
AGENDA ITEM 9.1:

Report on Executive Board 1st Meeting

Purpose of Paper

1. To report to the SPREP Meeting on the First SPREP Executive Board Meeting held in Samoa from 10 to 11 September 2018.

Background

2. To improve Secretariat efficiencies, the 26th SPREP Meeting in 2015 agreed that the SPREP governing council would convene every two years hosted by the Secretariat in Samoa, commencing directly after the SPREP Meeting in 2017.
3. The arrangements were further discussed by Members at the 27th SPREP Meeting in 2016. Members agreed to the establishment of an Executive Board to be the SPREP decision-making body in the alternate years of biennial SPREP Meetings and that the Board would:
 - a. Be a body to take key governance decisions in years alternate to the SPREP Meeting
 - b. Have membership based on Member representation and equity, including bilingualism
 - c. Be a mechanism that is cost effective and sustainable
 - d. Be a mechanism that is flexible to include other membership as necessary
 - e. Be a mechanism that ensures that the Secretariat remains accountable to Members
 - f. Work alongside existing governance mechanisms such as the Troika of the past, current and incoming Chairs of the SPREP Meeting and the Audit Committee.
4. The Terms of Reference of the Executive Board was approved at the 28th SPREP Meeting in 2017, including principles of environmental leadership, equity, transparency, accountability, flexibility, economy and sustainability and for the Board's operations to be in line with the practices and procedures of the Pacific region. The Executive Board's terms of reference (refer Attachment 1) provides for a biennial evaluation of the effectiveness of the Executive Board to be reported to the SPREP Meeting. A full biennial review will be undertaken in 2020 and reported to 30SM. This paper reports on an interim assessment after the first meeting based on feedback from participants.

Assessment on the First SPREP Executive Board

5. The first Executive Board Meeting was held at the Tanoa Conference Centre in Apia on 10-11 September 2018, and the outcome report circulated to Members.
6. The SPREP Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser undertook a survey of SPREP Members following the meeting to collect immediate feedback from participants. A total of 18 respondents participated in the survey, including Executive Board Members, Metropolitan Members, SPREP Focal Points and SPREP Staff. The following are the key findings:

Overall observations of respondents

7. In general the running of the meeting itself was considered to have been good. Participants reported good interactions during the Meeting with decisive actions being taken based on the working papers and presentations during the meeting, however the management of preparations for the meeting, and the subsequent sharing of the record of the meeting required improvements
8. **Environmental leadership, commitment, and transparency:** Members acknowledged SPREP's leadership on the environmental agenda in the Pacific; and considered that the Secretariat achieved its commitment to advance key items on the agenda which were adopted with timely advice provided to the Secretariat by Members.
9. The Executive Board as a governance mechanism was given a moderate rating for its impact on the implementation of priority projects/programmes with Partners.
10. **The constituency mechanism:** Most Members observed that the constituency mechanism worked well in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability for the delivery of SPREP programmes. Board Members considered that obligations were met after Executive Board discussions and noted the good interaction during the Meeting, as well as in their follow up discussions with constituency and other Members. However, they suggested the allocation of more time for consultations within and with constituency counterparts. Feedback from the Secretariat noted the challenges faced by regional constituency representatives in coordinating preparations with their constituency members. Secretariat facilitated teleconferences were considered helpful by Members, when they were able to be convened.
11. **Observers to the Executive Board Meeting:** Some Members recommended reconsideration of the Meeting Rule of Procedure 6 (3) that provides for Members to seek the approval of the Chair to be observer(s) to the Executive Board Meeting, the principal concern being one of equity. The matter was raised as a consequence of a locally based Metropolitan Member seeking observer status from the Chair in addition to the approved constituency representative. This, it was thought, illustrated an unfair advantage available to those Members who were either Samoa-based, or which had sufficient financial capacity to travel to Apia. Feedback to the survey requested the matter be resolved to either allow or not allow observer(s) to the Meeting.
12. The Secretariat notes that while the Executive Board Meeting is by design a closed meeting, the option remains for a request for observership to be made through the Chair. This was explicitly considered during the development of the terms of reference by the Friends of the Chair in 2017 to ensure the principle of equity for all SPREP Members so that Members not able to afford to be present as Observers would not be unfairly or disproportionately under-represented by not being present. The use of sub-regional constituency mechanism on a rotational and alphabetical basis was designed to ensure both equity and economy through the minimising of costs associated with hosting large meetings.
13. **Cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the conduct of the Meeting:** Executive Board members perceived the Meeting to be cost-effective and sustainable, noting there are less participants, and a shorter agenda compared to the SPREP Meeting.

14. The Secretariat advised that the costs of both the biennial SPREP meetings and Executive Board Meetings have realised significant savings by being held in Samoa. Costs will be further reduced from 2020 with the Pacific Climate Change Centre conferencing facilities coming on stream. Annual costs of recent governance meetings have steadily reduced from US\$ 314,000 in 2015, US\$ 220,000 in 2016, US\$ 95,000 in 2017 to US\$ 44,000 in 2018.
15. **Administrative arrangements and support:** Members noted the delay in circulation of documents to Members had limited the quality of Member participation in the Meeting and in the follow-up within constituencies.
16. Respondents also provided the following comments to enhance the effectiveness of future Executive Board Meetings:
 - Executive Board Members suggested that thematic papers presented during the Meeting could be streamlined further by excluding items where the Executive Board was unable to add value to a document that was either in publication format and or endorsed by another forum eg:
 - Pacific Climate Change Report Card
 - Cleaner Pacific Roundtable Outcome Report;
 - SPREP and Executive Board meetings should not be held a week following the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting. Many officers were not able to provide timely advice to SPREP working papers due to commitments for Forum Leaders;
 - SPREP DG Report should be disseminated earlier/six weeks prior to the Meeting;
 - Draft Meeting Report to be received by Members within six weeks after the Executive Board Meeting has convened;
 - All SPREP Executive Board Meeting documents should be translated to French;
 - SPREP to consider the rules on observers during the Executive Board Meetings.

Secretariat Improvements to the SPREP Executive Board and SPREP Meeting

17. The Secretariat will take this feedback into preparations for the second Executive Board Meeting in 2020, and reiterates its commitment to strengthen the consultations for sub-regional constituencies to better enable coordinated input from Members into the Executive Board process, and notes that the tighter control over the preparation and dissemination of agendas and working papers to the 29th SPREP Meeting will also be applied to future Executive Board and SPREP Meetings, starting with the second Executive Board Meeting in 2020.
18. This assessment of feedback from the First SPREP Executive Board Meeting will be incorporated into the 2020 biennial review of the Executive Board mechanism to be undertaken by the Troika after the 2020 Meeting.

Recommendation

19. The Meeting is invited to:
 1. **endorse** the Report on the First SPREP Executive Board Meeting.

25 July, 2019