
AGENDA ITEM 9.4

Staff Regulations Amendments

Purpose of Paper

1. To advise the SPREP Meeting (SM) of amendments made to the Staff Regulations.

Background

2. Under Staff Regulation 14, the Director General is authorised to make changes to the Staff Regulations subject to provision of advice to the SPREP Meeting on amendments which have no significant financial implications. At the 25th SM in Majuro in 2014, the SM noted that significant financial implications meant any costs over USD\$50,000 for a specific item.
3. The 29th SPREP Meeting has considered Working Paper 9.3 on CROP Harmonisation on Remuneration which outlines the challenges faced by the Secretariat in harmonising staff terms and conditions, and in particular the impact on SPREP recruitment and staff retention (refer WP 9.3). SPREP has not been able to grant any salary movement for the Staff Salary Scales in the last 6 years, as it has prioritised the elimination of the budget deficit and building the financial reserves.
4. In light of the above, and in order to address and progress the commitments of the Secretariat under Organisational Goal 5 of its Strategic Plan, which focuses on retention and recruitment of well qualified staff, the Director General has had to explore options to address some of the long outstanding staff issues within the resources available, and enable the Secretariat to remain a competitive employer in international and local markets.
5. The key changes in staff terms and conditions approved by the Director General in the last 2 years (2017 and 2018) are outlined below. These changes have been made to address the gaps in equity and fairness across the different categories of staff and to maintain competitiveness in international and local employment markets:
 - a) Granting of an Education Allowance for Employees in Positions Advertised Locally (EPAL) with a limit of US\$377 (SAT\$1000) per annum per staff. The cost of implementing this amendment in 2018, on a reimbursable basis, was approximately US\$3,800.
 - b) Granting of a School Leave Travel and Family Leave Travel to Samoan nationals engaged as Employees in Positions Advertised Internationally (EPAI) using Auckland, New Zealand (NZ) as the base, given the majority of Samoan nationals in EPAI positions are NZ citizens. For implementation of the School Leave Travel in 2018, costs incurred were approximately US\$2,000. The Family Leave Travel only came into effect in 2019 and the estimated budget for implementation is US\$20,000 per annum. The implementation of these two terms parallels those established in the Staff Regulations for expatriate EPAIs.

- c) A salary movement was implemented for the EPAL Salary Scale effective in January 2019 based on the 2018 Government of Samoa Salary Scale. The estimated cost of this was US\$14,000. The EPAL Salary Scale had not moved since 2014, (as is the case for the EPAI scale). The Government of Samoa implemented a 10% general increase in January 2019 with incremental increases over the next 3 years as follows (2019 – 5%; 2020 – 3%; 2021 – 2%). This increase has not been factored into the review of the new EPAL salary scale as the information was not available to the Secretariat at budget planning time. The Secretariat therefore needs to consider this increase in the local market within the next year to ensure it continues to remain competitive in the local employment market. The Samoa Public Service continues to drive remuneration standards across the local market as the leading and largest employer.
6. The SM will note that all the changes implemented for the last 2 years are within the authority of the Director General provided by the Staff Regulations with guidance from the SM. Members should also note that the above terms and conditions were included in the recommendations of the last 2 CROP Triennial Reviews (2015 and 2018) undertaken by 2 different independent consultants but were not implemented by SPREP because of the on-going lack of consensus for a common CROP position on remuneration. However, the Secretariat recognises that the recommendations from these reviews represent the most relevant market references available, given they were completed for CROP after substantive consultations amongst the participating agencies and considers the Triennial Review recommendations to be an appropriate guide when their implementation is financially possible, to ensure that the Secretariat remains competitive as an international employer.
7. The Secretariat needs to be able to recruit and retain high calibre staff to deliver effectively on its mandate and be a competitive and preferred employer. The Secretariat, therefore, seeks the understanding and support of Members as it strives to strike a balance between its financial health and delivery of its services to countries via motivated and highly performing staff

Recommendation

8. The Meeting is invited to:
1. **note** the amendments made to the Staff Regulations.

9 August, 2019

