



## **Seventeenth meeting of the Noumea Convention**

Seventeenth ordinary meeting of the contracting parties to the convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and related protocols (Noumea Convention)

Apia, Samoa  
31 August 2023

## **REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON WORK PERFORMED IN THE PERIOD JULY 2021 – JUNE 2023 IN RELATION TO THE NOUMEA CONVENTION AND PROTOCOLS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

1. In accordance with Rule 12(vi) of the Rules of Procedure for the Noumea Convention, the Secretariat informs the Parties on the work and activities developed, coordinated, and carried out by the Secretariat for the period from July 2021 to June 2023, to assist Parties implement their obligations under the Noumea Convention. These activities were carried out under the following areas:
  - (a) Marine pollution work as part of the Waste Management and Pollution Control Programme.
  - (b) Marine and coastal conservation work as part of the Island and Ocean Ecosystems Programme.
  - (c) Environmental impact assessment (EIA) works as part of the Environmental Monitoring and Governance Programme.
2. The implementation of the two Convention Protocols on Dumping and Oil Spills has been carried out by the Pollution Team (Pollution Adviser and Marine Pollution Officer) with funding mainly from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the Government of Australia which is primarily focused on ship-sourced marine pollution.
3. The Noumea Convention has two main sources of funding comprising of:
  - (i) Contributions from Parties (which support the biennial Conference of the Parties); and
  - (ii) An operating budget for activities under the Convention are indirectly supported by funding from the Government of Australia, Government of New Zealand, Government of France, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), European Union, Global Environment Fund (GEF) and others.
4. Over the past biennium there has been a significant focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly support in addressing marine litter and plastic pollution through the implementation of the Pacific Regional Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025.

5. The capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries Phase III Programme is in its halfway mark on the implementation of the activities. The project is earmarked to end in May 2024 with possible no cost extension to be finalised later this year. The ACP MEA Phase III Programme has supported the various activities under the Noumea Convention ranging from development of guidance notes on coastal engineering practices, support negotiations to the First and Second Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop a global legally binding framework to prevent plastic pollution including in the marine environment to the convening of the Ad Hoc Meeting of the Parties in June this year to discuss, review and unpack the findings and recommendations from the review of the Noumea Convention completed in November 2021. The ACP MEA Phase III will continue to support the activities under the Noumea Convention including the intersessional activities that are requested for approval by this Conference of the Parties.
6. The report on the work performed under the Noumea Convention is set out below under the relevant articles of the Convention and its Protocols.

**B. Waste and Pollution activities as part of the Waste Management and Pollution Control Programme.**

A number of activities have been undertaken by the Secretariat to support Contracting Parties in the implementation of the relevant articles relating to marine pollution from vessels, land-based sources, seabed activities as well as airborne pollution, disposal of wastes, storage of toxic and hazardous wastes, cooperation in combating pollution in cases of emergency. These activities are linked to the global multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and IMO Conventions regulating marine pollution such as MARPOL and the London Convention on Dumping with linkages to the Noumea Convention. The relevant Articles 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,15,17,18 in the Convention form the basis of the number of integrated activities carried out by the Secretariat as follows:

1. The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Treaty) was adopted on 19 June 2023. The negotiations and adoption of the new treaty demonstrated the strength of multilateralism to address the threats of human activities and ensure sustainability of areas not covered under national jurisdiction. The Secretariat with the CROP technical teams provided support to Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties of the Noumea Convention during the resumed sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop the BBNJ Treaty. The BBNJ Treaty is recognized as a pivotal instrument as it establishes a framework for environmental impact assessment and strategic impact assessment to ensure protection and conservation of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The Secretariat provided guidance and assistance to Contracting Parties such as:

- (i) development of the plans for the Organic Waste Infrastructure Management in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands.
- (ii) commenced designs for electronic waste take back system in Samoa which is expected to be implemented in late 2023 and early 2024.
- (iii) development of regional guidelines on personal protective equipment for waste workers.
- (iv) provision of technical assistance to Federated States of Micronesia in the development of their National Waste Strategy.
- (v) PACPLAN Resilience Project 2022-2025 capacity building initiatives benefiting Contracting Parties such as Nauru and Solomon Islands on evaluation of oil spill response readiness, development of national marine spill response contingency plans and general spill response awareness training.
- (vi) Assistance by way of funding and technical advisory services provided to Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands to support recycling, collection and processing to divert waste from landfill and avoid generation of waste.
- (vii) Ongoing and continuous assistance and support to the Moana Taka Partnership with Swire Shipping to provide assistance to recyclers for Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties for the disposal of non-commercial waste.
- (viii) Shipment of used oil is underway in Samoa.

