

Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre of the Pacific Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and the Waigani Conventions in the South Pacific Region integrated within the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SCPRC-7)

Introduction

1. The Seventh Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-7) for the joint implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions met virtually on 29 June, 2021.
2. Present at the Meeting as elected in 2017 were Australia and New Zealand with sub-regional representatives from Melanesia by Vanuatu, Micronesia by Federated States of Micronesia, and Polynesia by Samoa.
3. Also present as observers were delegates from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

4. The Steering Committee Meeting commenced at 12.23pm with a welcome from the current Chairperson, representing New Zealand.

Agenda Item 2: Organisational Matters and Selection of Chairperson

5. The Secretariat presented the procedure for the conduct of the Meeting and Article VII of the Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Pacific Regional Centre (PRC) on the Steering Committee.

The Meeting:

- **adopted** on an interim basis and so far as they are appropriate, until the SCPRC has had the opportunity to fully consider the matter, the rules of procedure of the Waigani Convention as they apply to a properly constituted subsidiary body of that Convention and;
- **elected** New Zealand as the Chairperson, Australia as the Vice Chairperson and Solomon Islands as the Rapporteur.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda

6. The provisional meeting agenda as presented, included issues as requiring noting and discussion by the meeting prepared by the Secretariat and New Zealand as Chairperson.
7. Australia suggested and New Zealand agreed that there be a short discussion on the findings of the review of the Waigani Convention under Agenda Item 5: Business Plan for the PRC 2022-2023. The proposed discussions were viewed as useful to help guide the future operations of the PRC.

The Meeting:

- **discussed** the provisional agenda as presented, with the agreed addition of a short discussion on the Review of the Waigani Convention under Agenda Item 5: Business Plan for the PRC 2022-2023; and
- **adopted** the agenda as amended for the meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Matters relating to the 2020-2021 Business Plan of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre

8. The Secretariat presented a report on the work undertaken in the implementation of the 2020-2021 Business Plan of the PRC for consideration by the Steering Committee.
9. The Federated States of Micronesia sought clarification on whether activities reported under *Scientific and Technical Matters, Topic B National Reporting* and *Legal Governance and Enforcement Matters, Topic B Upskilling of Customs Officers* included a request for technical assistance they had made to SPREP for training of their Customs and Waste Management Officers. The Chairperson sought advice from the Secretariat on whether the training would be delivered despite the impacts of COVID-19 as noted in the report under Agenda Item 5: Business Plan for the PRC 2022-2023.
10. The Secretariat responded that they have received the request from the Federated States of Micronesia for upskilling and training of Customs Officers and Environment Enforcement Officers. The Secretariat confirmed they will work with the Federated States of Micronesia and other Members on how they can deliver the training virtually in partnership with other Secretariat Programmes and partners who are also delivering work of similar nature.
11. New Zealand noted the 'Review of the Waigani Convention' was not completed as Parties are yet to submit comments for consideration as discussed at the Eighth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC-8) of the Waigani Convention on 23 June 2021. The Secretariat noted that they would correct the report.
12. New Zealand and Samoa made inquiries on *Topic B 'Financial mechanism for the implementation of the Waigani Convention'*. New Zealand requested further details on what the financial mechanism was, and Samoa queried why this activity had not been actioned. The Secretariat explained that the objective of the financial mechanism was to provide financial resources to assist Parties implement the Waigani Convention. The Secretariat recalled that there were attempts by the Ninth and Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Waigani Convention to explore ways in which a dedicated financial mechanism could be established and utilized by Parties to implement the Convention. The Secretariat further clarified that it has not been achieved due to lack of ongoing consultation with Parties.
13. In response to New Zealand's suggestion that future meetings allow countries to present progress of country projects, Samoa shared that they had received assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to develop and endorse their Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) Report in 2018. Priority areas have been identified and a proposal has been submitted to the Specific International Programme under the Minamata Convention to implement some of the activities. Samoa also sought assistance with training activities for Customs officers and responsible staff that implement the Basel and Waigani Conventions, particularly on the reporting templates.

