

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 9.2: Overview of Regional Goal 2 - Pacific people benefit from healthy and resilient island and ocean ecosystems

Purpose of paper:

1. To update the Meeting on implementation of Regional Goal 2 and priorities for the next biennial 2026-2027

RO2.1: Effectively manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems

2. The EU funded €12 million Pacific Biodiversity and Sustainable Land-Seascapes (Pacific BioScapes) Programme, expanded its scope of regional and national activities through 2024, with 27 projects (or ‘activities’) being executed out of 30 of the programme’s portfolio as compared to 18 by the end of 2023. With activities started in Papua New Guinea and Federated States of Micronesia in 2024, all 11 target countries are now recipients of at least one in-country activity, in addition to the regional and sub-regional (Micronesia) initiatives. Late in 2024, Tuvalu and Nauru were added as eligible countries for selected regional activities.
3. Kiwa Initiative provided technical assistance to regional projects and beneficiaries (national and local authorities, NGOs) to develop and implement gender-sensitive and human-rights based Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for climate resilience. The Kiwa Initiative is scheduled to complete by the end of October 2025.
4. The EU funded Pacific European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme By- catch and Integrated Ecosystem Management Initiative (KRA5) will continue to be implemented until August 2025.
5. Implementation of the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan progresses through a number of activities including through the Pacific BioScapes programme which included an activity that focuses on enhancing coral reef monitoring and the integration of traditional knowledge, through a regional comprehensive assessment of coral reef monitoring in five selected countries – Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu. Key findings from the comprehensive assessment were presented at the ReefCloud Pacific Regional workshop organised by AIMS in August, 2025. Building on this assessment, the Pacific Ocean Initiative project funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) will provide further training and capacity-building in coral monitoring in 5 countries between 2026 and 2028. The “Status and Trends of Coral Reefs in the Pacific: 2024 report” was launched during the Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France. This report developed by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) highlights the condition of the Pacific’s coral reefs and emphasises the urgency of continued action. SPREP is one of the regional collaborators of this report and will ensure that the report is accessible, shared and utilised as much as possible.

6. The German International Climate Initiative funded GIZ-SPREP-SPC *Management and Conservation of Blue Carbon ecosystems in Pacific Island Countries* (MACBLUE) project commenced in 2023 and implementation is underway in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The project will produce a national carbon stock emission and sequestration rate for mangroves and seagrass for the four project countries as well as strengthen the management of the blue carbon ecosystems. A carbon stock assessment has been completed in all four countries and a report will be produced in August 2025. MACBLUE project will be completed at the end of September 2025.

RO2.2: Support the conservation and sustainable use of marine, coastal, and terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity, consistent with regional and international commitments

7. The Secretariat continues to support Pacific Island Member engagement in the Convention on Biological Diversity. A Pacific Preparatory Meeting was convened in Samoa for Pacific Parties in September 2024 to prepare for COP-16 held in Cali, Colombia (October 2024) and the resumed COP16.2 held in Rome, Italy (February 2025).
8. COP16 was one of the most successful CBD COPs in terms of the Pacific's level of engagement in negotiations, including taking the floor and working as a region to lead and support agenda items. This resulted in strong outcomes for the Pacific. Key outcomes of CBD COP16 and COP16.2 relevant to the Pacific-led priorities can be found in WP 8.2/Annex.1.
9. The Secretariat has engaged in processes to support implementation and achievement of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted at the previous COP. SPREP was recognised as the sub-regional Centre for Technical and Scientific Cooperation (TSC) under the CBD. SPREP is also active in supporting the Pacific through being represented on the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Kunming-Montreal GBF, joining the Global Partnerships for the implementation of Targets 2 and 3, and a member of the NBSAP Accelerator Initiative and was awarded a NBSAP Facilitator (shared with Vanuatu).
10. SPREP continues to implement its component of the IUCN EU- funded Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) programme - Phase 2. The programme received a 2-year no-cost extension, approved by the EU in late 2022, to June 2025.
11. SPREP continues to provide secretariat support to the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation (PIRT), focusing on implementation of the Pacific Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2020-2025. PIRT was successfully utilised as the coordinating mechanism for Pacific engagement at the 1st Global Nature Positive Summit hosted by Australia in 2024, and also for coordination of regional organisation input into Pacific positions for CBD COP16.
12. SPREP, through funding from the NZ Climate Change fund has appointed a Pacific CMS/CITES Officer whose role will be to support SPREP Parties to these key biodiversity conventions and build capacity to implement them effectively. CITES COP 20 will be held this year 24 November – 5 December and SPREP will host a CITES Pre-COP for Oceania Parties in Samoa 14-17 October. SPREP is grateful for the leadership on CITES and CMS committees and support to Pacific Parties to both conventions.

13. SPREP through the support from the Government of Australia has engaged in the Ramsar process through the engagement of the Pacific Youth Wetlands Coordinator (PYWC). This includes convening of webinars to engage the Pacific youth to discuss the youth working group, workplan and activities such as the youth side event at COP15 and virtual meetings with the Oceania Parties in preparation of the 15th Conference of the Parties to Ramsar (Ramsar COP15). With the financial support from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand including additional funding under the MACBLUE project, additional Pacific delegates including designated youth focal points attended the Ramsar COP15 held in Zimbabwe from 23 – 31 July, 2025. Prior to the Ramsar COP15, a pre-meeting with the Oceania region was held on 22 July 2025 in Zimbabwe to finalise discussions on priority agenda items.

