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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 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 25th SPREP Meeting in 2014.

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. The Secretariat engaged David Gowty and Associates to prepare a report on available options to be presented to the 2011 SPREP Meeting. 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.

3. 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 directed that the sub-regional presence should be implemented 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.

4. In 2014 the Secretariat reviewed its modality for implementing in-country projects that require appointment of long-term project staff. The previous approach was to base project managers and technical staff at SPREP headquarters in Samoa, with regular travel out to the countries where projects are being implemented. This 'commuting' from Samoa results in high costs for travel and reduced effectiveness of the technical support, which is best achieved by day-to-day in-country presence for projects that require sustained support particularly at sub-national and community levels.

Desk Officers in Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands

5. RMI - The SPREP Technical Expert (Water Sector) has been in office since 10 February 2014, and is based at the Office of Environmental Planning & Policy Coordination (OEPPC). The SPREP Technical Expert has been instrumental in the improved coordination of donors in the water sector in the Marshall Islands and successful in mobilising and encouraging national stakeholders and partners to coordinate more effectively. This has played a key role in the successful approval of the Water Policy by the Government of the Marshall Islands in 2014 and in achieving significant progress in the water sector. In addition, the SPREP Technical Expert has played a key role in the coordination of SPREP activities in RMI, including through logistical and technical support for missions by SPREP technical experts to RMI.

6. FSM – The Solid Waste Management Expert, North Pacific (SWME) started official duties on 5th of January 2015, and was initially based at the Office of Environment & Emergency Management and more recently relocated to the SPC Office in Pohnpei. The Solid Waste Management Expert has assisted the national recovery efforts after Typhoon Maysak and provided invaluable coordination inputs and assistance for the Pacific Regional Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy (2016 to 2025) sub-regional consultations for Micronesia held in Guam.

SPREP Project Based In-country Officers

USAID Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change Project in Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands

7. This was the first project based in-country appointment following the resignation of the first project manager who had been based in Samoa. The project required a level of in-country commitment that was unsustainable both in terms of the travel cost from Samoa and the personal toll on the project manager's family as a result of his long term absence. A Solomon Islander, was subsequently appointed through international recruitment as the replacement project manager. The project comes to end in September 2015 and the project manager has been recruited to take on the role of PEBACC country manager.

Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC)

8. The 5-year €5 million German funded Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC) commenced in 2014, requiring the appointment of seven project staff. The project countries are Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. In order to facilitate better in-country delivery the project staff have been based in each country, and the sub-regional project office established in Suva, Fiji. The Suva project office houses the PEBACC Project Manager/Fiji Country Manager, national Project Officer, Communications Officer and Administration and Finance Officer; Vanuatu Country Manager is based in Port Vila and a national Project Officer will be based in a provincial office; and the Solomon Islands Country Manager is be based in Honiara at the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology.

Host Country Agreements

9. As at August, 2015, host country agreements have been completed with the governments of Vanuatu, Republic of Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands and are fully operational. The host country agreements for Fiji and the Federated States of Micronesia are awaiting government endorsement.

Partnership Mechanisms for South West Pacific Members

10. The SPREP Director General signed an MoU with the MSG in December, 2013. Since then SPREP has participated in several MSG meetings including the MSG Climate and Environment Symposium; and the Environment Climate and Climate Change Technical Advisory Committee held in February in Port Vila. SPREP will continue to strengthen the working relationship and partnership of SPREP with the MSG

Issues

11. It is the view of the Secretariat that a cost benefit analysis to assess the performance of the sub-regional offices in the Northern Pacific is not feasible at present as there has been less than two years of implementation in RMI and less than one year in FSM. Cost is also a factor: it is noted that the cost benefit consultancy undertaken in 2012 on this subject cost in excess of USD \$200,000 and comparable costs would be involved in another similar exercise.

12. Both Technical Experts for RMI and FSM are funded from the core budget of SPREP. A cost benefit analysis would mean a reallocation of limited funding from the core budget to support a consultancy rather than SPREP utilizing the same funding to directly support members through appropriate technical staffing in both Majuro and Pohnpei.

13. Given this situation it is recommended that a cost benefit analysis be undertaken in 2017 with a report to be submitted to the 2017 SPREP Meeting.

14. The Secretariat will hold direct bilateral discussions with the Governments of FSM and RMI to explore options for a voluntary host country grant in support of the sub-regional presence.

15. The project offices and staff in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji are fully funded for the duration of the 5-year PEBACC project. However, the signing of full Host Country Agreements with these countries enables SPREP to develop other modalities for in-country support should Members agree to expand the sub-regional presence approach in the future.

Recommendations

16. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the progress of the technical officers in RMI and FSM;
- **note** the establishment of the project based staff in the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu;
- **direct** the Secretariat to follow-up FSM on the finalisation of the host country agreement;
- **defer** the undertaking of a cost benefit analysis of the Desk Officers arrangement, until 2017.