



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

COUNCIL OF REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE PACIFIC (CROP)

CROP HEADS AND GOVERNING COUNCIL CHAIRS' MEETING

Wednesday 21 November
Executive Conference Room, Forum Secretariat, Suva, Fiji

OUTCOMES SUMMARY

1. On 22 November 2018, the inaugural CROP Executives and Chairs of Governing Councils Annual Meeting was held at the Headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva. The new CROP Charter, endorsed by Forum Leaders in September 2018, calls for such a meeting *'in order to promote stronger regional governance and coherence, and to inform CROP Heads and their respective Governing Council Chairs of the broader context in which CROP operates.'* A list of attendees from the inaugural meeting is at **Attachment A**.
2. At the outset, CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs expressed their support for the inaugural meeting of CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs - recognising the opportunity it presents for stronger collaboration between Members and their CROP agencies to deliver on the Forum Leaders' agenda and agreed regionalism priorities. As a new meeting mechanism, CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs noted the importance of providing feedback and review following the meeting, in the interests of maximising effectiveness of future meetings. **It was agreed that PIFS, in consultation with other CROP agencies and their Governing Council Chairs, would review the utility of the meeting in 2019.**

Terms of Reference

3. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs considered the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the meeting, confirming the overall purpose of the meeting being to: promote stronger regional governance, coherence and action by providing a platform; consider the broader

policy and operational context of CROP; and, to confirm the CROP's strategic work agenda for the coming year, based on Leaders' priorities and decisions relevant to CROP.

4. In considering the TOR, CROP Heads and their respective Council Chairs emphasised the need to ensure broader engagement of Members in the mechanism, including a process of reporting back from the meeting to members of their Governing Councils. The revised Terms of Reference for the meeting, incorporating such feedback, is at **Attachment B**.

CROP Cohesion and Coordination

5. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs considered the current level of cohesion and coordination across the CROP in providing high level policy advice and delivering on Forum Leaders' priorities, and opportunities to strengthen this.
6. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs noted progress in 2018 to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination including through the finalisation of a new CROP Charter; establishment of a CROP Deputies Group to drive implementation of CROP Heads decisions; development of a joint CROP communications plan; and the first annual written report to Forum Leaders delivered in Nauru on CROP progress to deliver on their decisions.
7. While noting progress, CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs agreed that this has primarily been achieved through coordination and cooperation, rather than the deeper forms of regionalism envisaged through the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* which include collaboration and harmonisation.
8. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed the increasing complexity of the regional space, including the large number of meetings, frameworks and initiatives that exist alongside the multiplicity of global events that Forum Members and CROP agencies engage in, as well as an increasing number of external partners that are seeking to engage with and in the region. Meeting participants emphasised the importance of an ongoing focus on prioritisation, as well as ensuring Members' ownership of the regional agenda.
9. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed the importance of effective and sustainable financing to deliver on the Forum Leaders' agenda, with an increasing expectation on CROP agencies to collaborate and deliver. It was noted that CROP agencies receive just 2.6% of the total funding to the Pacific region from development partners.¹ CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed the importance of greater discussion and engagement between Members and development partners to ensure effective regional funding levels are aligned to the Forum Leaders' agenda, including through the new annual Regional Development Partner Roundtable, which is a related meeting to the FEMM.

¹ Based on data and analysis from the Pacific Aid Map by the Lowy Institute.

10. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed the opportunities afforded by the new CROP Charter to strengthen cohesion and coordination and **agreed that the annual meeting of CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs could provide an oversight role on the implementation of the new CROP Charter. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs further agreed that a footnote be added to the CROP Charter to stipulate the current CROP membership.**
11. To support whole-of-government engagement on the regional agenda, CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs **agreed on the importance of Member participation in CROP taskforces, building on the success of current examples such as the PRP Taskforce and the NCDs Taskforce, as envisaged by the new CROP Charter. The CEO of SPTO requested SPTO be included on the Sustainable Development Working Group, given the important linkages with tourism.**
12. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs reflected on the opportunities to strengthen Pacific regionalism including through further consideration of the regional architecture as a regional *system* and a focus on Member countries and CROP agencies coming together on regional goods and services where there is strategic advantage, to deliver on the Forum Leaders' vision for the region.