RO2.3: Prevent the extinction of threatened species and support measures to sustain their conservation status

14. Significant progress has been made Initiative in implementing objectives in the *Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026 (PIRMSP)* through the Pacific European Union Marine Programme (PEUMP) Bycatch and Integrated Ecosystem Management (BIEM). Key activities included:
- Monitoring Manuals for turtles and seabird species groups for the Pacific have been produced and training in monitoring methods is underway. This was supported through the Pacific Bioscapes Programme.
 - Produced the Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing Guidelines. A guide to industry best practice for viewing marine wildlife in the Pacific. It is hoped that this will be promoted widely across the tourism industry and government agencies responsible for managing and protecting marine wildlife.
 - Support for development of National Plans of Action for seabirds, sharks and turtles, assistance with development of Non-Detriment Findings for CITES traded species, training of fisheries crew and observers in mitigation methods for seabirds and turtles, community use of turtles' surveys and scholarships for students studying marine species.
 - A review of Cetacean Diversity Status and Threats in the Pacific identified by-catch as the greatest threat and to Pacific whales and dolphins.
 - The development of an extinction risk analysis for the five key species of marine turtles found in the Pacific. All of these species are threatened with extinction globally. On the current trajectories of take for consumption and bycatch, Leatherback turtles could be extinct in 30 years and all species within 100 years. For Hawksbill turtles there is an urgent need to reverse the decline through addressing bycatch, minimising traditional and direct take and eliminating international trade as well as protecting hawksbill nesting sites. By-catch in Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission area is a significant risk for the more oceanic loggerhead turtles and a reduction in by-catch would allow population recovery. Finally, Olive ridley turtles which are not common in the Pacific region are also threatened by by-catch due to low population size. The Extinction Risk report is currently being reviewed and was presented at a regional turtle workshop for Members in April 2025 in Fiji, where discussions focused on actions to reduce threats. PEUMP BIEM continues to provide significant capacity support for Pacific Parties to the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to meet their CITES obligations to protect endangered species involved in international trade.

15. There is an urgent need to reverse the decline of turtles in the Pacific including a focus on reducing bycatch of turtles particularly in the WCPFC and on harvest and consumption, particularly of breeding females. Increasing productivity through protecting nests from predators, reducing human take will be beneficial for all species. Requiring two methods of by-catch mitigation to be used across all longline fisheries in WCPFC would significantly increase the chances for long term survival of Oceania's turtle populations.
16. The first Oceania Seabird Symposium (OSS) was held in Auckland in April this year funded by PBS and Fonds Pacifique, attended by over 100 scientists and managers from across the region. Scientific oral and poster presentations and workshops enabled Pacific participants to gain knowledge and share experiences around seabirds including traditional knowledge and culture. The Pacific Seabirds Survey and Monitoring Manual and the Pacific Seabird Colony Database were launched at the OSS.

RO2.4: Significantly reduce the socio-economic and ecological impact of invasive species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate priority species

17. SPREP has exponentially increased support to its member countries and territories to reduce the impact of invasive species. Activities continue to be implemented in the GEF6 project *Strengthening national and regional capacities to reduce the impact of Invasive Alien Species on globally significant biodiversity in the Pacific* (finishing late 2025) and the PRISMSS-*Restoring Island Resilience* project funded by New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The EDF11 OCT *PROTEGE* project has also recently been completed. 130 islands in the Pacific are now rat-free, with the delivery of an additional 21 rat eradication operations in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, RMI, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu, with a further seven in the preparation phase and planned for 2025. Active biological control of invasive plants is evident in 16 member countries and territories and six regionally significant invasive plants have research targeted towards determining solutions. Restoration plans are being implemented in 101 priority ecological sites throughout the region and planning has been conducted to increase the scope of this further across the region in 2025 to ensure biodiversity protection and restoration of ecosystem function within priority sites.
18. The Pacific Regional Invasive Management Species Support Service (PRISMSS) has been greatly supported in enabling effective assistance to SPREP members, including funding provided by the Government of New Zealand and the United Kingdom for the PRISMSS Restoring Island Resilience Project, which addresses the combined threats of climate change and invasive species. In addition to supporting on-the-ground activities, the funding has resourced the PRISMSS to progress the Sustainability Plan and secure the resources required to function as a unit over the past two years.
19. Current project development includes a multi-country GEF8 project including Cook Islands, Niue, RMI, Tonga and Tuvalu (PIF approval sought in April 2025), development of a multi-country Adaptation Fund application and several GCF National applications.
20. Region-wide and multi-country capability building events such as the 6th Pacific Invasive Learning Network Meeting in the Cook Islands and the New Zealand Study Tour have provided opportunities to build on cross-cutting themes such as Occupational Health and Safety, Traditional Knowledge and GEDSI.

21. Opportunities for Members to progress their National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plans (NISSAP), National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAP) and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) through invasive species management has never been greater.

Challenges and Opportunities

22. Pressures on Pacific biodiversity and ecosystems and the services they provide that support development in the region continue to increase. This includes the combined challenges of climate change, deforestation, invasive species, biodiversity loss and degradation of coastal ecosystems that are critical for marine health and community food security.
23. Collaboration with key partners such as the Pacific Islands Round Table for Nature Conservation continues to provide an excellent opportunity to coordinate conservation efforts in the region.
24. Current initiatives and those in development continue to support the implementation of priority conservation actions at national and regional levels. SPREP continues to explore opportunities for new and predictable funding and resources to support the implementation of national, regional and global priorities and commitments. A Business Plan is being developed for the SPREP Biodiversity Conservation Programme to provide strategic direction and opportunities for new initiatives, funding, including new partnerships.
25. The review of the Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas aligned to the Global Biodiversity Framework and informed by the Regional State of Environment Conservation Report and relevant regional strategies will contribute to the formulation of the next SPREP Strategic Plan.

Recommendation:

26. The Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Note** and **endorse** the progress on implementation of Regional Goal 2 activities and planned activities for the biennial period 2026 - 2027.