14. The Secretariat noted the suggestion from New Zealand to ensure there are linkages with other Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and confirmed this work will be ongoing including continuing work with the BRS Secretariat and exploring potential relationships with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and their work on pesticides, the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM) and their work on chemical management, as well as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
15. The Secretariat confirmed they will also continue to engage with Tsinghua University of China and pursue ways to improve their relationship with the university as the Basel Convention Regional Centre (BCRC) for Asia and the Pacific.
16. Samoa provided an update on e-waste management with PacWaste Plus to improve sustainable management of e-waste at the national level. It was further noted that Samoa is planning to develop e-waste regulations and policy, and increase community awareness through a national campaign. Samoa shared that it intends to establish a storage facility to enhance capacity building on the proper dismantling and handling of e-waste, as well as training on e-waste to support the circular economy and create employment opportunities.
17. Vanuatu shared their MIA report is nearly completed and sought clarification on funding available for legacy mercury waste. Vanuatu also sought clarification on implementing the Waigani Convention and whether there should be legislation in place to help with implementation at the national level. A request was also conveyed to the Secretariat for a copy of the reporting template.
18. The Secretariat responded the ISLANDS Pacific Child Project has funding available to assist parties to the Minamata Convention. The project was designed to incentivize countries to become Parties to the Convention. Once the report is completed, Vanuatu will qualify to access the pool of funding for affected countries to help the clean-up of mercury waste. The Secretariat confirmed that it is vital for the relevant legislation and regulations to domesticate their international obligations under the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions.

The Meeting:

- **provided** feedback of the Report of the Secretariat; and
- **endorsed** the amended report and recommended it to COP-11 of the Convention for formal noting.

Agenda Item 5: Business Plan for the PRC 2022-2023

19. The Meeting considered the 2022-2023 Business Plan for the PRC and exchanged views on how the Secretariat can improve its delivery of services with limited resources.
20. The Chairperson noted that due to strong interlinkages between the Waigani and Basel Conventions, the Business Plan of the PRC is the same as the Work Programme of the Waigani Convention. The Chairperson further noted that since the PRC is fully embedded in SPREP's Waste Management Pollution Control (WMPC) Programme, the Business Plan contains WMPC's work plans and budget .
21. Australia noted an error under Section 1.3 of the Business Plan and requested its inclusion as a Steering Committee Member. It was also suggested that the 'Review of the Waigani Convention' be included in the Business Plan pending finalization of the review report,

including the possible development of an action plan to deliver the recommendations of the review report.

22. Papua New Guinea requested their inclusion in the 4.2.4 table regarding Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Comments from other Members were also supported regarding Customs trainings in countries, and a suggestion was made to include the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other relevant organizations in Section 5.2 of the Business Plan.
23. New Zealand suggested that the business plan have linkages to the Cleaner Pacific 2025 and also the developments around the global plastics agreement. With respect to 4.2.1, New Zealand and Australia offered assistance with Pre-COP support and would also explore Post-COP support. New Zealand also suggested the Secretariat include a column in 4.2.4 to show costs related to the activities in the Business Plan 2022-2023.
24. Samoa requested advice on how they may update information on their Competent Authority. The Secretariat confirmed that the updating of the information occurs formally at the COPs but they may submit those changes anytime to the Secretariats of the Waigani and BRS Conventions.
25. It was suggested that the Secretariat circulate a draft of the Business Plan 2022-2023 for comments from committee members and encouraged Members to provide feedback that is reflective of the sub-regions to ensure there is ownership. It was agreed that a timeline of 23 July would allow sufficient time for sub-regions to provide comments and satisfy Waigani COP requirements.
26. The Secretariat clarified that as per Article VII (2) of the Memorandum of Understanding establishing the PRC, the SCPRC reviews and approves the Business Plan which is then lodged with the Basel Convention Secretariat. Hence, there is no requirement to prepare the Business Plan for approval by the Waigani COP as has been the practice. This means the Committee and the Secretariat can work together to finalize the draft Business Plan before it is resubmitted to the Basel Convention Secretariat. It may be tabled for adoption at the Waigani COP.
27. The Secretariat agreed to the request by the Federated States of Micronesia to officially notify Competent Authorities and Focal Points of the Waigani Convention through a circular that Vanuatu, Samoa and themselves will be contacting Parties for information to be included in the Business Plan 2022-2023.

The Meeting:

- **considered** with amendments, the Pacific Regional Center Business Plan 2022-2023; and
- **agreed** for Parties to provide written comments through their sub-regional representatives on the Committee by **23 July 2021** to the 2022 – 2023 Pacific Regional Center Business Plan for **endorsement** by **30 July 2021**.

Agenda Item 6: Date and venue of the next meeting

28. Upon discussion, a date and venue for the Eighth Meeting of the Steering Committee for the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-8) was agreed.

The Meeting:

- **confirmed** the venue of the SCPRC-8 meeting as Vanuatu to be held in 2023 following the STAC-9 Meeting subject to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and resources needed to host such a meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Adoption of the Report

29. The meeting report was presented for adoption as the Seventh Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-7).

The Meeting:

- **adopted** the draft report of the SCPRC-7 meeting; and
- **recommended** the COP-11 formally endorse the report as a true record of the SCPRC-7 meeting.

Agenda Item 8: Closure of the meeting

30. The meeting ended at 4.19pm.

The Chairperson of the Meeting:

- formally **closed** the Seventh Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre.
