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**Report of the Eighth Meeting of the Steering Committee (SCPRC 8) 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**

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### **Introduction**

1. The Eighth Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-8) for the joint implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions met virtually on 19 July 2023.
2. Present at the Meeting as elected in 2021 were Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu (Melanesia), Federated States of Micronesia (Micronesia) and Samoa (Polynesia).

### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting**

3. The Steering Committee Meeting commenced at 12.10pm with a welcome from the current Chair, representing New Zealand.
4. Samoa opened the meeting with a prayer
5. All committee members were invited by the Chair to introduce themselves.

### **Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda**

6. The provisional meeting agenda as prepared by the Secretariat and the Chair was presented to the meeting. It included two items related to the core business of the committee, a report on the status of the 2022-2023 Business Plan and the draft 2024-2025 Business Plan.

### **The Meeting:**

- Adopted the agenda as presented with no objections and requests for additional matters.

### **Agenda Item 3: Matters relating to the 2022-2023 Business Plan of the Pacific Regional Centre**

7. The Secretariat presented a report on the work undertaken in the implementation of the 2022-2023 Business Plan of the PRC for consideration by the Steering Committee.
8. New Zealand indicated they will review the 2022-2023 Business Plan and submit comments to the Secretariat for consideration. They added that the approach they have taken is to ensure that the report captures additional highlights for what has been achieved so far and is as up to date as possible to the end of the calendar year since the report will also be submitted to the BRS Secretariat as part of the Centre's annual reporting.

9. Samoa thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensive report of the implementation of the 2022-2023 Business Plan and sought made several follow-up enquiries from activities presented in the report.
10. Samoa enquired if the regional BRS training on Legal Frameworks and Illegal Trafficking conducted an evaluation to follow through on the application of the knowledge gained by participants at their workplaces. The Secretariat advised that while there were evaluation forms prepared for the training, the hybrid nature of the meeting and the different time zones made it difficult to undertake an evaluation immediately at end of the training. The Secretariat will also discuss the possibility of follow-up refresher training with the BRS Secretariat.
11. Samoa expressed sadness that the training on negotiation at COPs did not go ahead as planned because there is now an increase in international forums which Pacific countries are part of. The Secretariat explained that the training was deferred due to the change in funding modalities from UNEP. The training will go ahead in 2024 once the full allocation was made available.
12. Samoa then concluded their intervention on this matter by reporting to the meeting that invitation for meetings sent by UNEP and other organizations did not reach them in good time and they have missed out on some of these meetings as a result. The Secretariat noted this point and will raise it with the BRS Secretariat again.
13. The mentoring role played by the Centre at the 2023 BRS Triple COP did not go unnoticed. New Zealand were of the view that despite the report indicating no progress on the MEA negotiations training, the Centre's support provided to Parties at the COPs, especially with the proposed amendment to the Rotterdam Convention, can be taken as some progress.
14. Vanuatu commended the Secretariat for the work done in implementing the 2022-2023 Business Plan and made calls for the Committee to consider means of strengthening the capacity of the Centre so it is able to support countries. Using the example of the Minamata Initial Assessments, Vanuatu pointed out that the project has had lengthy delays due to the Centre's limited manpower and although they have completed their MIA, they are still to undertake sampling of animals for mercury. They found the BRS training very useful and requested that follow-up sessions be included in the 2024-2025 Business Plan. These interventions were noted by the Secretariat and they would meet the international consultants undertaking the MIA to plan mercury sampling for Vanuatu.
15. Vanuatu also raised the impact of internal administrative issues on the delivery of SPREP Projects and suggested project Letters of Agreement include mechanisms for intervening in such situations so project work continues unimpeded.
16. Federated States of Micronesia observed the work of the Waigani Convention is picking up momentum from previous years and encouraged the Steering Committee to ensure this is supported. They requested ongoing training and lamented the lack of progress on the GEF ISLANDS Project that is earmarked to support FSM address their used oil challenges. The Secretariat indicated its willingness to conduct a follow-up in person training to the virtual one in 2021, noting that the close proximity to South-East Asia, a noted hotspot for illegal trafficking of hazardous wastes, make the North Pacific an important area for the Waigani Convention.

17. The Secretariat noted the slow progress of the GEF ISLANDS Pacific Project and informed FSM of the relocation of the Project Manager to Samoa in July 2023 should improve implementation and engagement with all beneficiary countries.

