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The Pacific environment. sustaining our livelihoods

Twenty Sixth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Apia, Samoa
22nd – 24th September 2015

Agenda Item 6.4: Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Purpose of the Paper

1. The purpose of the paper is to update Members on the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

Background

2. In 2013, a review of the *Pacific Plan* led by Sir Mekere Morauta, former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, assessed the effectiveness of the *Pacific Plan* and whether it continued to deliver on deeper regional integration and cooperation. In May 2014, a Special Leaders Retreat of the Pacific Islands Forum was held in the Cook Islands to consider the recommendations of the *Pacific Plan Review*. A key decision from the Special Leaders' Retreat was the re-casting of the Pacific Plan as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

3. The Framework was adopted by the 2014 Pacific Island Forum Meeting. It has six main sections addressing: (i) a **Vision Statement** for the region; (ii) **Values**: a set of values to underpin work undertaken in the region; (iii) **Strategic objectives**: The Framework presents four high-level strategic objectives for regionalism, which continue on from the four pillars of the Pacific Plan; (iv) **Forms of regionalism**: The Framework sets out a range of options for pursuing regionalism, including coordination, cooperation, collaboration, harmonization, economic integration, and institutional integration; and (v) **Processes for priority setting**: The Framework specifies a robust process that should be followed to support rigorous application of special criteria for regionalism, and well-focused, high-level attention on only the highest priorities for regional action. There is also a set of tests for regional action, which are applied to all future regional initiatives.

Implementation to Date

4. The Pacific Islands Forum Troika – Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau and Papua New Guinea, representing the current, former and in-coming Forum Chairs at the time – appointed a Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR), consisting of representatives from the sub-regions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia; one member to represent Australia and New Zealand; as well as representatives from the private sector and civil society. The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is the permanent chair of SSCR. The work of the SSCR is key to the implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, particularly as it supports the identification of high priority regional policy issues for the Leaders' agenda, in an open and transparent manner.

5. SPREP did not submit an individual submission to the SSCR, but rather submitted joint proposals with other CROP Agencies and partners. This included a proposal related to the Strategy for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (SRDP), developed through the Technical Working Group (comprising SPREP, SPC, PIFS, USP, UNISDR and UNDP) and overseen by a Steering Committee composed of several countries and representatives of NGOs and the private sector, and a proposal related to a Pacific Plan for Regional Bio-security and Management of Invasive Alien Species and Diseases, developed through the Pacific Invasives Partnership. The SRDP was approved in principle in 2014 by the 25th SPREP Meeting in Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands and by the 44th CRGA of SPC in Noumea, New Caledonia.

6. At the SSCR meeting held in Suva from 13 to 15 July 2015 the committee considered 68 initiatives submitted through a public call for submissions, as per the process outlined in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. The priority issues identified by the SSCR and recommended to be placed on the Leaders' agenda for their consideration are:

- a. Increased Economic Returns from Fisheries Activity and Maritime Surveillance;
- b. Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management;
- c. Information and Communications Technology;
- d. West Papua; and
- e. Cervical Cancer.

7. Priority (b) on climate change and disaster risk management included consideration of the SRDP, and a high level statement on climate change reflecting a regional position on the desire for a global agreement in preparation for COP 21 in Paris.

8. The Forum Officials Committee (FOC) met on 12 to 13 August 2015 to consider and provide additional commentary and advice to Forum Leaders on the initiatives put forward by the SSCR. SPREP provided technical advice to FOC during their discussions on the SRDP and further consultations towards a draft high level statement on climate change.

9. Leaders will decide on the priorities for regional action under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism during their meeting in September 2015 in Port Moresby.

10. SPREP supports the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and is working closely with other CROP agencies to support the Framework, as evidenced above, and will continue its collaborative efforts into the future on areas of SPREP's mandate. Within the principle of the Framework to deepen regionalism and provide more space for Leaders to make decisions on a few key issues, there are implications for how CROP agencies engage and support the new regional agenda under the Framework moving forward. SPREP will reflect the Framework in the development of its new Strategic Plan in 2016.

Issues

11. The Framework presents broader governance issues for regional organizations which are being considered in the context of specific CROP reviews. Through the work of the CROP several consultancies in support of the Framework have been initiated or are in pipeline, including the review of CROP working groups which will conclude in August 2015. The review is led by Dr. Jimmie Rodgers, which will provide recommendations to strengthen this CROP coordination mechanism and identify opportunities for greater alignment with the emerging regional agenda. A review of regional ministerial meetings will commence in August 2015 led by the Forum through an independent consultant. The review of regional meetings will assess resourcing requirements for

existing Ministerial Meetings and investigate options to improve their transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. The review will encompass all Ministerial meetings, and will be important to ensuring that these meetings support the Framework. For SPREP, the environment ministerial meetings are held every two years and have been running very successfully. The Secretariat sees this as a useful model for other Ministerial meetings in the region and would welcome general feedback from Members on this issue and specific feedback on how to improve the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of future SPREP Ministerial meetings.

12. There is also the proposed study on regional governance and financing, which plans to identify opportunities to strengthen the collective work of CROP. This study has been deferred by agreement of the CROP Executives in their meeting of 16 July, until the conclusion of current reviews relating to CROP working groups and regional ministerial meetings.

13. SPREP is cautious of the proposed study noting the independence and membership of the governing council of SPREP, given that it is proposed that the study address issues such as finance and governance, which are the direct responsibility of the SPREP Meeting. SPREP has also expressed through the CROP its clear intent that the study should not be a continuation of the Regional Institutional Framework (RIF) and also that such a review must build on and not replicate agency specific reviews, such as the 2014 SPREP Independent Corporate Review.

Governance

14. With respect to the Framework and the independence of the governing council of SPREP the Secretariat recognizes that the Pacific Islands Forum does not include Pacific Island Territories and Metropolitan members beyond Australia and New Zealand. Forum Leader decisions where relevant to the mandate of SPREP, will have to be presented for due consideration to the SPREP Meeting as will the outcomes of studies in support of the Framework commissioned by PIFS and the CROP.

Recommendation

15. The meeting is invited to:

- **note** the update on the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and its implications for SPREP.
- **provide** advice and guidance on any of the matters covered above