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

## Fourteenth meeting of the Noumea Convention

**Fourteenth ordinary meeting of the contracting parties to the convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and related protocols (Noumea Convention)**

Apia, Samoa  
14- September 2017

### **REPORT OF SECRETARIAT OF WORK PERFORMED IN THE PERIOD JULY 2015 – JUNE 2017 IN RELATION TO THE NOUMEA CONVENTION AND PROTOCOLS**

1. Implementation of the Noumea Convention over the recent two years since CoP-13 (2015 and 2016) has been carried out under the following areas:
  - marine and coastal conservation work as part of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management Programme,
  - environmental impact assessment (EIA) work as part of the Environmental Monitoring and Governance Programme, and
  - marine pollution work as part of the Waste Management and Pollution Control Programme.
2. Legal advice, as a cross-programme service is provided following requests from countries. Strong linkages are seen to efforts aligned to the Pacific Oceanscape Framework, and the Secretariat is an active member of the CROP agency Marine Sector Working Group, working to advance integrated land and sea management.
3. Implementation of the two Convention Protocols on Dumping and Oil Spills has been carried out by the Pollution Adviser with funding mainly from the International Maritime Organisation which is primarily focused on ship-sourced marine pollution.
4. Over the last 12 months there has been a significant focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly support to the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (UN Ocean Conference).
5. The Noumea Convention has two main sources of funding comprising:
  - i) contributions from Parties (which support the biennial Conference of the Parties), and
  - ii) an operating budget for activities under the Convention (which largely consists of an annual contribution to the Convention through contributions to the Secretariat from the United States of America).
6. SPREP continues to collaborate with UN Environment Pacific sub-regional office, particularly on marine pollution and marine debris, as well as marine and coastal ecosystem-based planning and management, and environmental governance, including strengthening EIA.

## **Article 6: Pollution from Vessels**

7. The Secretariat assisted seven Pacific island countries develop their national ballast water management strategies. Ballast water is the sea water that is used by ships to help them stabilize and balance. Globally, it is estimated that 7,000 species are carried around the world in ballast water every day, with 10 billion tonnes of ballast water transferred each year. For the last two years the secretariat has worked in close partnership with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to address the spread of marine invasive species through international ships in the Pacific region. The issue was discussed at special workshops made possible with funding support from IMO conducted in Samoa, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Tonga, and Republic of the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji.
8. In partnership and with funding support from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme, and the Fiji Government's Maritime Safety Authority (MSAF), the Secretariat was able to procure oil spill response equipment for four locations in Fiji of a total value of NZD 750,000.00. This assistance has enabled Fiji to meet its obligations under the Noumea Convention for marine spill preparedness and response.
9. In 2015 the secretariat worked with a number of Pacific islands members and the IMO to lay the foundation for the development of the Pacific's first Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), a global mechanism, developed by IMO, to mitigate or eliminate the impacts of international shipping on sensitive marine environments. In 2016 Papua New Guinea made history by having the Jomard passage declared as a PSSA – a first for Pacific islands.
10. Shipping pollution is regulated under MARPOL which prohibits the discharge of all garbage at sea except for food waste. The Secretariat has been able to analyse over 10,000 MARPOL violations from 2013-2015 made possible through the SPC/FFA Observer programme GEN6 form. Plastic discharge attributed to 71% of the incidents and around 70% of incidents were from vessels flagged by distance water fishing nations. The data is skewed towards purse seiners who have 100% observers within Pacific island countries and make up just half of all licensed fishing vessels registered in the WCPFC region. Of this 3,104 fishing vessels registered in 2013, 1503 were purse seiner vessels, with around 252 purse seiners registered under Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA).

## **Article 7: Pollution from land based sources**

11. In the period of 2015 and 2016 there was a surge in activities to address marine litter in the Noumea Convention area - particularly addressing land based sources of marine litter which contributes an estimated 80% of total marine litter. Following on from the Samoa Marine Litter demonstration project where trash booms were installed at two of the main rivers leading into Apia harbor, a similar project was carried out at the Matanikau River in Honiara Solomon Islands. This was part of the Matanikau river health project in partnership with the Solomon Islands department of environment, Honiara City Council and other stakeholders. The Secretariat was also able to support several country coastal cleanup activities.
12. Through Noumea Convention funding support the secretariat has been able to have a study conducted on plastic ingestion by fish in the South Pacific. Samples were analyzed across the region from New Zealand, Samoa, Tahiti and Rapa Nui that showed that 97% of the species tested had ingested plastic. This is 30% more than the global average of 67% plastic ingestion.

This is truly alarming considering that the average Pacific islander consumes four times as much fish as the average global citizen.

