

Report of the 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)

14th September 2017

Apia, Samoa

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

1. Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention met for their Thirteenth Fourteenth Ordinary Meeting on 14 September, 2017 in Apia, Samoa.
2. Present at the Meeting were representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, France, Republic of Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and United States. A full list of participants is contained Annex 1).
3. The Meeting commenced with an opening prayer by Mr Frank Griffin of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).
4. Mr Mike Walsh, representing New Zealand, Chair of the Thirteenth COP Meeting noted the importance of the Noumea Convention as the legally binding document for parties for the environment in the Pacific islands region, further noting that based on the achievements of the parties over the last two years more may be gained through strengthening use of the Noumea Convention as a legally binding instrument for sustaining the region's environment.
5. Ulu Bismarck Crawley, Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Samoa welcomed all delegates to the Fourteenth Meeting of the Noumea Convention, further thanking the Secretariat and partners for the good work done into coordination of the regionally owned convention geared to meet the needs of the region and the countries.
6. The Director General of SPREP welcomed parties of the Noumea Convention to the Meeting, reflecting on the value and achievements, provided by the Convention with often shoestring budgets, which help tackle and resolve large environment management and pollution control challenges.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of the Meeting

7. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention, a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson were elected from the representatives by a simple majority vote. The official languages for the Convention are English and French and the sessions are to be held in plenary.



8. The Parties elected Samoa as Chairperson and France as Vice Chairperson.
9. The outgoing Chairperson, representing New Zealand thanked delegates for their support and wished Samoa all the very best and invited Ulu Bismarck Crawley, Representative of Samoa to take over as Chairperson.
10. The incoming Chair thanked Mr Mike Walsh representing New Zealand and delegates for their nomination.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda

11. The Chair noted Country Reports will be made by Australia, France, New Zealand and Republic of Marshall Islands under Agenda 5.
12. The Parties adopted the proposed Agenda and Working Hours as outlined in Annex II.

Agenda Item 4: Report of the Secretariat

13. In accordance with Rule 12(vi) of the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention, the Secretariat presented its Report on work performed in relation to the Noumea Convention and Protocols during the period July 2015– June 2017.
14. United States, Cook Islands, France and Federated States of Micronesia thanked the Secretariat for the work done.
15. United States recognised the global interest in marine pollution, citing the marine litter capture and work on microplastic and fish in Samoa and Solomon Islands as good initiatives.
16. Cook Islands expressed gratitude for the work of the Secretariat on the guidance provided to Cook Islands on sand mining policy and the survey work done on biodiversity.
17. France acknowledged the work undertaken on marine debris and the Pacific Biodiversity Blue Belt in French territories.
18. Federated States of Micronesia sought clarification on the involvement of the agencies of the Council of the Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) in the transboundary movement of nuclear waste within the region citing the discussions in the recent Suva meeting on trying to address safe transport of this waste.

19. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that a risk assessment of the transportation of nuclear wastes in 2003/2004 confirmed that the transport of nuclear wastes is covered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Furthermore, the Secretariat advised that the transporting vessel must be accompanied by security and that coastal states need to be aware of the international requirements.
20. The Deputy Director General noted that the outcomes achieved by the Convention reflects the work and efforts of the Parties and the Secretariat. The growth of Marine Protected Areas in the Pacific Region is one of many great examples demonstrating world leadership in environmental conservation.
21. The Parties:
 - **noted** the Report of the Secretariat

Agenda Item 5: Country Reports on Implementation of Obligations under the Noumea Convention

22. Country Reports were requested from Members to highlight any activities relevant to their obligations that have taken place since the last Meeting. Country Reports were submitted by Australia, France, New Zealand and tabled at the Meeting.
23. Australia presented their Country Report noting the 2016 State of Environment (SoE) Report was released in 2017 for which key priorities are consistent with the Noumea Convention. The SoE Report is a five-yearly publication. Australia's full Country Report on the Noumea Convention can be found at Annex xxx
24. France presented its Country Report noting the amendment of their National Strategic Plan for Environment, which encompasses more elements of the Noumea Convention, as well as the steps taken by the three territories towards a more integrated management of the environment. The full Country Report can be found at Annex xxx
25. New Zealand presented their Country Report, inviting Parties to read their comprehensive Country Report, highlighting three key points, one being the amendment of the New Zealand Exclusive Economic Zone Act on 1 June 2017 making changes to the process for decision making on some marine consents and includes new requirements regarding decommissioning offshore petroleum production facilities. The full report can be found at Annex xxx
26. The Chair urged other country parties to submit their Reports to the Noumea Convention

27. The Parties:

- **Tabled and noted** reports on the implementation of their obligations for the past biennium, in particular Australia, France, and New Zealand.

