encourage regional cooperation and South-South economic development;
12. Recognizing the importance of the participation of all PICTs, indigenous communities, as well as Regional Organizations, NGOs and the private sector in collaborative action related to the conservation of marine species and management of their habitats.

THE PARTICIPANTS THEREFORE

1. *Note* that the Pacific can become an even more globally recognised destination in terms of marine ecotourism due to its biodiversity, commitment to sustainable practices and traditional knowledge;
2. *Recognise* that ecotourism is a major opportunity for the development of the economic sector in the region, for the benefit of the local communities and conservation goals;

3. *Recognize* the importance of local, cultural and scientific knowledge and practices for the sustainable economic development of this niche market;
4. *Recommend* that actions at the national level be implemented in an integrated multi-sectorial approach;
5. *Recommend* that actions at a national level be implemented with the support of key stakeholders at a regional level;
6. *Endorse* the development of a multiyear programme based on the framework agreed to during this conference, to provide the opportunity for Pacific countries and territories to coordinate efforts and to meet their shared expectations;
7. *Recommend* institutional reforms be undertaken in our respective countries, if required, to support community-based well-managed ecotourism initiatives and directly and indirectly benefiting local communities;
8. *Propose* that institutional reforms be undertaken in our respective countries and territories, if required, to support the conservation of marine species and their habitats with resources generated by tourism sector;
9. *Agree* that the endorsement of the regional strategy proposed by SPTO would be beneficial for the development of marine ecotourism in each country or territory according to local context;
10. *Propose* that each country and territory represented at this conference should consider making a firm commitment to supporting existing, or establishing pilot, marine ecotourism projects combining economic development with marine species conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, according to the framework agreed by participants;
11. *Recommend* that countries and territories represented at this conference put in place a mechanism for all the stakeholders involved in marine ecotourism to regularly exchange information and experiences;
12. *Endorse* the development of an eco-certification label for tourism infrastructures, private operators and travel agencies, along with relevant training programmes, to improve and harmonise the quality and sustainability of ecotourism services and the protection of iconic species;
13. *Recommend* that countries and territories consider the establishment of a regional label linked with the destination Pacific islands, without affecting existing efforts in the region;
14. *Recommend* that countries and territories review and consider the adoption of regional guidelines related to responsible and sustainable marine species-based tourism and ensure its promotion at national and regional levels;
15. *Recommend* that countries integrate community-based ecotourism principles into national development policies and legal frameworks, including raising awareness and capacity building for the local community and tourism industry on preserving marine life, developing this niche for sustainable economic and livelihood development;
16. *Request* the SPREP Secretariat to forward this Communiqué and other relevant outputs of this Conference to the 2015 SPREP Meeting, to Tourism and Environment Ministers in member governments, and to all CROP agencies involved in tourism development and marine resources management in the Pacific islands, and to the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (such as CBD and CMS); and furthermore
17. *Invite* countries taking part in this Conference who are members of such treaties and agencies to also bring to their attention the relevant outputs of this Conference;
18. *Endorse* SPTO and SPREP as the organisations to lead development of the regional guidelines framework, to collaborate in seeking funding and implementing the multiyear programme.