### **C. Marine and coastal conservation work as part of the Island and Ocean Ecosystem**

The Island and Ocean Ecosystems (IOE) have carried out numerous activities implementing the relevant Articles of the Convention relating to marine and coastal conservation work, as well as oceans. Article 14 encapsulates activities relating to oceans, marine and coastal, biodiversity and marine protected areas, threatened and migratory species, invasive species and regional initiatives supporting Contracting Parties who are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to implement their respective obligations with linkages to the Noumea Convention.

1. Some of the key ocean-related events which the Secretariat participated in are as follows:
  - (i) Fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA5.2)

- (ii) 2022 UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, with the theme “Scaling up Ocean action based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions.
- (iii) Fourth session of the intergovernmental conference to develop an agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Treaty). The BBNJ Treaty was adopted on 19 June 2023.
- (iv) Development of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The post-2020 GBF was adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022.
- (v) First intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC-1) convened to negotiate a global legally binding agreement on plastics pollution including in the marine environment.
- (vi) The 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognized the importance of the ocean and climate change nexus. The health of oceans is to be protected from the harmful impacts of climate change. The importance of oceans as the regulator of climate and weather patterns was raised throughout the thematic discussions of the COP27 meeting.

2. All of the above ocean-related activities represented opportunities for Contracting Parties to present a strong vision for ocean conservation and management of its resources. The Secretariat supported the Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties to the above ocean-related activities.

For activities relating to biodiversity and marine protected areas, the Secretariat carried out the following activities to support Contracting Parties:

3. The membership of the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation (PIRT) continues to grow with the addition of Islands Conservation and IUCN French National Committee. The annual PIRT meeting and associated meetings were convened during the reporting period to support and coordinate effective regional progress to new regional and global biodiversity frameworks.
4. In preparation for the CBD COP15 in December 2022, the Secretariat organised a hybrid regional preparatory meeting for Pacific Parties to the CBD. All Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention are States Parties to the CBD. The objective of the preparatory meeting was to brief Pacific CBD Parties on the provisional agenda of the COP15, gauge national positions to formulate coherent regional positions as well as identifying the gaps in the engagement for the Secretariat to develop options and approaches to bridge these gaps. This was made possible by the ACP MEA Phase III Project and the Government of Australia in building the capacities of Pacific CBD Parties to engage at MEA COPs such as the CBD COP15.

5. The Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030 has been developed by the Secretariat with Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties and Partners and adopted in September 2021. Outlining regional priorities and actions for coral conservation, the Secretariat supports the implementation plan with Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, scientific and technical partners and non-state actors. As an example, the Pacific Reef Cloud Monitoring Project is an initiative resulting from the partnership with the Government of Australia through the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the Secretariat to combine scientific data with traditional knowledge and monitoring data into the ReefCloud platform to better inform conservation and restoration measures and policies. The project is first implemented in Samoa and expected to be expanded to Contracting Parties and non-C Contracting Parties beyond 2023 as part of the Pacific Bioscapes Programme.
  
6. The EU-ACP Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme Phase II conducted various key activities within Contracting Parties such as:
  - (i) Review of national protected area coverage data was completed for Solomon Islands to update their country profile on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) with the addition of two new, legally declared Forest Conservation Areas. This data review support to update the WDPA will enable more accurate national reporting against protected area targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
  
  - (ii) A national workshop was successfully completed for the Cook Islands on identifying, recognizing, supporting and reporting 'Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). The workshop improved the understanding of OECMs among conservation practitioners and policy makers, provided insight into potential OECMs and concerns specific to Cook Islands and the Pacific Region. The workshop also laid the foundation and a roadmap on the way forward to recognize and report OECMs in the Cook Islands. OECMs are firmly embedded within Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Cook Islands experience will provide lessons and best practice for the rest of the of the Pacific Region to follow and replicate.
  
  - (iii) A virtual training was carried out for Nauru and an in-person training delivered for Samoa. The trainings engaged national technical officers and equipped them with basic practical knowledge of navigating the Pacific Islands Protected Area Portal (PIPAP) to find country data, access information resources and protected area management decision support tools to assist them with their daily work. Furthermore, these trainings imparted practical skills and knowledge on data capture from the field, the use of global positioning systems (GPS) units, data input and the production of basic site maps with primary descriptive features utilizing the freely available Geographic Information Systems software (Quantum GIS – QGIS).

- (ii) Provided data analysis support for the Ensuring Resilience Ecosystems for Protected Areas (EREPA) Project with the goal to establish an effective network of protected areas to achieve healthy, productive and restored landscapes in Guadalcanal, Malaita, Rennell-Bellona and Temotu Provinces. This process involved gathering of spatial data from key stakeholders in country through a data workshop in March 2023 to ensure relevant data to support the establishment of Protected Areas. Another data validation workshop is being planned to present back to the stakeholders the results of the analysis.