CROP Strategic Work Agenda for 2019

13. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs considered a draft CROP Strategic Work Agenda for 2019, to ensure clarity and agreement on the collective work priorities for CROP to deliver on the decisions of Forum Leaders including new decisions, as captured in the *49th Pacific Islands Forum Communique* agreed in Nauru in 2018, as well as clarity on how CROP will work together, and with stakeholders, over the course of the year to deliver on Forum Leaders' decisions.
14. In response to Leaders' decisions at the 2018 Pacific Islands Forum, and building on existing Leaders' priorities which require continued, collective work, it was agreed that CROP's work priorities for 2019 are:
 - a) Combatting climate change and building disaster resilience;
 - b) Ensuring the long term sustainability and viability of the region's fisheries resources;
 - c) Strengthening regional security cooperation;
 - d) Ensuring sustainable oceans management and conservation;
 - e) Promoting sustainable development through the delivery of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development;
 - f) Tackling childhood obesity, non-communicable diseases and promoting early childhood development; and

g) Strengthening arrangements for regionalism.

15. The Director General (DG) of SPREP noted that climate change is the most serious threat to the Pacific Islands region. Given this, a strong focus is placed on regional preparations for the annual Conference of the Parties (COP). It was noted that CROP is an extension of Member countries' national services, and there is a need for further discussion on how to best collectively support countries. The DG of FFA noted that the impact of climate change on tuna fisheries is an issue of increasing concern and FFA will be further resourcing this.
16. On resilience, the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of PIFS noted that the two key initiatives for delivery are the *Pacific Resilience Partnership Taskforce*, established in May, and the *Pacific Resilience Facility* endorsed by FEMM to be fully elaborated. It was further noted that CROP agencies and Member countries will need to work closely together to ensure the success of these initiatives in 2019.
17. On fisheries, the DG of FFA noted that Forum Leaders have continued to reiterate their collective commitment to fisheries. A current focus is to address the underperformance of the longline industry, including through the development of a strategy. A further priority is engagement with Distant Water Fishing Nations, particularly through the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). The DG noted plans to hold the inaugural 'Regional Fisheries Ministers meeting' in 2019, as endorsed by Forum Leaders. **FFA will prepare a draft Terms of Reference for the Regional Fisheries Ministers meeting, for wider consideration.** The DG of SPREP noted the anticipated growing impact of plastics on tuna fisheries, as a food security issue, as well as an issue for the economic returns from the fisheries industry.
18. On fisheries, PIFS raised a proposal to discontinue the Regional Fisheries Taskforce, given it appears to have completed its taskings; in light of the new CROP Charter which recommends taskforces be results-orientated and time bound; and importantly the establishment of the Regional Fisheries Ministers meeting as an alternate mechanism. Meeting participants raised some concerns with this proposal, given Leaders call for fisheries to be standing agenda item, and queried whether a review of the Taskforce had been undertaken. While they noted there could be valid reasons for the proposal, they sought further information and advice on the rationale for standing down the Fisheries Taskforce. **It was agreed for PIFS to lead the development of a paper regarding the proposed discontinuation of the Regional Fisheries Taskforce, noting that this would need to be considered by FOC and Forum Leaders.**
19. On regional security, the DSG of PIFS highlighted the recent endorsement of the *Boe Declaration* by Forum Leaders, and the key deliverable for 2019 being an action plan to support implementation. A key part of the Plan will be the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism for security, in which relevant CROP agencies will need to be actively involved. The expanded concept of security under the *Boe Declaration* also

requires a greater role by CROP agencies to ensure effective implementation. It was noted that regional security is one of four priorities for Forum international engagement and advocacy, as supported by the FOC Sub-Committee for Forum Engagement and Advocacy.