#### **Article 8: Pollution from sea-bed activities**

13. A strong partnership was developed and maintained with the SPC-EU Deep Sea Minerals (DSM) Project, which concluded in December 2016. SPREP's expertise in the areas of environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA was particularly welcomed), and contributed to SPREP being invited as a member of the expert panel that reviewed the draft Regional Environmental Management Framework for Deep Sea Minerals Exploration and Exploitation, and the Guidelines for Deep Sea Minerals Scientific Research, both of which were published in 2016. SPREP input contributed to strengthening the EIA and SEA sections of these publications. SPREP was also asked to deliver presentations on EIA, SEA and Risk Assessment, and Environmental Best Practice and the Precautionary Approach, at the DSM Regional Environment Workshop held in Fiji, October 2016. These presentations provided an opportunity for SPREP to promote its Regional EIA Guidelines as well as its national EIA capacity-building and technical back-stopping (see Article 16 below), and were well-received by the national government officers in attendance at the Workshop.
14. SPREP was the lead author on a paper with SPC on actions required to strengthen the EIA process in Pacific island countries for effective management of DSM development. The paper was published in 2016 in the journal, Marine Policy, and its findings have been used as technical input to support interventions by Pacific island countries during Preparatory Committee meetings for an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
15. In January 2017 SPREP applied for observer status with the International Seabed Authority (ISA), highlighting its unique environmental mandate within the Pacific region and its broad portfolio of ocean responsibilities, including ocean monitoring and observation, ocean acidification, protection of threatened and migratory species, marine pollution and debris reduction and protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. SPREP also highlighted its regional capacity-building work with tools and approaches such as EIA, SEA, marine spatial planning, ecosystem-based management and marine protected areas, which are all relevant to the management of resources and activities within the Area. SPREP understands its observer status application has been approved at the 23rd Session of the ISA, held from 8-18 August 2017, and is awaiting formal confirmation.
16. In March 2017 SPREP provided feedback on the DSM regional agreement, drafted by SPC. SPREP comments highlighted the need for the agreement to address the precautionary approach, the polluter pays principle, the establishment of a pollution fund, and provisions for independent monitoring of DSM activities; and also expressed caution about the practical application of biodiversity offsets in a DSM context. SPREP is yet to receive an update on the status of the draft DSM regional agreement.

#### **Article 10: Disposal of wastes**

17. The Secretariat did not receive any requests for assistance in respect of disposal of waste at sea.

### **Article 11: Storage of toxic and hazardous wastes**

18. In 2015 and 2016 the Secretariat completed an assessment of used oil and pesticides in 13 Pacific islands countries. This was made possible with funding support from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under the Solid waste project and the UPOPs projects respectively. The project allowed for the assessment of used oil and pesticides imports, stockpiles and disposal practices. And developed cost benefit analysis of management options as well as a draft model legislation that implements an extended producer responsibility.

### **Article 13: Pollution from Mining and Coastal Erosion**

19. Refer to DSM report under Article 8.
20. In May 2017, as part of an EIA training workshop in the Cook Islands, SPREP led a brainstorming session to support the development of national sand mining guidelines. SPREP will continue to work with the Cook Islands National Environment Service, over the coming twelve months to further develop and finalise the guidelines. The Cook Islands sand mining guidelines will serve as a model for the region, and they reflect SPREP's increasing emphasis on delivering targeted EIA capacity-building and technical support for specific development sectors.

### **Article 14: Specially Protected Areas and Protection of Wild Fauna and Flora**

21. SPREP Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management Division operates key programmes on Island and Ocean Ecosystems (Biodiversity, Coastal & Marine and Ecosystem based adaptation), and Threatened and Migratory Species and Invasive Species. Activities included:

#### ***Island and Ocean Ecosystems***

- Completed the biodiversity rapid assessment of the Cloud Forest of Rarotonga, providing the basis for development of a Management Plan to protect and conserve the cloud forest.
- Eleven members of the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation signed the new PIRT Agreement symbolizing their continued and renewed commitment to the work of the Roundtable and support for the implementation of the Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific islands region 2014-2020.
- Supported the CBD Capacity Building Workshop on Aichi Targets 11 and 12 which produced draft national roadmaps for protected areas.
- SPREP regional protected area programme launched at CBD COP13 in Mexico. This programme consolidates SPREP activities supporting Members in implementing their national protected area priorities.
- Protected area related news, events, training, funding and employment opportunities are also updated on the Pacific Islands Protected Area Portal (PIPAP) and disseminated through PIPAP listserver on a weekly basis.
- Participatory 3 Dimensional Models produced for islands and catchments in Tonga (Eua Island, Vava'u), Fiji (Taveuni Island), Nauru and Cook Islands (Rarotonga).
- Signed Project Cooperation Agreement with UNEP for new regional UNEP-GEF SPREP ABS project, to commence in 2017.

