

**AGENDA ITEM: 9.6:
EU Request for greater engagement in
SPREP Biennial Meetings**

Purpose of Paper:

1. To report to Members the assessment of the Open-ended Working Group established by the SPREP Executive Board to consider the EU request and report its recommendations to the 29th SPREP Meeting.

Background

2. On 28 August 2018, EU requested by email to the Director General that SPREP consider providing greater engagement by the EU at SPREP biennial Meetings. (refer Attachment 1). This request was considered by the SPREP Executive Board at its first meeting in September 2018.
3. The SPREP Executive Board endorsed the following recommendations:
 - **recognised** the request of the European Union (EU) "*for the formal opportunity of engaging with Members and make interventions during the discussions on issues linked to the EU cooperation at SPREP" biennial meetings*"
 - **considered** that this is an issue for the full membership of SPREP to consider;
 - **noted** the greater involvement of non-traditional partners;
 - **recognised** that similar requests might be made in the future; and
 - **recommended** that a Friends of the Chair/Open Ended Working Group with an initial membership of Australia, Cook Islands and France be convened to discuss this issue and recommend to the Twenty-Ninth SPREP Meeting:
 - a) whether existing rules are sufficient;
 - b) whether this is a model for formal participation status for non-Members.
4. The Working Group, including representation from Samoa, met three times to consider the Executive Board's recommendation. The Group consulted with the EU Pacific Office in preparation of its report.
5. The Working Group:
 - notes that the existing SPREP Meeting Rules of Procedure are sufficient to accommodate the EU request;
 - recommends that in response to the recommendation of the Executive Board, the following mechanism would meet the EU request under the existing SPREP Meeting Rules of Procedure;
 - considers that the proposed mechanism might equally apply to any other Observer seeking greater engagement in SPREP Biennial Meetings.

Proposed mechanism

6. All observers including the EU will receive the SM provisional agenda and papers 6 weeks in advance of the Meeting and proposes the following mechanism to guide the discretion of the Chair provided under SPREP Meeting Rules of Procedure 6.3 (refer Attachment 2):

7. Observer to advise the Chair at least 3 weeks in advance of the Meeting of items on the provisional agenda of particular interest to Observer cooperation;
8. Chair in consultation with the Secretariat to exercise discretion on whether issues can be dealt with directly by the Secretariat in advance of the Meeting, or otherwise out of session;
9. Chair to exercise discretion in consultation with the Secretariat on whether the agenda has the potential to include this discussion, and if so, what timing amendments might be required to the provisional agenda to accommodate the request.
10. Chair to advise the Observer prior to the commencement of the meeting of the Chair's ruling on speaking slot/s.

Guidance to the Chair

11. In exercising discretion the Chair should, in consultation with the Secretariat, consider the priority for Members to utilise the limited time available for their interaction and discussion of matters of significance to their jointly owned organisation and its programmes; and:
 - i. Require the Observer to prioritise issues;
 - ii. Consider whether any alternative, out of session means to accommodate engagement of the Observer with Members might best meet Observer concerns and save time on the Meeting agenda for Member discussion and decision-making.
12. Following consideration by the June CRGA concerning the EU's request for special observer status at SPC, the Secretariat asked the Pacific EU Delegation whether the EU request to SPREP had changed as a consequence. We have been advised this would depend on a determination from Brussels on this matter. On 25th July, SPREP received a letter from the EU in response to the Director Generals' letter of 1 May 2019, that the EU will be withdrawing its request to SPREP pending a positive resolution regarding the permanent status of the EU to SPC.

Recommendations

13. The Working Group recommends that the Meeting:
 1. **note** that the existing SPREP Rules of Meeting Procedure are sufficient to meet the EU's request;
 2. **endorse** the proposed mechanism as an appropriate response to the request of the EU;
 3. **agree** that the proposed mechanism should serve as a model for subsequent observer interest in a similar level of engagement in SPREP biennial Meetings; and
 4. **Notes** the EU letter of 25th July informing the Director General of SPREP that the EU would like to withdraw its request for greater engagement in SPREP biennial meetings pending a positive resolution regarding the permanent observer status of the European Union to SPC.

4 July 2019