



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa
E: sprep@sprep.org
T: +685 21929
F: +685 20231
W: www.sprep.org



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 6.10: Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the implementation of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO) and seek Member guidance for strengthening SPREP's role in its implementation.

Background

2. The region covered under the FPO covers nearly 38 million square kilometres, some 10% of the global ocean, mostly contained within the EEZs of SPREP member states. The health, sustainable development and management of the oceans is crucial to Pacific economies and communities. The Pacific Ocean is threatened like never before by human-induced impacts such as over-fishing, ocean acidification, pollution, coral bleaching and marine litter, including micro-plastics.

3. In order to address these concerns President Anote Tong of Kiribati proposed the idea for a Pacific Oceanscape at the 2009 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting, and the FPO was approved by Leaders at the 2010 Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting. Our Leaders continue to highlight the importance of oceans for the Pacific Islands region, not only at regional meetings but also at global meetings. They advocated successfully for the inclusion of Oceans in key global agendas such as "The Future We Want", the SAMOA Pathways, and the Post 2015 Development Agenda's inclusion of an oceans goal as part of the new Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The FPO provides a framework for the integrated conservation management of the Pacific Ocean and Islands, covering ocean health and security; governance; sustainable resource management; increased research and knowledge investment; and facilitating the partnerships and cooperation needed to support the conservation of this vast ocean ecosystem. The main elements of the FPO are:

- 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.

5. The FPO also reinforces the various sub-regional initiatives that have been launched in recent years, such as the Micronesia Challenge, and the large Marine Protected Areas in the EEZs of Palau, Kiribati, New Caledonia and the Cook Islands.

The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner

6. The inaugural Pacific Ocean Commissioner, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, was appointed in 2011. His successor, Dame Meg Taylor, was confirmed by the CROP Executive in February 2015 as the current Pacific Ocean Commissioner. The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC), housed in the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, has dedicated resources, including an Oceans Analyst, to facilitate implementation of the FPO. The Office works closely with SPREP and is, amongst other things, responsible for:

- briefing and advice on cross-sectoral ocean issues and integrated ocean governance issues;
- administering the Pacific Ocean Alliance, launched at the Third International Conference for Small Island Developing States;
- supporting the Secretary-General of PIFS in her role as Pacific Ocean Commissioner;
- monitoring, evaluating and reporting on implementation of the FPO;
- supporting national ocean governance and policy processes consistent with the FPO when required;
- developing and implementing a communication strategy for the FPO; and
- supporting countries, including Pacific Permanent Missions to the United Nations, with coordinated CROP¹ advice on cross-sectoral ocean issues.

7. Integrated ocean management cannot be achieved without strengthened coordination and collaboration across and between the various sectors of ocean development, and a range of many different stakeholders. Recognition of this challenge led Pacific Leaders to endorse the development of a regional ocean alliance under the FPO. The *Pacific Ocean Alliance* was thus launched in 2014 at the Third International UN Conference on Small Island Developing States. The Alliance is facilitated by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, with secretariat support provided by her Office. The Alliance is designed to provide effective policy coordination and implementation, facilitate regional cooperation for the high seas, and provide support for strengthening national oceans governance and policy processes. It is envisaged that the Alliance will further develop and foster inter-regional cooperation.

8. The first meeting of the *Pacific Ocean Alliance*, in Fiji, May 2015, focused on the issue of Pacific interests in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). The meeting, and subsequent working group of technical experts, began a regional dialogue to develop technical and strategic advice on high seas issues in the context of upcoming UN negotiations on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).

SPREP's role and Implementation of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape

9. SPREP is fully committed to the implementation of the FPO, and is currently contributing to its implementation in the following ways:

¹ Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific

i) Marine Protected Areas

Marine protected areas present tremendous opportunities for improving resilience and food security while achieving conservation of marine biodiversity. SPREP supports Kiribati, Cook Islands and New Caledonia in the establishment and management of their large MPAs. SPREP recently conducted marine BIORAPs (Rapid Biodiversity Assessments) in Nauru and the Vava'u archipelago in Tonga, to support MPA development.

ii) Conservation and Management of Threatened and Migratory Species

The populations of many species of cetaceans, turtles and sharks in the region are at historically low levels. SPREP actively supports members to protect threatened species within their own jurisdictions and facilitates regional cooperation for the protection of migratory species that range through the EEZs of various Pacific Island countries and international waters. SPREP initiated the "Pacific Voyagers" campaign to engage countries as "united in the one Va'a" at international meetings of the biodiversity conventions such as CBD, CMS, CITES. This has inspired and assisted members to make significant advances in conservation of migratory marine species like whales, sea turtles and sharks and attract international support for their efforts.

iii) Marine Pollution

While the impacts of some forms of marine pollution, such as oil spills, are generally obvious, the insidious effects of marine debris are often far less apparent. Microplastics have recently been highlighted as a major pollutant of concern to the marine environment. A SPREP study of SPC fisheries observer programme data on marine pollution incidents across the Pacific purse-seine fleet has produced the first substantive analysis of the nature and extent of fishing related marine pollution in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean and recommendations for addressing the issue. SPREP has an ongoing programme of work to assist our members in implementing the IMO conventions and agreements on marine pollution and recently facilitated the development of a Regional Port Reception Facilities Plan to minimise the dumping of waste at sea. SPREP implemented a marine debris pilot project in Samoa that has since been replicated in Solomon Islands and will implement a regional marine debris project in partnership with UNEP.