Agenda Item 6: Financial Statements for 2015 and 2016

28. The Secretariat tabled the audited Financial Statements for the Noumea Convention for the 2015 and 2016 financial year. The Financial Statements included a statement from the Director General, Director General's Statement, the Report of the Auditors for 2015 that was tabled at the 27th SPREP Meeting, the Income and Expenditure Statement for 2015, the Report of the Auditors for 2016 that will be tabled at the 28th SPREP Meeting, the Income and Expenditure Statement for 2016, operational expenditure 2015 and 2016, and protocol expenditure report 2015 and 2016.

29. The Secretariat thanked all valued Members and Partners for their support of the Noumea Convention.

30. The Parties:

- **adopted** the relevant parts of the audited Financial Statements for 2015 and 2016.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.1 UN Oceans Conference: Outcomes and Next Steps

31. The Secretariat presented on the outcomes of the UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (UN Ocean Conference), SPREP's support to Parties leading up to and during the Conference, and next steps.

32. Australia congratulated SPREP for significant efforts undertaken with positive outcomes, noting the Australian delegation to the UN Ocean Conference made several voluntary commitments at the conference on Pacific initiatives, one with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) to address illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing with and the second with the Pacific Community (SPC) to continue their work on delineation of maritime boundaries.

33. United States also expressed gratitude to Fiji and Sweden as co-hosts of the UN Ocean Conference, noting the success of the conference was also due to transparency, inclusivity and robust participation.

34. United States noted the focus by the Secretariat on concrete action after the UN Ocean conference and the importance of this in moving forward.

35. The Parties:

- **acknowledged** the leadership and effort put forth by Fiji in co-hosting the UN Ocean Conference with Sweden;
- **noted** with appreciation the support received from Sweden which allowed the Secretariat to support Parties throughout the UN Ocean Conference process;
- **acknowledged** the logistical support provided by the UN Missions of Fiji and Samoa to SPREP for the UN Ocean Conference;
- **reaffirmed** our commitment Parties to achieving SDG 14; and
- **requested** that the Secretariat work with Parties to ensure that we achieve the commitments made during the Conference.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.2: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

36. The Secretariat presented on progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the work undertaken by the Pacific SDGs Taskforce (PST). The PST was established in 2016 as a response to the commitment made by the Leaders of the Pacific Island Forum in 2015 to the full implementation of the SDGs.

37. The Parties:

- **noted** regional progress in the implementation of the SDGs ; and
- **noted** the Secretariat's contribution in assisting with the monitoring and reporting on SDGs.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.3: EDF-11 Progress Report

38. The Secretariat updated Parties on progress with Round 11 of the European Union Development Fund (EDF-11). The presentation on upcoming activities under the EDF-11, in particular regarding Objective 2.1 on sustainable use of marine resources (the Pacific-European Union Marine Project, PEUMP) and Objective 2.2 on waste management (PacWaste Plus), also included preparations with partners and members in developing activities under the EDF11 Overseas Countries and Territories package.

39. The Parties:

- **noted** that SPREP is a significant beneficiary of the EDF-11 funding round which will be implemented in Member countries, although implementation will only take off in early 2018.
- **noted** that for Objective 2.1 of EDF-11, SPREP's main engagement will be to develop ways to mitigate the by-catch of threatened species and to improve the state of the biodiversity and the management of coastal ecosystems;

- **noted** that for Objective 2.2 of EDF-11, SPREP engagement will be to implement priority components of the Cleaner Pacific 2015 programme, with partners, to improve management of waste and pollution in the Pacific.
- **noted** that while there will be an OCT component to EDF-11 details of the programme are still in development, although the Secretariat has been providing advice and support to the OCTs on development of the programme, in particular the objectives with an environmental focus; and
- **agreed** to collaborate with SPREP in the implementation of projects to be initiated under EDF-11.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.4 Cleaner Oceans for a Cleaner Pacific