For activities relating to threatened and migratory species, the Secretariat carried out the following activities to support Contracting Parties:

7. Similar to the preparatory work to build the capacities of States Parties to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the SPREP Secretariat organised a hybrid preparatory meeting for Pacific Parties to the CITES. The aim of the preparatory meeting was to ensure Pacific Parties, including Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention, were briefed on the provisional agenda of the CITES COP meeting in particular scientific information was shared on proposed new species listings. SPREP Secretariat followed up in February 2023 with an online workshop to discuss capacity gaps that require support. The ACP MEA Phase III Project supported the participation of delegates to the preparatory meeting as part of the project objectives to build the capacity of Pacific CITES Parties to engage at the CITES COP.
8. Following a review of the 2013-2017 Regional Marine Species Programme and a series of workshops and consultations, a new Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026 was developed and launched in 2022. The Regional Marine Species Action Plan 2022-2026 covers five species groups including for the first time an Action Plan for Seabirds. The Secretariat is working with interested countries to develop implementation plans for the priority species.
9. In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species, the SPREP Secretariat hosted an online 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Pacific Cetacean Memorandum of Understanding in August 2021.
10. Through the partnerships with the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme and the BIEM Initiative, the Secretariat carried out various key activities relating to threatened and migratory species:
  - (i) Regional marine turtle workshops were carried out for Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties together, where participants reviewed their turtle conservation work with resolutions proposed for the CITES COP19 for endorsement. Further, an online workshop with TRAFFIC was carried out for the benefit of the Pacific CITES Parties.

- (ii) The development of the CITES Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) and management plans for giant clams, coral and shark species was carried out for a few Contracting Parties such as Fiji's NDF for giant clams and NDF development for giant clam stockpiles consultancy for Solomon Islands is in progress.
- (iii) The National Saltwater Crocodile management plan for Solomon Islands is progressing including a training workshop and planned review of the first draft.
- (iv) Papua New Guinea will be reviewing the Crocodile Trade Act amendments followed by consultations.
- (v) On National Plan of Action (NPOA), Solomon Islands' NPOA for marine turtles is awaiting endorsement by Cabinet while Papua New Guinea's NPOA for sharks was launched in June 2021.
- (vi) The PEUMP programme has also supported research including the development of a turtle extinction model and a review of Pacific cetaceans, diversity and threats. Monitoring of bycatch of threatened dolphins and sharks in a fish maw gillnet fishery in the Kikori Delta (Papua New Guinea) has also been undertaken. Research provided by these reports will contribute to identifying where efforts to reduce threats to vulnerable species are best focused.

**D. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) and environmental monitoring and governance activities as part of the Environmental Monitoring and Governance Programme**

The Environmental Monitoring and Governance (EMG) Programme manages and coordinates the EU-ACP Project on Capacity Building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) Phase III. Through this project, all MEAs managed by the Secretariat are coordinated under the EMG Programme through the ACP MEA Phase III Project. The unique feature of this project is the internal coordination of activities to support enforcement and compliance under MEAs as well as building national capacities to implement obligations under MEAs. The ACP MEA Phase III project activities are focused on MEAs such as the CBD, CITES, CMS, BRS, Minamata, Waigani and the Noumea Convention. The Noumea Convention is a regional seas convention for the Pacific Region. The two components of the ACP MEA Phase III have enabled the Secretariat to coordinate the activities of MEAs within Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties as well as strengthen the regional seas component of the Pacific Region, the Noumea Convention.

On the activities to support the Contracting Parties, the Secretariat carried out the following activities:

14. Capacity building measures such as trainings were carried out for the Cook Islands' National Environment Service focusing on enforcement and compliance with

environmental impact assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) processes. Furthermore, a national training was also carried out in Samoa for stakeholders in the tourism and environmental sectors on the key aspects the EIA Guidelines on coastal tourism to support sustainable tourism developments. A mentoring programme was initiated between the Secretariat and Samoa's Planning and Urban Management Agency (PUMA) for increased understanding of risk assessment and increased capacity on environmental assessments using the SPREP EIA Risk Assessment toolkit.