iv) Climate Change Impacts

There are several impacts of climate change on marine biodiversity, including the bleaching of corals by high water temperatures and feminisation of turtle eggs by increased sand temperatures. However, ocean acidification is of particular concern. Much of the carbon dioxide generated by burning fossil fuels is dissolved in the ocean, where it forms a weak acid. More acidic seawater leads to corals, fish and shellfish suffering from weaker skeletons and shells, slower growth and increased larval mortality. SPREP currently leads a NZD 1.8mill project to monitor ocean acidification in the region and to develop coastal adaptation responses and policies to mitigate impacts of ocean acidification.

v) Environmental Governance

Many development activities have an impact on the oceans. SPREP provides technical advice, capacity building and training to Pacific Island members for environmental legislation, planning, development control and monitoring of development activities. The main regulatory tool is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, and SPREP is working with Members to strengthen their capacities in regulation and management of the EIA process. SPREP has developed regional EIA Guidelines as well as specific sector EIA Guidelines for Deep Sea Minerals (DSM) and coastal development, in particular tourism.

vi) International Negotiations

Efforts to protect and conserve iconic migratory and other marine species within EEZs may be nullified without similar measures being taken on the high seas. As part of the Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG), SPREP has made a significant contribution in providing advice to Pacific Island Countries for their engagement in the UN discussions on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and now on the Post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Following the 2014 report on Pacific CROP agency perspectives for BBNJ, the MSWG tasked the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (the Office) to coordinate further regional advice on this issue. In March 2015, the MSWG endorsed a proposal to hold a regional meeting on areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). The inaugural meeting of the Pacific Ocean Alliance – “High Hopes for High Seas” – and associated technical working group were thus hosted by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner and organised by the Office with assistance from a steering committee, including SPREP. This meeting and working group helped to i) enhance the regional understanding on issues related to areas beyond national jurisdiction, ii) develop a technical paper on Pacific perspectives and considerations, and iii) inform regional statements and positioning in the UN negotiations process on the new implementing agreement for BBNJ commencing in 2016. More information can be found at: <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/strategic-partnerships-coordination/pacific-oceanscape/pacific-ocean-alliance/pacific-ocean-alliance-meeting-1.html>. This successful application of the collaborative governance frameworks envisaged under the FPO positions the Pacific favourably in the global UN negotiations process on BBNJ, and will stimulate further transboundary cooperation on integrated ocean management in the Pacific.

As part of the collective CROP agency coordination process on UN Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), SPREP and the MSWG have also been providing specific advice through the Ocean Commissioner's Office into the targets and indicators for proposed SDG 14 on Oceans for use by member States. SPREP and the Ocean Commissioner's Office continue to develop additional ocean management activities with international partners, metropolitan donor countries, UN agencies and MEAs, ensuring that these activities are designed and implemented to meet strategic priorities of the FPO.

vii) Marine Spatial Planning

Marine spatial planning (MSP) is an integrated and cross-sectoral planning process for zoning of marine uses, including in MPAs. This is undertaken by engaging multiple agencies, resource owners, resource users and other stakeholders in sustainable use of their coastal and marine areas. SPREP has been a partner in the implementation of a number of related projects such as the Pacific Ocean Ecosystem Analysis Project (PACIOCEA), Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management, Pacific Islands (MACBIO) and Enhancing Pacific Ocean Governance (EPOG). We have also facilitated national marine spatial planning workshops:

- identifying important environmental, economic and social values;
- recognising critical connections within and across social and ecological systems; and
- developing oceans policies, zoning plans and resource use guidelines to support sustainable development objectives and resilient Pacific ecosystems and island communities.

In partnership with the CBD Sustainable Oceans Initiative, French Marine Protected Areas Agency (AAMP), CSIRO (Australia) and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, SPREP is currently developing regional and sub-regional activities to facilitate integrated ocean management, including:

- CBD Sustainable Oceans Initiative Regional Workshop in 2016
- A "Biodiversity Blue Belt" proposal to assist Members to strengthen their shared capacity in marine protected area management, coral reef management and conservation of marine biodiversity in the spirit of the FPO Vision and Framework.

viii) Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Programme (PROP)

The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner is leading, with technical assistance from SPREP, the design and implementation of Component 3 of the World Bank Pacific Islands Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP), which was approved by the World Bank board in December last year. The aim of this component is to help identify revenue streams to sustainably finance the conservation of critical habitats that underpin oceanic and coastal fisheries in the region. Work will be carried out through two projects: establishing financing mechanisms for large scale marine protected areas; and establishing a pilot Pacific Blue Carbon regional program for the conservation of small to medium scale marine habitats.

Ongoing SPREP Role and Implementation

10. In the spirit of the words of Epeli Hau'ofa that have become synonymous with the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape:

"No people on Earth are better suited to be the guardians of the world's largest ocean than those for whom it has been home for generations."

11. SPREP will continue to deploy resources to assist members to achieve the FPO's goals and ensure that SPREP's role its implementation is fully integrated into the new SPREP Strategic Plan, other SPREP strategies, programmes and action plans.

Recommendation

12. Members are invited to:

- **note** the **progress achieved** and **reaffirm support** for the implementation of the Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape by SPREP, in collaboration with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner and other CROP agencies; and
- **provide** *guidance on SPREP's future role in the Pacific Oceanscape*

22 August, 2015