#### **The Meeting:**

- The Meeting endorsed the report (following consideration of further comments from the Parties and any tidying up edits by the Secretariat) and recommends it to the Waigani Convention COP12 for formal noting.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Business Plan for the PRC 2024-2025**

18. At the invitation of the Chair, the Secretariat presented the 2024-2025 draft Business Plan to the Steering Committee and exchanged views on how the Secretariat can improve its delivery of services with limited resources.
19. The Secretariat explained that the 2024-2025 draft Business Plan reflected the COP-1 decision on the budget of the Waigani Convention and the embedding of the activities and budget of the convention with the Centre. Accordingly, the budget is composed of a Core budget funded through Parties contributions to Waigani Convention and a Programmatic budget funded by SPREP WMPC Projects.
20. Vanuatu requested the Secretariat to confirm if the work on healthcare waste incinerators installed by the PacWaste Project would be continued by PacWaste Plus hence they are not captured in the 2024-2025 Business Plan. The Secretariat confirmed the inclusion of the ongoing work by PacWaste Plus to repair and commission identified incinerator units in this biennium.
21. Vanuatu further requested support for the management of obsolete chemicals that are currently stockpiled in country, noting that the GEF ISLANDS Pacific project will be removing only mercury and POPs. The Secretariat acknowledged the rise of obsolete stockpiles of mainly laboratory and industrial chemicals in the region and offered to liaise with UNEP, Implementing Agency of the GEF ISLANDS Pacific Project, on possible inclusion of these chemicals with the clean up work for mercury and POPs. The Secretariat also disclosed to the meeting several discussions held with Australian counterparts on potentially collaborating with the Australian Defense Force programme in the Pacific to remove and dispose stockpiles of chemicals.
22. The Secretariat explained that the Core Budget will see an increase in Parties' contributions. Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, and New Zealand queried the proposed increase in the Core Budget and suggested the Secretariat provide arguments in the appropriate COP Working Paper to justify the increase in membership contributions so Parties understand where the funds will be going. The Secretariat noted this for action and explained that the proposed increases were made in anticipation of the additional meetings of the STAC to deliberate on the implementation of the 2021 Review report.
23. The Secretariat also stressed that despite the increase in the Core Budget, STAC and SCPRC meetings would still be held on the back of other SPREP meetings to share costs and therefore reduce the amount needed to host these working meetings of the Waigani Convention.

24. New Zealand noted that it may not be able to attend intersessional meetings in person. They also noted that the last sentence in the Executive Summary still contained information relating to 2022-2023 which the Secretariat noted for rectifying. In relation to the strategic lines of action in the Executive Summary they sought to clarify if:
- a. SPREP is also a donor under Point #1;
  - b. The Secretariat's intent under Action Point # 5 was for the PRC to be part of working groups established under various MEAs or to encourage Pacific Island countries to join the working groups
  - c. The responsibility of accessing resources from donors should be a high level role for SPREP (Point #6)
25. In response the Secretariat clarified that since it relied on membership contributions to carry out its mandate, it would be difficult to classify SPREP as a donor organization. The Secretariat then confirmed that it plans to join partnership working groups of the MEAs as a regional centre and to encourage member countries to join. Finally, the Centre shared that while managing relationships with partners was a high level role that SPREP plays, it enjoys a certain level access to partners through its network with UNEP and therefore devoted part of its time to maintaining harmonious relationships.

**The Meeting:**

- Endorsed the draft 2024-2025 Business Plan (following consideration of further comments from the Parties and any tidying up edits by the Secretariat) and recommends it to the Waigani Convention COP12 for adoption.

**Agenda Item 5: Date and venue of the next meeting**

26. Upon discussion, a date and venue for the Ninth Meeting of the Steering Committee for the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-9) was agreed.

**The Meeting:**

- The Meeting recommended that the 9th Meeting of the Steering Committee for the Pacific Regional Centre (SCPRC-9) be held in early 2025, in conjunction with the 11th Meeting of the of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC-11). The location is to be determined.

**Agenda Item 6: Adoption of the Report**

27. The Secretariat requested the meeting if it could be given time to complete the meeting report overnight circulate it to members for input before finalization.

**The Meeting:**

- Agreed to give the Secretariat time to complete the meeting report for finalization and adoption through electronic means.

**Agenda Item 7: Closure of the meeting**

28. The Chair thanked everyone for availing themselves to attend the meeting.
29. The Secretariat also thanked the Chairperson and everyone.
30. The meeting ended at 2:45 pm.

**The Chair of the Meeting:**

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