

## **SPREP Director General's report to the 2015 SPREP Meeting**

It is my pleasure to report on progress over the last year. Our achievements are detailed in the 2014 Annual Report which will be tabled at the 2015 SPREP Meeting and in the 2014 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) which will also be tabled and discussed at this meeting.

As you can see we have had a busy year working in support of our SPREP Pacific island members.

This will be my last report as Director General to SPREP Members. In the report to my first SPREP meeting in 2009, I outlined a change management process to ensure SPREP would become a more relevant, effective and focused organisation responding to Member priorities. There were five key elements of this change process: (1) increasing tangible and direct support to SPREP's Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs); (2) improving partnerships with like-minded organisations to support PICTs in the areas of our mandate; (3) improving governance and management of the Secretariat; (4) increasing the focus of science in our programme to improve the advice and guidance we provided to PICTs; and (5) ensuring a sharper and clearer focus for SPREP.

I am pleased at this SPREP meeting to note the results of this change management process. As Winston Churchill once stated: *"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."*

The major outcome from SPREP's work over the 6 years has been a major increase in the level of support to Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to address their environmental and sustainable development priorities. In particular, financial and technical support from SPREP to Pacific Island countries and territories has increased from US\$ 9.3 million in 2010 to US\$ 21.1 million in 2014. This is clearly shown in Annex A of this report which outlines all projects implemented in PICTs over the 2010 to 2014 period.

SPREP's overall budget has increased around three times from 2009 to 2015. The increasing budget has been allocated to practical programmes in Pacific Island countries and territories. Salary costs as a percentage of the total SPREP budget have dropped, from 45% in 2008 to 30% in 2014, reflecting the fact that extra funding for SPREP is going directly to programmes in Pacific island member countries.

The increase in SPREP's budget reflects the increasing confidence of donors and partners in our work. SPREP values this trust and, for example, we have been working hard during 2015 to ensure continuation of multi-year funding agreements with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand after current arrangements conclude in December 2015. This type of funding is significant as it increases the ability of SPREP to plan and implement long term programmes in SPREP's Pacific island members. This multi-year support is acknowledged with appreciation and it is hoped that other "Metropolitan" Members of SPREP - France, the UK and the USA - will also consider shifting their support to SPREP to a multi-year programmatic basis.

We have increased our technical support and advice to Pacific Members and there have been many visits by SPREP staff to your countries and territories over the last year. It has been my pleasure to have visited 25 SPREP Member countries and territories since starting at SPREP 6 years ago. I would like to thank all involved most sincerely for your warm hospitality. These visits have provided me with the opportunity to see at first hand the many environmental challenges faced in Pacific Island countries and territories and to discuss how SPREP can best assist.

SPREP significantly strengthened its governance in 2014 and 2015 with major reforms and improvements in the areas of executive governance, financial management, and human resource management to improve effectiveness and accountability. We are pleased that capacity has been strengthened in these areas, enabling SPREP to better deliver on its mandate for Pacific island members.

The improvements in SPREP's governance and management systems were clearly documented by the comprehensive, five yearly, Independent Corporate Review undertaken of SPREP in 2014. This review noted the significant improvement in SPREP's governance since the previous review in 2008 and that Members view SPREP as an effective and efficient organisation delivering tangible outcomes for Pacific island countries and territories.

The "bottom line" from improved governance is that SPREP is better able to support our Pacific Island members in addressing their pressing environmental challenges.

This growth in our support reflects SPREP's focus on supporting Pacific countries and territories to address their many and varied environmental and development challenges. These include: climate change – identified by Pacific Leaders as the major challenge facing our region; biodiversity loss, with rates of loss among some of the highest in the world for some groups of species; and ever increasing levels of solid and hazardous waste in Pacific countries and territories.

These challenges require urgent and concerted action. Reports to this years' SPREP Meeting outline how SPREP has been helping our Pacific island members to address these challenges, from the community to the international level.

The Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) programme concluded in 2015 and was independently assessed as very successful, particularly in providing practical support and advice to Pacific countries and communities in the vital areas of water and food security, as well as more effective management of the coastal zone. PACC also showcased a number of key issues and areas, such as the application of gender based principles to climate change adaptation.

SPREP has moved quickly to support implementation of the Pacific Islands Meteorology Strategy (PIMS 2012-2021), following directions from SPREP Members, and has strengthened our capacity to support Pacific National Meteorological Services in managing and disseminating weather and climate information. Progress with these areas was assessed at the third Pacific Meteorological Council Meeting in Tonga in 2015, held in association with the first ever Ministerial Meeting on Meteorology.

A major programme of support for Meteorological Services in the Pacific with support from the Government of Finland, (FINPAC), is strengthening the capacity of National Meteorological Services in the Pacific. In these areas we work closely and effectively with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and have greatly appreciated their support and partnership.

