

A monthly e-bulletin from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

MESSAGE FROM MR. KOSI LATU, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SPREP

Talofa from the SPREP campus,

This year has gone by in a blur so far, and just like that we are done with the first half of the year! A lot of milestones were achieved in the month of May, for which I must commend not only our SPREP staff for their continued hard work, but our members for their continued support and partnership.

Samoa held its first Climate Change Finance Forum in May, which attracted representatives from the national government, development partners, regional technical agencies and members of the civil society to discuss this important field of development work, and also learn from the experiences of neighbouring Pacific island countries on accessing climate change finance.

The Pacific was well represented at the Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention in Geneva, from which a number of positive outcomes were achieved, such as the establishment of a partnership on household waste. These achievements however, were overshadowed by the failure of the Parties to reach consensus on the listing of known hazardous substances including chrysotile asbestos and paraquat, and the failure of reaching consensus on the Convention's compliance mechanism.



Mr Kosi Latu at the Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions in Geneva, Switzerland. Photo: A.Carvan/SPREP

By the time you read this issue of SPREP-Tok, we will be back from New York after attending the United Nations Ocean Conference, which SPREP and its members and partners have been preparing for almost a year. We look forward to the many positive outcomes that will come out of this conference, which will go a long way in helping us protect our oceans, and we'll be sharing these outcomes with you in our next issue.

Soifua,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Soifua Latu".

SPREP-Tok LATEST NEWS



Pacific island Parties to the Rotterdam Convention have been vocal in their support of the listing of both chrysotile asbestos and paraquat on Annex III of the Convention. Photo: IISD/Kiara Worth

SPREP DIRECTOR GENERAL CALLS FOR PACIFIC REGIONAL ACTION ON HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

The Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention failed for the sixth consecutive time to reach consensus on addressing chrysotile asbestos and paraquat, both of which are known hazardous substances. The repeated failure of this key Multilateral Environment Agreement prompted the Director General of SPREP, Mr Kosi Latu, to call on Pacific island members to address the issue of hazardous substances at a regional level.

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CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS BUILD PACIFIC RESILIENCE



Participants from Tonga and Nauru discussing key target groups for Communications Strategy. Photo: S.Seuseu/SPREP

The Climate and Ocean Support Programme in the Pacific (COSPPAc) Second Regional Communication Training for Climate Officers was held in Nadi in May, with Met Service staff from 11 Pacific countries in attendance. Communication of weather and climate information is important for people from all sectors and communities to plan their daily activities and seasonal work, and can be critical during natural disasters to protect lives and property. The training will also consider the review of communication products for medium to long term climate projection and its impacts on communities and the environment.

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VANUATU'S PROTECTED AREAS: LET THE MAPPING BEGIN!



SPREP Spatial Planning Officer, Ryan Wright (right), during discussions with the training participants. Photo: SPREP

A training in open-source Geographic Information System software, a spatial analytical programme that allows users to create, view, store and analyse data in real-world coordinates, was completed in April for protected area managers and stakeholders of Vanuatu. The GIS training was co-organised and implemented by SPREP and the Vanuatu Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation.

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SAMOA CLIMATE CHANGE FINANCE STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSS WAY FORWARD



Samoa. Photo courtesy of Carlo Iacovino

Climate change financing stakeholders of Samoa converged in Apia in May for a week-long series of activities geared towards knowledge-sharing and collective formulation of solutions to challenges presently experienced in this particular field of development work. The series of meetings from 8 – 11 May engaged key stakeholders from national government, development partners, regional technical agencies, and representatives of civil society including the private sector.

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VANUATU INITIATES ACTION TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY TARGET ON PROTECTED AREAS



Participants of the national workshop for protected areas stakeholders held in Vanuatu. Photo: SPREP

Vanuatu is a stronghold of biodiversity in the Pacific islands region and there are many sites throughout the country that have high conservation value owing to their role as key habitats for vulnerable and endemic species. Vanuatu is part of the East Melanesian Islands biodiversity hotspot, a bioregion in Melanesia notable for its unique flora and fauna and species richness. Furthermore, the sustainable use of biodiversity is a key priority for the government of Vanuatu.

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SHARING EXPERIENCES ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE FINANCE, A KEY FEATURE IN SAMOA CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM



Participants during a presentation at the Samoa National Climate Finance Forum. Photo: SPREP

Learning from the experience of neighbouring countries was on the agenda at Samoa's National Climate Finance Forum in Apia. Given the increasing climate change financing to the Pacific, there is a need to share experiences and lessons given the varying degrees of readiness that exist in Pacific island countries. A special session on the world's largest dedicated climate fund, the Green Climate Fund, heard the perspectives of the Cook Islands on accessing the Readiness Fund.

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PACIFIC ISLANDS SPEAK IN ONE VOICE ON ASBESTOS



Ms Lupe Matoto from Tonga spoke on behalf of all Pacific island Parties to the Rotterdam Convention to support the listing of chrysotile asbestos on the Annex III hazardous substances watchlist. Photo: A.Carvan/SPREP

In Geneva last month, Pacific island parties to the Rotterdam Convention joined together to speak in one voice on the issue of asbestos. Ms Lupe Matoto, representing Tonga, addressed the plenary on behalf of the Cook Islands, Samoa, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tonga, which, collectively, are the Pacific island Parties to the Rotterdam Convention. The intervention was also supported by Kiribati which was present at the Convention but is not a Party.

