

Thirty Second SPREP Meeting of Officials

2-4 September 2025

Sheraton Aggie Greys Hotel & Bungalows
Apia, Samoa

“Sustaining our Pacific Environment in Harmony with our Cultures”

Agenda item 6.5: Report of the SPREP Working Group on the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review

Purpose:

1. To provide to Members the Strategic Pay Review of SPREP Remuneration System Inclusive of all Staff Terms and Conditions: Final Report, April 2025 (**Annex A**).
2. To provide an assessment of the recommendations of the review and comments from the Secretariat (**Annex B**).
3. To seek approval and endorsement from the SPREP Meeting of the recommendations from the Working Group.

Background:

4. At the 30th SPREP Meeting in September 2021 and after the Special SPREP Meeting in October 2021, the SPREP Members agreed for the Members Working Group tasked with consideration of recommendations from the reports of the Independent Corporate Review of the Secretariat (ICR) and the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026 to also consider the report and recommendations of the completed SPREP Remuneration Review.
5. Strategic Pay of New Zealand was engaged in August 2024 to carry out the independent review of the Secretariat's staff remuneration and employment conditions with completion expected at end of October 2024. The contract was extended, primarily to allow more time for Members to provide feedback into the review with the final end date set for 2 May 2025. The final report by Strategic Pay was provided to the Working Group on 8 May 2025. The Working Group met to discuss the final report on 11 June 2025.
6. In order to enable evidence-based recommendations and to allow Members to make informed decisions at the SPREP Meeting, the Members Working Group requested further details from the Secretariat on the financial and resource implications of the recommendations. This advice and a draft Addendum to the Final Report (work in progress), was provided to the Members Working Group on 18 August 2025. The Members Working Group met to consider the supplementary information on Friday 22 August, with representation from Australia, the Cook Islands, New Zealand, Samoa, Tokelau and the United Kingdom.

About the report from Strategic Pay

7. The report, provided at **Annex A**, presents a comprehensive review of SPREP's remuneration framework, examining salary structures, benefits, allowances, and employment conditions. Strategic Pay sought feedback from various stakeholder groups to inform its recommendations, including interviews with SPREP Leadership, focus group discussions with staff representatives, surveys and written submissions from employees across locations, and engagement with SPREP Members and external partners.

8. The review incorporates extensive market benchmarking, stakeholder consultations, comparing it against regional and international benchmarks, including CROP Agencies, the UN, ADB, etc. and a comparative analysis against the Birches Report (2021). SPREP's remuneration is up to 50% lower than UN and ADB levels, lagging regional organisations by 11%-15% on average.
9. SPREP plays a critical role in supporting regional environmental governance, climate resilience, and conservation efforts. Ensuring a well-compensated and motivated workforce is essential to achieving these objectives. As such, this report provides strategic, evidence-based recommendations aimed at:
 - Enhancing salary competitiveness to attract and retain top talent.
 - Aligning COLDA and housing allowances with real market conditions.
 - Maintaining a structured pay progression model linked to performance.
 - Standardising leave entitlements and benefits to ensure fairness.
 - Strengthening transparency in salary structures and communication.
 - Implementing sustainable remuneration reforms within a phased timeline.
10. The report outlines immediate, medium-term, and long-term priorities to improve fairness, transparency, and competitiveness. Key recommendations include updating SDR conversion rates, reviewing COLDA and housing allowances, enhancing recruitment and retention strategies, and harmonising remuneration structures with other CROP agencies. The report emphasises the need for clearer salary calculations, performance-linked progression, and alignment with regional benchmarks, while acknowledging financial constraints.

Assessment of the recommendations

11. **Annex B** provides comments from the Secretariat on each of the immediate, medium-term and long-term recommendations from the Strategic Pay Report. It also notes the Members Working Group position on the response to each of the recommendations. The Members Working Group and the Secretariat are overall supportive of the recommendations from the review.
12. A key recommendation from the review was that SPREP engage with CROP Agencies to harmonise remuneration structures and minimise internal competition. The Members Working Group would like to commend the Secretariat for its efforts to re-start the **CROP Harmonisation Working Group Remuneration Sub-Group**. Collaborating with CROP agencies to harmonise remuneration structures reduces internal competition and promotes regional consistency. SPREP's active participation in the Harmonisation Working Group and Remuneration Sub-Group positions it well to influence and benefit from collective reforms. A shared workplan and principles for harmonisation of key remuneration and staff regulations and terms and conditions are a positive step to help maintain alignment. The Sub-Group, and its work plan, will be a key mechanism to progress a number of the recommendations of the Review.
13. One recommendation the Working Group agrees can be progressed jointly through the Sub-Group is recommendation 2.b. to conduct comparative benchmarking with global organisations such as the UN and ADB to help SPREP stay informed of broader international trends. In its discussions the Working Group emphasized the purpose of this recommendation is to stay informed but noted the priority is to focus on CROP agencies and other local markets, noting that other international organisations are not the target reference market.

Implementation of the Review recommendations

14. The Members Working Group recommends that the Meeting endorse the recommendations from the review and invite the Secretariat to progress work on the recommendations, as informed by the analysis from Strategic Pay, and in line with the comments in **Annex B**.
15. The Working Group noted advice from the Secretariat that the Director General is mandated to make decisions on Staff Regulations, except where there are substantial budget implications.
16. The Secretariat will bring any items with significant financial implications for decision by the Executive Board in September 2026, for incorporation into the supplementary 2027 budget.
17. The Members Working Group and the Secretariat see ongoing value for the Members Working Group to continue to convene as a useful forum for members and the Secretariat to discuss any recommendations from the Secretariat to implement the recommendations ahead of the 5th Executive Board next year.

Recommendation:

18. The Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Note** the report of Strategic Pay 'Review of SPREP Remuneration System Inclusive of all Staff Terms and Conditions: Final Report'
 - 2) **Note** the comments from the Secretariat and Members Working Group's position on the Recommendations, set out in **Annex B**
 - 3) **Endorse** the DG and Secretariat to progress implementation of recommendations that don't have substantial budget impacts
 - 4) **Invite** the Secretariat to report to the 5th Executive Board in 2026 to seek decisions on recommendations with financial impacts for the supplementary 2027 budget process as appropriate
 - 5) **Endorse** the Working Group to continue to provide oversight, support, and guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of the recommendations
 - 6) **Endorse** the Working Group's recommendations on the Strategic Pay Review of SPREP Remuneration System Inclusive of all Staff Terms and Conditions in **Annex B**.
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