SPREP's emphasis on Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) – better management and protection of important ecosystem services as a basis for resilience to climate change – accelerated during the last year through a major new programme in a number of Pacific countries, with support from the Government of Germany. EbA is proving vital to both protect biodiversity and to provide a key front line tool to adapt to a changing climate, as we have seen through our project work in the Choiseul Province in Solomon Islands and in Abaiang in Kiribati where many partners are coming together to support sustainable livelihoods by better managing and protecting nature.

Our work in the area of biodiversity and ecosystem management was significantly strengthened in 2014 with the finalisation and launch of the historic Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region 2014-2020. This milestone document provides guidance on priorities for biodiversity conservation for the next six years and makes us the first (and only) region in the world to have developed a strategic framework to bridge the gap between national and regional initiatives and global conservation agendas, including the CBD Aichi Targets.

The ever-increasing challenge of waste and pollution poses major environmental, health, and social concerns for Pacific islands and is a major barrier to sustainable development in the Pacific. Recent SPREP Meetings have directed the Secretariat to increase attention to waste management and pollution. SPREP has significantly increased resources at SPREP to this area and has joined forces with the Governments of Japan and France, and the European Union, amongst many others, to help Pacific Island countries and territories better address this issue.

Over the last year the PacWaste project, supported by the European Union, has improved management of hazardous waste across the Pacific region. PacWaste has conducted emergency asbestos clean-ups in Fiji and Nauru as a result of region wide hazardous waste surveys. Similar regional inventories for healthcare waste and E-waste promise to yield further benefits to the health of both the Pacific environment and communities.

The growing needs of our Members have seen our work in environmental monitoring and governance growing. Notably, in 2014, we continued our work in the development of State of the Environment (SOE) reports for the Cook Islands and the Marshall Islands and National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) for Fiji, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines were further developed and applied during the year in the Federated States of Micronesia (Kosrae).

These are some of the many projects and activities through which SPREP has supported Pacific island countries and territories to address their pressing environment and development issues. Many of these activities are highlighted in the PMER and other reports to this years' SPREP meeting.

A major highlight of 2014 was the third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (UN SIDS) held in Apia, Samoa. The conference was an outstanding success for Samoa and, indeed, for all of our 21 Pacific Members. SPREP played a central role in this landmark event, including through involvement in more than 50 partnerships arising from the conference.

The theme of the conference was: *'The sustainable development of Small Island Developing States through genuine and durable partnerships'*. One such partnership, that we were delighted to formally announce during the course of the conference, was that our already close relationship with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would be strengthened even further through the establishment of a new UNEP sub-regional office for the Pacific to be based at SPREP.

The strength of SPREP's governance was further underlined by SPREP becoming accredited as an Implementing Entity under the Adaptation Fund in 2014 and the Green Climate Fund in 2015. We intend to use these decisions to assist Pacific countries better access climate and other environmental funding.

The approval of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Medium Sized Project (MSP) in 2015 will support SPREP in seeking accreditation as a Project Agency of the GEF. When that happens we will be even better placed to assist our Members to access resources on environmental programmes across the six focal areas of the GEF.

The continued increase in our operating budget and staffing has improved our capacity in core areas of finance and administration, human resources, information technology, knowledge management and communications, which in turn has enabled increased technical and project delivery support to our Members.

Our Corporate Services Division has overseen the development of new, paperless systems to improve our productivity and efficiency while ensuring a "greener" SPREP. Many new staff joined us over the last year, including our first ever out-posted SPREP Officers in the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and new project positions based in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands through the five-year Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change project, which is being funded by the Government of Germany.

These are exciting developments which will further strengthen the work of SPREP in support of our Pacific island members.

The challenges facing the Pacific are vast and require better cooperation between SPREP and its partners and donors. We recognize the critical role of partnerships to SPREP's work. Over the last year relations were strengthened with a number of key partners. In addition to strengthening our relationship with UNEP we also strengthened cooperation with line agencies and ministries with SPREP's Metropolitan Members and during the past year have welcomed secondments supported by the Governments of France and Australia. Better partnerships such as these are dramatically improving SPREP's efforts to support efforts in Pacific Island countries and territories on environmental management and sustainable development.

SPREP would like to thank all donors and partners for supporting and working with SPREP in our common endeavours to make the Pacific environment a healthy and sustainable one. We value your support and increasing trust in our organisation. We will work hard to ensure that we have earned your trust and confidence.

I would also like to thank all staff at SPREP for their dedication and hard work over the last year and also thank SPREP's host, the Government of Samoa, for its strong and most generous support.

Thank you to SPREP Members who we as a Secretariat have worked hard to support. We appreciate your wise guidance and your partnership.

In conclusion, SPREP has made considerable progress over the last six years in supporting our Pacific island members. We have achieved many practical on ground outcomes for the environment and for sustainable development in the Pacific region but many challenges remain. We will continue our efforts to make SPREP a more efficient and effective organizations that can better serve the needs and priorities of our Member countries and territories.

Thank you, most sincerely

David Sheppard  
Director General  
SPREP

Annex A - List of all projects implemented in SPREP Member countries and territories in 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, and 2010