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SPREP AND YWCA OF SAMOA CELEBRATE GIRLS IN ICT DAY



The participants of the Girls in ICT Day celebrations with SPREP and YWCA of Samoa. Photo: SPREP

The International Girls in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Day is celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday of April, and this year, SPREP joined forces with the Young Women's Christian Association of Samoa to raise awareness on the importance of technology to advance gender equality and women's rights. The International Girls in ICT Day is an initiative which aims to create a global environment that empowers and encourages young girls and women to consider careers in the growing field of ICT.

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PACIFIC METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES AND PARTNERS MEET TO UPDATE KEY REGIONAL PRIORITIES TO ENSURE SAFETY OF PACIFIC COMMUNITIES



The regional framework for building and strengthening of National Meteorological Services (NMSs) was under review in May by the Pacific NMS directors, private sector, Pacific intergovernmental agencies, technical and development partners, and media to reflect key priorities of the Pacific on meteorological and hydrological needs.

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BRS TRIPLE-COPS CONCLUDE WITH HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT



Mr Kosi Latu, Ms Amatlain Kabua and Hon. Siasia 'O. Sovale at the high level segment of the BRS Triple-COPs in Geneva. Photo: A.Carvan/SPREP

The joint Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention, known as the BRS Triple-COPs, concluded on 5 May 2017, after two weeks of back-to-back discussions in Geneva, Switzerland. A feature of the final day was the conclusion of the high level segment, which saw Ministers and Ambassadors report back to the plenary on the outcomes of their roundtable discussions.

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MILESTONE MEETING FOR A MILESTONE PROJECT



Mr John Townend (PIFS), Mr Jesús Laviña (EU), Ms Ileana Miricescu (EU), Mr Kosi Latu (SPREP), Mr Stewart Williams (SPREP) and Mr Junji Ishizuka (JICA) at the fifth PacWaste Steering Committee Meeting in Apia, Samoa. Photo: A.Carvan/SPREP

Representatives from 12 Pacific island countries gathered in Apia, Samoa from 11–12 May 2017 for the fifth and final steering committee meeting of PacWaste – the Pacific Hazardous Waste Management Project. PacWaste is a €7.85 million project funded by the European Union and implemented by SPREP to improve regional hazardous waste management across the Pacific.

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COUNTRIES SEEK CONTINUATION OF ADB/ SPREP MAINSTREAMING AND REGIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT MECHANISM



Participants at the SPREP Headquarters. Photo: SPREP

Pacific island countries unanimously expressed a strong interest in the continuation of work progressed under technical assistance provided by the Asian Development Bank and SPREP in a meeting held in Apia in May. The Implementation of the Strategic Program for Climate Resilience: Pacific Region Technical Assistance, piloted the use of mainstreaming tools in FSM and Tuvalu so that climate change and disaster related risks could be incorporated into their development planning processes, policies and plans.

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SMARTMET, SMARTALERT, BETTER INFORMED COMMUNITIES



Participants of the SmartMET and SmartAlert training at the SPREP campus. Photo: SPREP

With the advancement of modern technology, our lives are changing in many areas, including the roles of Meteorological Services. While some things remain the same, in other areas huge steps are being made in improving forecasting for early warning systems and for long term projections based on ICT. A training was underway in Samoa last month for the Met Services of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, who now deploy the SmartMet and SmartAlert Weather Systems to help improve weather and climate forecasts and warnings.

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WOMEN LEADING OCEAN ACTION



Samantha Kwan conducts a mangrove survey. Photo: Maria Satoa/MNRE Samoa

The action of women is a key part of reaching Sustainable Development Goal 14, Life Below Water. At the United Nations Ocean Conference from 5–9 June in New York this year, an event on day one will showcase women’s actions and strategies for including women in ocean management. The UN Ocean Conference is co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden. Fiji will also be featured in the special event titled “Healers of our ocean: Asia-Pacific women leading ocean action to achieve SDG 14”.

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PACIFIC NATIONS MAY FACE DROUGHTS, FLOODS IF EL NIÑO DEVELOPS LATER THIS YEAR



Meteorologists warn that there is twice the normal likelihood of El Niño developing in 2017. El Niño events are usually associated with lower rainfall with the possibility of droughts, dust, and increased bushfires for countries such as Fiji, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu in the Western Pacific.

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A WAVE OF PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION FOR OUR OCEAN HEALTH



As caretakers of the world’s largest ocean basin, SPREP with Members and global partners have committed to four different partnerships for Ocean health. These are now registered in the UN Ocean Conference Registry of Voluntary Commitments – global initiatives for collaborating partners to help implement Sustainable Goal 14, Life Below Water.

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FAREWELL NETA!

We would like to dedicate a special farewell to our outgoing Director for the Climate Change Division, Dr Netatua Pelesikoti, whose contract with SPREP concluded at the end of May.



Dr Pelesikoti, or Neta as she is lovingly referred to by her colleagues, has made an enormous contribution to the fight against climate change in the Pacific region. We thank her for her years of service to SPREP, and we wish her all the best for her future endeavours.

Malo ‘aupito Neta!



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