15. Supported the development of the State of Environment (SOE) Reports for Nauru and Samoa. These SOE reports have supported the development of action plans and strategies to address threats to the national environment as well as informing a country on the state of their national environment on a periodic basis. Thematic maps were developed based on SOE indicators to support reporting on the health of its environment. The Secretariat has also carried out and supported the development of National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) for Tuvalu and Palau. These initiatives are a result of the obligations under the Noumea Convention and are extended to include non-Contracting Parties.
16. The Pacific Learning Partnership on Environmental Social Sustainability (PLP-ESS), a collaborative partnership established between the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Secretariat, support environmental and social risk management for development projects in the Pacific. Through this partnership, several capacity building modules and mentoring programmes on environmental safeguards and impact assessment were developed and delivered to a wide range of stakeholders and practitioners in the environment and safeguards space across the region.
17. The Secretariat provides ongoing and continuous assistance and support to Contracting Parties through the development of guidance and practice notes, review of EIA reports, supporting national EIA/SEA processes as well as providing technical advice on the development of bills, regulations and policies. This was done for the following Contracting Parties:
  - (i) The Secretariat provided support and assistance to the development of Nauru's EIA Regulations under the Environmental Management and Climate Change Act 2020. The draft EIA Regulations aims to better manage the environmental and social risks of development projects.
  - (ii) The Pacific Network for Environment Assessment (PNEA) launched in 2016, has recently been upgraded to better support EIA, SEA and Safeguards practitioners in the Pacific Region. With over 700 members, the PNEA continues to serve as a platform for information exchange, collaboration and capacity building. Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties gain access to a resource library, newsletters and webinar training events to improve



environmental assessment and management practices throughout the Pacific Region.

- (iii) The Secretariat also recently developed a sector specific guidance note on EIA for coastal engineering and development projects in the Pacific to support resilient planning and infrastructure development for coastal environments in the Pacific to support Contracting Parties in meeting their obligations under the Convention.
  - (iv) A brochure communicating the benefits of registration of EIA consultants and experts was developed and shared to Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties to support national efforts and initiatives in developing similar guidelines and processes for the registration of EIA consultants and experts.
18. Articles 17 and 18 of the Noumea Convention are cross-cutting provisions that all activities of the Noumea Convention to be coordinated and implemented. The implementation of marine pollution activities, ocean and island ecosystems and environmental monitoring, planning and governance require scientific and technical cooperation. Article 17 stipulates that Contracting Parties are to cooperate directly or with the assistance of competent global, regional and sub-regional organisations, in scientific research, environmental monitoring and the exchange of data and other scientific information related to the purpose of the Convention.
19. In supporting Contracting Parties implement Article 18, the Secretariat has undertaken the following activities:
- (i) Since 2018, the Secretariat established the Pacific Environment data portal network which hosts 14 country data portals as well as a regional node. This network is used for sharing and storing data but more importantly, using data to foster national objectivity including the Noumea Convention. In 2022, there were over 18,000 datasets available to all Pacific countries and territories to access. Further information can be accessed here: <https://pacific-data.sprep.org>
  - (ii) The collaboration between the Pacific Community (SPC) Data Hub and the Secretariat's Pacific Environment Data Portal on portal system analysis continues as part of the Pacific Data Ecosystem. Data hubs (SPC and the Secretariat) hosted the first Pacific DataViz Challenge in 2022 aimed to improve access, sharing and use of Pacific data as well as highlight innovative data visualizations.
  - (iii) The State of Environment and Conservation Report produced by the Secretariat provided indicator status for 31 indicators including protected areas, pollution, migratory species and more. This contributes to the regional monitoring and exchange of technical information required by Article 17 of the Noumea Convention. For more information, please go to: <https://soec.sprep.org>

- (iv) In collaboration with UNEP, the Secretariat hosted a side event at the UNFCCC COP27 on the importance of data-based reporting to inform decision making. Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties were panel members sharing their respective experiences on the importance of having 'good' data to make good, sound decisions.
  - (v) The Secretariat presented at the regional Geospatial Information System and Remote Sensing (PGISRS) User Conference and the first Oceania Geospatial Symposium (OGS) on the GIS and capacity building support provided to Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties. This includes the development of GIS online learning modules and in-country training to enhance Pacific countries' technical GIS capacity for data driven decision making and to support Contracting Parties in meeting their obligations under the Convention.
  - (vi) The Secretariat facilitated an interagency discussion with the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and United States Geological Survey (USGS) on Pacific countries' support for spatial data and earth observation data access in the Pacific Region.
20. The Secretariat, pursuant to Article 18, provides technical and other assistance to Contracting Parties through projects implemented by the Secretariat. These project scopes usually cover Contracting Parties and non-Contracting Parties given the proximities of exclusive economic zones that are referred to as the Convention Area in the Noumea Convention. Through partnerships and collaborations with the Secretariat's traditional partners and donors, the activities reported in the biennium 2021 to 2023 were carried out, completed and/or planned through the technical assistance and other support provided through existing and/or projects managed, coordinated or implemented by the Secretariat.
21. One of the key projects providing technical and other assistance to the Contracting Parties is the ACP MEA Phase III Project which coordinates all of the activities that are directly linked and aligned to the provisions of the Noumea Convention. The regional seas component of the project is the platform on which the Noumea Convention activities can be expanded to link with contemporary global issues such as the BBNJ Treaty and the INC sessions on plastic pollution including the marine environment.

\*\*\*\*\*