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

Twenty Sixth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Apia, Samoa
22nd – 24th September 2015

Agenda Item 10.1.3 : Ecotourism and Iconic Marine Species

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to advise Members of the outcomes of the Blue Days (Journées Bleues) Conference on ecotourism and iconic species, held in Papeete 1-5 June 2015; and to invite Members to endorse the Communiqué issued by participants and the draft programme developed to take the work forward.

Background

2. At last year's SPREP meeting, the Government of French Polynesia announced that it would collaborate with SPREP to organise a conference in Papeete in 2015, (the Blue Days) to review ecotourism opportunities and experiences in the region involving iconic marine species; and to develop a road map for the future sustainable development of marine-based ecotourism, based on best international practice.

3. The Blue Days conference was held in Papeete 1-5 June 2015. In addition to the generous funding and logistical support provided by the Government of French Polynesia, additional funding was provided by Fonds Pacifique and GIZ, as well as other donors or stakeholders.

4. During the conference, sixty participants from around the Pacific, including delegates from 14 SPREP PICT members, shared their experiences on marine-based ecotourism, and developed a work programme to sustainably grow this niche of the sustainable tourism industry in the region. Throughout the week, there was an emphasis not only on charismatic marine wildlife, such as whales, dolphins, turtles, rays and sharks, but also the fundamental importance of involving local communities and their cultural relationships with wildlife.

5. The delegates agreed on a Communiqué to present to the SPREP Annual Meeting (Annex 1). A programme framework (Annex 2) has also been prepared, in association with governments, experts, SPTO and the private sector, to develop actions in the region including promotion of best practice guidelines, undertaking research, and developing regional labeling.

Recommendation

6. Members are invited to:

- **note** the outcomes of the Blue Days conference;
 - **endorse** the Communiqué issued by the conference (Annex 1), in particular the proposal for SPREP to collaborate with SPTO and the private sector in the promotion of sustainable ecotourism involving protected species by providing advice and guidance on best practice guidelines; and
 - **endorse** the proposed programme framework (Annex 2) to implement actions and to develop best practice ecotourism in the region that will support the conservation of iconic marine species and provide economic benefits to coastal communities.
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27 July 2015