- Open Standards for Conservation Planning tools introduced to GEFPAS Integrated Island Biodiversity Project Coordinators and biodiversity officers from Cook Islands, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu.
- Promoted mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into agriculture production in Samoa and at the regional level through workshops, side events and launch of the FAO-SPREP-SPC publication *Mainstreaming Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity into the Agricultural Production and Management in the Pacific Islands*.
- Nauru completed its first national wetlands inventory and also a management plan for the conservation of the Anabar. Ijuw wetland sites;
- Recent years have seen rapid growth in the number of designations of marine protected areas, with several new large MPAs over EEZ waters. SPREP and our partners continue to build capacity for effective management of these areas, however achieving and measuring effective MPA management is challenging.
- "Biodiversity Blue Belt" project established with Agence Francaise pour la Biodiversite (AFB ex AAMP) to enhance capacity in MPA management in all four Pacific OCT members.
- Engaging several countries in the use of marine spatial planning tools and processes by leveraging synergies across projects such as EPOG, MACBIO, PACIOCEA and BIOPAMA: in Samoa, Nauru, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Kiribati.
- Training in use of SPREP environment spatial information platform (ESIS), and application of spatial data in descriptions of marine bioregions and marine spatial planning.
- Regional Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) Meeting and Sustainable Oceans Initiative (SOI) Workshop on integrated ocean management held in Apia with key industry sectors, CROPs and all SPREP Members, for multi-sector planning and management at EEZ and regional scales.
- Technical input through the Marine Sector Working Group and Pacific Ocean Alliance has enabled countries to prepare strong positions on the needs of Pacific SIDS in global negotiations such as the UN process on ABNJ-BBNJ and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators.
- Contributions to production of the UN Environment Regional Seas Programme Implementation Plan, to address SPREP member priorities on oceans and coral reefs.
- Assisted development of 2017 Action Framework for the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, to identify strategies and actions that will benefit SPREP Members in coastal and marine environmental management (FPO – Actions 5D,6A, 6B).
- Signed and commenced partnership MOU with UK Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) with assistance to Vanuatu in coastal water quality monitoring.
- Five new trainees from SPREP Member countries completed the 2016 Coral Reef Management Fellowship Programme held at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- Pacific GCRMN (Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network) Workshop, convened with UNEP and CRIOBE to develop a database and key issues for a Pacific islands coral reef status and trends update.

- Assisting Kiribati, Palau, Vanuatu to update Ramsar Site data and identify priority wetland sites for future Ramsar designation and management focus.
- Briefings and guidance to Pacific Island Parties in negotiations and deliberations at Ramsar COP13.
- Assistance towards the promotion and coordination of annual World Wetlands Day national celebratory activities throughout the region;
- Support provided to Kiribati, Niue and Tonga and Vanuatu on preparations for joining the Ramsar Convention. Assistance to the Republic of the Marshall Islands to undertake community consultations and field surveys related to the designation of their second wetland of international importance, Namdrik Atoll.
- Watershed management, waste management and water supply EbA activities implemented in Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands
- Ecosystem based adaptation (EbA) Cost benefit Analysis conducted for Lami Town, Fiji, with a synthesis and technical tool for use in small island states.
- Ecosystem and socio-economic resilience analysis and mapping (ESRAM) completed for Port Vila, to inform options for ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.

### ***Threatened and Migratory Species***

- Appointment of Shark and Ray Conservation Officer and signing agreement with Pew Charitable Trusts to promote the conservation of sharks and rays by SPREP members
- Delivering the regional Blue Days conference in French Polynesia to promote conservation of threatened species by supporting development of ecotourism opportunities for communities
- NZODA funded turtle conservation initiative empowered communities in Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands
- Agreement reached in principle with the EU to support a 5-year programme to mitigate turtle by-catch in commercial fisheries.
- CITES COP 17 listed 9 species of mobula rays, 4 species of sharks and the family Nautilidae on Appendix II.
- Tonga joined CITES as 183rd State Party.
- Successful CBD/CITES pre-COP meeting convened for SPREP Parties. Hosted a Pacific Shark Symposium workshop for the CITES Pacific Parties focused on conservation and management measures to be highlighted in the revised Marine Species Action Plan
- Mobula rays up-listed to CMS Sharks MoU Meeting of Signatories in Costa Rica.
- Launch and implementation of Year of the Whale activities.