20. On non-communicable diseases and childhood obesity, the SPC representative noted that SPC is leading the establishment of a taskforce on childhood obesity, with its first meeting to take place on 3 December. Plans to hold a regional meeting in February 2019 regarding ending childhood obesity in the Pacific are being proposed, with the findings to be presented to the Pacific Heads of Health meeting in April 2019. The PIF Secretary General (SG) noted that the private sector and civil society were strong on this issue at their recent dialogues with Forum Leaders, so a society-wide approach is important.
21. **CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs agreed to the CROP Strategic Work Agenda for 2019 to deliver on Leaders' decisions, including priorities, key deliverable/s and required mechanisms for delivery and their constructs such as Member participation.**
22. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed the importance of CROP coordination in country, and particularly to ensure a greater understanding by Members of the work of CROP agencies and how they are enhancing national capacity.
23. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs also discussed the importance of whole-of-government engagement and delivery on the regional agenda, reflecting on Forum Leaders' 2017 decision to 'ensure a whole-of-government engagement with the regionalism agenda to strengthen the regional architecture and maximise effective use of resources, regional actions and initiatives.' It was noted that CROP agencies report through different ministries, and often information on regional policies, priorities and initiatives does-not filter across to other relevant ministries, or to the whole-of-government. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs emphasised that Forum decisions must be owned and implemented by Member countries, as well as by the members'-owned regional organisations.
24. While recognising examples of strong implementation of regional priorities at the national level, for example on cervical cancer, CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed that whole-of-government engagement on the regionalism agenda is hampered by shortfalls and gaps in resourcing; a still crowded regional agenda; and limited systems and capacities for information sharing. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs identified some practical opportunities to strengthen whole-of-government engagement including: a) ensuring that when CROP executives visit Member countries for whole-of-government consultations, they raise awareness of the broader regional agenda and the collective work of CROP to support its delivery; b) encouraging Member countries to socialise Communiques and outcomes statements from regional meetings across their respective government administrations.

25. **It was agreed that the PIF Secretary General would raise this issue with the Forum Troika, in terms of steps that could be taken to support whole-of-government engagement on the regional agenda, including a stronger focus on regional information sharing, communications and capacity building. It was also agreed that this issue would be further discussed and consulted on by PIFS and other CROP agencies as part of the ongoing work to strengthen regional governance and financing.**

CROP Harmonisation

26. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs considered opportunities to strengthen CROP harmonisation. It was noted that CROP harmonisation has been on the agenda of CROP agencies for a number of years, in recognition of the opportunities to develop robust corporate policy processes and procedures; allow cost sharing across agencies; and streamline stakeholder and donor engagement with CROP agencies, in the interests of achieving effective and efficient Pacific regionalism.
27. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed that the main focus of CROP Harmonisation has been on CROP remuneration. While some progress had been made, including through the *CROP 2008 Harmonisation and Remuneration Guiding Principles and Strategies*, CROP Heads acknowledged that progress has been limited and challenging, in large part driven by the fact that governing bodies have interpreted and applied remuneration decisions differently across CROP agencies.
28. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed that while a focus on CROP remuneration should not be lost, there are opportunities to consider CROP harmonisation with regards to other corporate functions. A focus on ‘low hanging fruit’ and ‘early wins’, for example with regards to joint purchasing on travel, accommodation and insurance could be explored.
29. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs noted that the current *CROP 2008 Harmonisation and Remuneration Guiding Principles and Strategies* are strongly focused on remuneration, and that it would be beneficial to review and broaden these principles to cover other opportunities for CROP Harmonisation.
30. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs discussed opportunities for a joint CROP approach to capacity building, in support of harmonisation, through the European Union’s (EU) Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building Facility (TECCBUF) Project. CROP Heads noted their recent agreement to develop a joint proposal for institutional strengthening, under TECCBUF, which is currently being designed. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs also discussed the issue of EU ‘eligible expenditure’, noting that a number of CROP agencies had run up ineligible expenditures. It was highlighted that this

is an area where CROP agencies have sought to work together, including through a joint letter to the EU and would need to continue to do so.

31. CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs:

- **Approved the development of a set of common principles/standards for CROP corporate harmonisation, drawing on the 2008 CROP Harmonisation and Remuneration Guiding Principles and Strategies, and aligning with the new CROP Charter; and, tasked the CROP Directors of Corporate Services/Finance to lead the development of these principles/standards for eventual adoption by all CROP Governing Councils.**
- **Agreed to prioritise a select number of areas to explore for CROP harmonisation/coordination, focused on ‘low hanging fruit’ and ‘early wins’ including joint purchasing (travel, insurance, ‘back office’ business systems); common corporate procedures; and joint communications and information sharing; and, tasked the CROP Directors of Corporate Services/Finance to progress opportunities.**
- **Agreed that the annual meeting of CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs be used to provide strategic oversight and guidance on the CROP harmonisation and coordination of the joint CROP strategic work programme and agenda.**

November 2018

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs Meeting - Attendees

CROP

- Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General, PIFS and Chair, CROP
- Cristelle Pratt, Deputy Secretary General, PIFS
- Manu Tupou Roosen, Director General, FFA
- Professor Rajesh Chandra, Vice Chancellor and President, USP
- Kosi Latu, Director General, SPREP
- Andrew Valentine, General Manager, PASO
- Patricia Sachs-Cornish, Chief Adviser of Director General, SPC