40. The Secretariat informed the Parties of the importance of best practice in waste management and pollution control as an effective mechanism for addressing marine pollution, and sought the commitment of Parties to actively participate in these initiatives to sustain the long-term health of the Pacific Ocean and its people.
41. France noted their Call for Action on Plastic Microbeads which will be presented to SPREP Countries for endorsement at the Twenty-Eighth SPREP Meeting. The draft Call for Action can be found at Annex **xxx**
42. The Secretariat noted its support for this Call for Action on Plastic Microbeads
43. Australia sought clarification on the Call for Action on Plastic Microbeads noting that advice will need to be sought from their respective national agencies prior to endorsement.
44. The Secretariat explained this will be presented at the Twenty-Eighth SPREP Meeting and requested for the Call for action on Plastic Microbeads to be distributed to Parties for review before the Twenty-Eighth SPREP Meeting next week.
45. United States thanked the Secretariat for their presentation, noting their work undertaken to address marine debris at national level and across countries to address this international issue, and supported Australia's call to seek advice from capital on the proposal from France on microbeads.
46. The Parties:
 - **noted** the progress made in waste management and pollution control, a productive collaboration between SPREP, Parties and other partners;
 - **noted** that the success of such activities has been based on strong commitment from participating countries; and
 - **committed** as Parties to act to combat marine pollution, including through waste management and pollution control interventions to stop marine pollution at its source.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.5 Sustainable Regional Capacity Building for Improved Decision Making

47. The Secretariat updated the Parties of the planned implementation of sustainable mechanisms for strengthened institutional and human capacity, and sought the commitment of Parties to participate and actively engage in the proposed capacity building initiatives and the collection and submission of data on waste, chemicals and pollutants.
48. The Parties:
- **noted** the development of sustainable capacity building activities and a Regional Waste Monitoring System;
 - **noted** that the success of such activities requires strong commitment from participating countries;
 - **encouraged** Parties to participate fully in the capacity building initiatives; and
 - **encouraged** Parties to designate country counterparts who will be charged with the task of regularly collecting data and submitting them to SPREP for inclusion in a database.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda Item 7.6 Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre in the Pacific

49. The Secretariat presented on the Parties of the Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre in the Pacific (MTCC-Pacific). The MTCC-Pacific is one of the five centres in the world forming part of the Global Maritime Network (GMN) Project, an initiative implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and funded by the European Union. The GMN is a €10 million project for four years from 2016-2019 to build the capacity of developing countries and particularly Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for climate mitigation in the maritime industry.
50. The Parties:
- **noted and supported** the Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre in the Pacific.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda 7.7: International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Conventions

51. The Secretariat informed Pacific islands to encourage Parties to accede to IMO's pollution, liability and compensation conventions as well as the Cape Town Agreement 2012.

52. The Parties:

- **agreed** to work with SPREP to encourage relevant member country departments to understand the importance of ratifying the IMO's pollution, liability and compensation conventions as well as the Cape Town Agreement 2012.

Agenda Item 7: Decision Items

Agenda 7.8: Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development in the Pacific Region

53. To seek endorsement of the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development in the Pacific Region (EIA Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development)

54. United States noted the need to review the draft guidelines before endorsing.

55. The Parties:

- **noted** the publication of the EIA Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development.

Agenda Item 8: Consideration and Adoption of the Core Budget

56. The Secretariat presented the core budget for consideration and adoption by the Meeting, noting that the budget is funded by contributions from the Parties and that funds have traditionally been used for the limited purposes of providing for the next Meeting of the Parties and for the Secretariat providing technical advice.

57. The Secretariat thanked Members and their Partners for their support and contributions.

58. The Parties:

- **considered** and **approved** the core budget and contributions for the biennium 2018–2019; and
- **committed** to urgently clearing outstanding contributions.

Agenda Item 9: Other Business

Agenda Item 10: Date and Venue of Next Meeting

59. Papua New Guinea presented a Country Paper on their work developing their Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), providing lessons learnt in undertaking this initiative. The Meeting congratulated Papua New Guinea and noted that this is the first PSSA in the Pacific islands. The Country Paper can be found at Annex xxx

60. The Secretariat presented an information paper on Strengthening Membership and Effectiveness of the Convention found at Annex **xx**

61. The Meeting:

- **postponed** further action until the Secretariat firstly undertakes further background research and development of future options

Agenda Item 10: Date and venue of the next Meeting

62. The Meeting:

- **agreed** that the next Meeting would be held in Apia, Samoa in 2019 prior to the Twenty-Ninth SPREP Meeting.

The 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) Meeting closed at: 1.40pm