### ***Invasive Species***

- Completion and successful evaluation of the GEPAS Project "Prevention, management and Control of Invasive Species in the Pacific Islands", which included over 100 invasive species initiatives in nine countries over the past five years.

- GEF Council approval of the GEF 6 project, strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific.
- Rat control and eradication projects in Tonga, resulting in a significant increase in the Vava'u endemic Tongan whistler at Mt. Talau, Vava'u islands, and seabirds successfully nesting on Malinoa and Motutapu islands in the Tongatapu island group.
- Restoration projects in Samoa have resulted in more resilient ecosystems by managing invasive plants and revegetating with native trees. 3 weed species in both the Cook Islands and Niue are closer towards eradication.
- National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plans were completed for Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, RMI and Wallis et Futuna.
- Development of Pacific Invasive Species Battler Series including the first nine publications of common invasive species issues in the Pacific.

### **Article 15: Co-operation in Combating Pollution in Emergency Situations**

22. Refer to Article 6 above.

### **Article 16: Environmental Impact Assessment**

23. Regional Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidelines were endorsed at the 26th SPREP Meeting in Samoa in 2015, launched at the 27th SPREP Meeting in Niue 2016, and have now been published in English and French. The Guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for EIA training and capacity-building across the region, and are being used as a tool to assist with the implementation of current EIA legal requirements and to promote best practice in EIA across the full range of projects and economic sectors in the Pacific. The Regional EIA Guidelines include templates and checklists that have been used by Pacific island countries to update their internal EIA procedures and to strengthen their application of EIA. Countries have commented that the templates and checklists are particularly useful tools for supporting the review of development applications and the review of EIA reports. The value of the Guidelines has also been acknowledged by Pacific Small Island Developing States, for supporting their EIA input to the negotiations on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
24. In 2015 SPREP delivered EIA training workshops in Samoa (21 participants); Vanuatu (30 participants); Tuvalu (21 participants), in partnership with the Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States project managed by SPC; and an EIA and Biodiversity workshop in Samoa (39 participants). In 2016 EIA training workshops were delivered in Tokelau, Nukunonu atoll (12 participants); Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) (16 participants); and Niue (15 participants), in partnership with IUCN's Low Carbon Islands project. In 2017 to date, an EIA training workshop has been delivered in the Cook Islands (12 participants), and SPREP delivered an introduction to EIA and field trip as part of the Pacific Island Environment Conference in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In Q4 2017 EIA training is planned for the Federated States of Micronesia. Typically, SPREP's EIA training workshops:
- Have included a range of government agencies to emphasise that EIA responsibilities often extend beyond the department/ministry of environment to other areas of government (e.g. lands and planning, energy, water, health, climate change, transport,

cultural affairs, tourism, local/provincial/outer island government). Where appropriate, private sector and civil society organisations have also attended the training workshops.

- include P as an important component of the EIA training to encourage participants to use their new EIA knowledge to assess existing developments and related environmental issues.
- Emphasise the importance of effective EIA implementation to help countries meet their commitments and responsibilities under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements they are party to, including the Noumea Convention.

25. Key outcomes from the training have included:

- increased awareness and understanding of the EIA process across a range of government agencies in the targeted countries; the development of EIA Guidelines in Samoa, guided by EIA capacity-building, SPREP's Regional EIA Guidelines, and direct review comments from SPREP;
- the development of an EIA flowchart for RMI EPA, to be used as a communication/education tool with government and public stakeholders to promote awareness of and compliance with the EIA process; and
- support for the finalisation of Niue's Environment (Development Consent and Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations.

26. In addition to EIA training, SPREP has continued to provide technical back-stopping for countries for key steps of the EIA process, particularly the development of terms of reference for EIA reports, and the review of EIA reports. The EIA training, in combination with direct technical-backstopping, has helped to improve countries' confidence with EIA administration and oversight. There are, nonetheless, ongoing challenges with EIA implementation in the Pacific including insufficient quality control exercised over EIA reports, weak compliance monitoring and enforcement, and low levels of public engagement and participation in EIA. SPREP is working with member countries and partners to identify ways of addressing these challenges such as:

- developing terms of reference templates to support EIA scoping and better-quality EIA reports,
- encouraging EIA administrators to establish networks with other government agencies and regional partners to help strengthen their compliance monitoring and enforcement efforts, and
- emphasising opportunities for public involvement in key steps of the EIA process such as screening, scoping and EIA report review.

