

31st SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5, 6, and 7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

Agenda item 9.4.3: Scaling up the outcomes and results of the ACP MEA Phase 3 Project

Purpose of paper:

1. To inform the Members on the outcomes and results of the ACP MEA Phase 3 Project implementation; and
2. To seek endorsement of the scaling up of the ACP/MEA Phase 3 Project to Phase 4.

Background:

3. The ACP/MEA Phase 3 is the capacity building project related to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) supported by the Organisations of African Caribbean and Pacific (OACP) states and funded by the European Union and implemented by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). For the Pacific region, the ACP MEA Phase 3 project is executed by SPREP. This phase commenced in July 2020 and became fully operational in early 2021. The total budget for the ACP MEA Phase 3 project is USD3.2 million dollars.
4. The project aims to build the capacity of Pacific Members to fulfill and meet their obligations under MEAs to address environmental issues. It has two components: the SPREP component aims to enhance the mainstreaming and implementation MEAs¹ related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste; while the Noumea component focuses on the reinforcement of compliance, enforcement measures and the strengthening of the regional seas conventions.

Some Key achievements:

5. The great support by the OACP, the European Union and the UN Environment Programme is to be acknowledged because it has provided the funding to assist members achieved key environment framework and activities as contained in attachment 1. Some of the achievements are shared under each of the Components below.

¹ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on the international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora (CITES), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of wild animals (CMS), Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions, Minamata Convention, Waigani Convention and Noumea Convention.

6. Under the SPREP Component,
 - a. Supported Kiribati in the development of the Kiribati Integrated Environmental Policy and the Tuvalu and Palau National Environmental Management Strategies.
 - b. Development of the Nauru and Vanuatu State of Environment Reports.
 - c. Completed the development of the Regional EIA Guidance Notes on Coastal Engineering. These EIA Guidance Notes complement the existing SPREP Environmental Assessment Guidelines (SPREP 2016, SPREP 2018, SPREP 2020)
 - d. Supported PICs to attend the Regional preparatory meeting of Pacific Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to the Convention on international trade of endangered species (CITES), and meeting of the Pacific Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions.
 - e. Pacific Network on Environment Assessment (PNEA) Portal is fully functional as the Pacific EIA Community of Practice. The PNEA Community of Practice supported the Pacific Learning Partnership for Environmental and Social Sustainability (PLP-ESS) third round of regional training on EIA, stakeholder engagement and social impact assessment.

7. Under the Noumea Component
 - a. Support the work of the Secretariat of the Noumea Convention and completed the Ad Hoc Meeting of the Parties to the Noumea Convention to discuss and unpack the recommendations from the review of the Noumea Convention.
 - b. Development of the Pacific Island Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026 and completed the Regional Guidelines for the Nagoya Protocol to support SPREP Members in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol.
 - c. Completed the Comparative Analysis of Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (PAME) tool that helps SPREP Members to develop a strategy and build capacity for management effectiveness of protected and conserved areas.

Challenges:

8. Since the commencement of the ACP/MEA Phase 3 in 2021, the project was faced with challenges relating to COVID-19 global pandemic. Compulsory national lockdowns prevented the implementation of activities designed prior to the global pandemic. As such, in mid-2021, component activities underwent substantial review by project hubs² and partners³ to accommodate the new modalities of project delivery i.e., virtual. In-country engagement and face-to-face capacity building initiatives were either postponed or conducted virtually. However, despite changes in modalities for project delivery and revisions to project log frames, the persistent challenge for Members was having access to stable internet connectivity and the resulting high costs of internet use. These were further compounded by national priorities shifting from addressing environmental threats to prioritising prevention of COVID-19.

² African, Caribbean and Pacific Hubs

³ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), European Environmental Bureau (EEB),

Next steps:

9. The ACP MEA Phase 3 project is due to expire on 8 May 2024 in accordance with the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in July 2020. The remainder of activities have yet to be implemented due to contributing factors such as the global pandemic which enforced mandatory lockdowns creating remote working arrangements that required stable internet connectivity as well as shifting national priorities. However, despite these challenges to implementation, the project was able to achieve notable achievements.
10. In order to progress implementation, the EMG Programme is reorganising project implementation within the Secretariat including changes that may be required at the country level in consultation with the participating Member countries.
11. Given the above activities have either not completed or commenced, there is a need to extend the project timeline. To this end, the ACP MEA Phase 3 Donors and Partners are discussing early stages of a no cost extension to the project. This is attributed to the Project Partners' requests and sufficient funding to continue the project so that Members can benefit from the planned regional activities relating to capacity building as well as the development of necessary tools to support national initiatives. The extension will also provide ample time for the Secretariat to finalise the ACP MEA Phase 4 Project Concept which will be developed with members and donor partners.

Recommendation:

12. The Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Note** the outcomes and results of the ACP MEA Phase 3 project implementation to date; and
 - 2) **Seek** the endorsement of the Members for the Secretariat to develop an ACP MEA Phase 4 project proposal in partnership with member countries and donor partners to be presented in the Executive Board meeting in 2024.

3 July 2023