Governing Chairs

- Tapaeru Herrmann, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Cook Islands (PIFS)
- Peleni Talagi, Secretary to Government, Niue (SPC)
- Aloma Johansson, Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council (USP)
- Jim Armistead, Director, Pacific Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Cook Islands (FFA)
- Senimili Bulai, Department of Environment, Government of Fiji (SPREP)



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

CROP EXECUTIVES AND CHAIRS OF GOVERNING COUNCILS – ANNUAL MEETING

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. CROP Mandate

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders established the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) in 1988, with the primary purpose of improving cooperation, coordination and collaboration between Pacific regional inter-governmental organisations. The adoption in 2014 of the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* requires that the CROP organisations act together to support the Leaders' increased commitment to regionalism and to achieving the principle objectives of the Framework.

2. Establishment of the CROP Executives and Chairs Annual Meeting

2. At the 48th Pacific Islands Forum, Leaders agreed on the need to strengthen the regional architecture, including by ensuring whole of government engagement with the regionalism agenda; to embedding the Leaders' agenda across the CROP and its member agencies; and ensuring CROP members' meetings and their respective agendas are rationalised - to take forward the Leaders' agenda in a synchronised, coherent way.

3. The revised CROP Charter envisages a joint, annual meeting, between CROP Executives and the Chairs of their respective Governing Councils in order to promote stronger regional governance and coherence, and to inform CROP agencies' Heads and their respective Governing Council Chairs of the broader context in which CROP operates.

4. At their meeting on 4 April 2018, CROP Executives agreed to establish a CROP Executives and Chairs of Governing Councils Annual Meeting. This terms of reference sets out arrangements for the Annual Meeting including its objectives, roles and responsibilities, membership and meeting arrangements.

3. Objective

5. The objective of the CROP Executives and Chairs of Governing Councils Annual Meeting is to promote stronger regional governance, coherence and collaborative action, by providing a platform for CROP and Member countries to: consider the broader policy and operational context of CROP; and, confirm CROP's Strategic Work Agenda for the coming year, based on Leaders' priorities and decisions relevant to CROP.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

6. The CROP Executives and Chairs of Governing Councils Annual Meeting, coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General, as permanent Chair of CROP, shall focus on the following:

- Briefing and discussion on Forum Leaders' decisions at their annual September Retreat;
- Discussion and agreement of CROP's Strategic Work Agenda for the coming year, in response to Leaders' priorities and decisions;
- Ensuring coherence and alignment of Members' interactions in the Governing Councils of CROP agencies;
- Discussion on the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR)* and current regional policy development initiatives, and their relevance and implication for CROP;
- Exploring the feasibility of streamlining and synchronising regional meeting agendas, where possible, in the spirit of the FPR; and,
- Discussion on opportunities to continuously strengthen regional governance and financing, to support continued improvement in the delivery and cost effectiveness of regional public goods and services by CROP agencies.

5. Membership

7. The PIF Secretary General (as the permanent CROP Chair), the Chief Executives of CROP members and the PIFS Deputy Secretary General, and the incumbent Chair of the Governing Body of each CROP member agency – at an officials' level - will be invited to attend the Annual Meeting. CROP Chief Executives may agree to invite Observer(s) to attend the full meeting, or part of the meeting, depending on the nature of the business/ issue being addressed.

6. Meetings arrangements

8. The Annual Meeting shall be held in October/November. It will be scheduled to coincide with a CROP Chief Executives Meeting - to allow for discussion, planning and agreement on CROP's Strategic Work Agenda for the coming year.

9. Additional meetings of CROP Chief Executives and their respective Governing Council Chairs, in any given year, would be held as and when required.

10. The CROP Chair will write to CROP Chief Executives and Governing Council Chairs to advise of the Annual Meeting and seek their input on a proposed agenda at least two months in advance of the meeting. CROP agencies are expected to advise and engage their membership in the Annual Meeting, in support of whole of government engagement in the regional agenda.

11. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, with the support of the CROP Operational Support Team, shall provide Secretariat support to the meeting including following up on decisions and actions.

G. Reporting and monitoring arrangements

12. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat will prepare a summary record of the meeting, for endorsement by meeting participants and circulation to all CROP Governing Councils by the relevant CROP Executive and Governing Council Chair, shortly following the meeting.

13. The Secretary General of PIF, in consultation with CROP Executives, will write to Governing Council Chairs approximately six months after the meeting to provide a progress update on implementation of the decisions taken.