27. In 2017 SPREP finalised draft EIA guidelines for coastal tourism development, which are being presented to the Noumea Convention COP for endorsement (see agenda item 7.11 for an overview). The coastal tourism EIA guidelines complement and build on the Regional EIA Guidelines, with an aim of providing sector-specific guidance for one of the Pacific's most important economic sectors.

28. As a complement to its EIA work, SPREP has contributed to the component of SPC's Restoration of Ecosystem Services and Adaptation to Climate Change (RESCUE) project that is exploring options for progressing the mitigation hierarchy and offsets in the Pacific. The mitigation hierarchy and offsets are tools that can be implemented as part of the EIA process to help manage and mitigate project impacts. SPREP has also been working in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, and Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility, on the development of Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) capacity-building across



the Pacific Region. The ADB and World Bank have invited SPREP to participate in and lend its expertise to regional safeguards workshops, and the World Bank has used SPREP's Regional EIA Guidelines as a technical resource for national EIA work.

29. As an accredited entity to the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund, and Executing agency for the Global Environment Facility, SPREP now has its own Environmental and Social Management System and ESS framework, which are important tools for the sound implementation of SPREP projects throughout the region, to ensure that all potential environmental and social risks are effectively managed.
30. To further support effective EIA implementation, SPREP has begun development of a complementary environmental planning tool on knowledge and awareness of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as. In 2016 SPREP staff engaged in SEA capacity-building through a seminar delivered by The World Bank at SPREP, and also delivered a presentation on the status of SEA in the Pacific at the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment annual conference. The next step will be to promote SEA awareness and capacity-building to SPREP members through the development of SEA guidance materials and the inclusion of SEA modules in EIA training workshops.
31. SPREP launched an online site, the Pacific Network for Environmental Assessment (PNEA) in March 2017. PNEA has been developed to connect and support government officers working in the area of environmental assessment, including EIA and SEA. PNEA allows officers to send environmental assessment questions and assistance requests directly to SPREP; access environmental assessment resources, templates and educational materials; and keep up-to-date with environmental assessment news and events. PNEA will be further developed and its usability will be enhanced over the coming twelve months.

#### **Article 17: Scientific and Technical Cooperation**

32. SPREP continues to collaborate with partners and to provide and receive technical assistance:
  - SPREP and CROP agencies have been collaborating to develop large proposals to the European Development Fund for EDF11 support to the Pacific European Union Marine Project (PEUMP) and the Pacific European Union Waste Management Project (PacWaste plus). The PEUMP will address mitigation of by-catch, and biodiversity and integrated coastal management. The EU contribution of €35m towards this project will be augmented with a €10m contribution from the Government of Sweden. The PacWaste Plus project of €35m will address waste and pollution management to implement the Cleaner Pacific 2025, an integrated ten year strategy, and will follow on from the PacWaste project which concludes at the end of 2017.
  - The Secretariat has also:
    - engaged with several Member countries in the use of marine spatial planning tools and processes by leveraging synergies across projects such as EPOG, MACBIO, PACIOCEA and BIOPAMA: in Samoa, Nauru, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Kiribati.
    - assisted in organising a regional workshop, the *Regional Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) Meeting and Sustainable Oceans Initiative (SOI) Workshop*, on integrated ocean management held in Apia with key industry sectors, CROPs and all SPREP Members, for multi-sector planning and management at EEZ and regional scales
    - participated in providing technical input to Parties through the Marine Sector Working Group and Pacific Ocean Alliance which has enabled countries to

prepare strong positions on the needs of Pacific SIDS in marine conservation and in global negotiations such as the UN process on ABNJ-BBNJ the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators and preparations toward the UN Oceans Conference.

- With reference to marine litter and MARPOL violations from fishing vessels, the Secretariat was able to analyse over 10,000 MARPOL violations from SPC/FFA Observer GEN6 Reports from 2003-2015. Refer to Article 6 above for more details.
- With reference to discharge of wastes at Sea the Secretariat was able to organize and host the 39<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Group Under the London Protocol and Convention in Suva Fiji in March 2016. The session covered many scientific issues regarding disposal of dredged material and vessels at sea that were of particular interest to PICs.

#### **Article 18: Technical Cooperation and Assistance**

33. The SPREP web-site is undergoing an overhaul. As a part of this the Noumea Convention web-site was revamped in order to facilitate easier access by Parties to the Convention's business.
  34. The Secretariat assisted Parties in their preparation for and at the *Sustainable Development Goal 14 at the UN Oceans Conference* in June 2017. Legal assistance was provided on activities and publicity materials from the Pacific preparatory meeting in Suva to the New York conference. Through the Partnership Dialogues and Voluntary Commitments, the various side events, displays, booths and media partnerships. More information on the UNOC is outlined in paper 7.1.
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