

Thirteenth Meeting of the Waigani Convention

Sheraton Aggie Grey's Hotel & Bungalows

5 September 2025

Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and the Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention)

Introduction

The Tenth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC 10) of the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention) was a hybrid event held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands on 13 – 14 March 2025.

Present at the Meeting were representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu.

Virtual participants were from Samoa

Apologies were submitted from New Zealand.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

The meeting commenced at 9.10 am with Cook Islands as the out-going Chair calling the meeting to order, welcoming all members, extending appreciation to the STAC and the Secretariat. The Chair invited an opening prayer from the Cook Islands.

The outgoing Chairperson welcomed delegates to the meeting and thanked all for their help with work undertaken in the STAC over the past two years.

The Director of Waste Management and Pollution Control of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) hereafter referred to as Director, explained the Rules of Procedure and confirmed that a quorum had been reached for the meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of the Meeting

The Chair noted the Meeting follows a sub-regional approach and opened the floor for nominations for the incoming Chair of STAC10.

Tonga nominated Federated States of Micronesia to be the Chair of the STAC10, this was seconded by Niue. FSM accepted the role of the Chair.

The out-going Chair opened the role of the Vice Chairperson for which Tonga nominated Kiribati, this was seconded by Papua New Guinea.

The Cook Islands nominated Papua New Guinea as the Rapporteur of STAC10, seconded by Niue.

The outgoing Chair commended the Secretariat for their hard work and congratulated the incoming Chair, Vice-Chair and Rapporteur for STAC10. The outgoing Chair further noted the support received from fellow delegates and the Secretariat in its role as Chair of STAC9.

The Meeting:

- **Elected** Federated States of Micronesia as the Chairperson, Kiribati as the Vice Chairperson and Papua New Guinea as the Rapporteur for the Meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair invited members to provide any comments for discussion.

The Chair and Director noted the agenda dates have been corrected in response to a query from Tuvalu.

The Director welcomed all members to the STAC10 highlighting a two-day agenda ahead. Day one consists of items as per past STAC meetings with Day two opening a discussion on the review of the recommendations of the Waigani Convention.

The Cook Islands recommended to adopt the agenda; this was seconded by Fiji.

The Meeting:

- a) **Commented** on and **discussed** the Provisional Agenda as presented; and
- b) **Adopted** the Agenda for the Meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Matters Related to the Work Programme of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee for the Biennium 2023-2024

Agenda Item 4.1: Strategic Issues

Members were provided an overview of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 2021 Review of the Waigani Convention and the status of the Work Plan endorsed by the Waigani COP12 Parties.

The Secretariat requested this Agenda Item and recommendations be revisited upon completion of the workshops on Day two.

The Chair encouraged all Parties to be open in discussions, welcoming all to comment at any given time noting each Party represents the voice of their nation in the role of protection against hazardous chemicals and waste.

The Meeting:

- a) **endorsed** further discussions on the Approved Work Plan, **deleted** completed items and **discussed** additional activities, targets and proposed timelines.

Agenda Item 4.2 Scientific and Technical Matters

The Secretariat presented updates on its work in relation to 1) Technical Guidelines 2) Hazardous Waste Management Strategies and 3) Codes of Practice for Hazardous Waste Management Strategies (HWMS).

Australia sought clarification on the selection of Chemicals of Concern to be considered within 3) Codes of Practice for HWMS. The Secretariat clarified an initial approach spanned lithium-ion batteries, asbestos, chemicals in the health sector and e-waste yet responses provided from tender applicants spanned a broad scope of chemicals including pesticides. Going forward, the Secretariat will aim for chemicals of concern currently, as well as exploring chemicals that may be of concern in the future through a survey that will help identify the most critical ones.

SPREP noted many of these chemicals of concern are also being addressed in the Plastics Treaty negotiations.

Australia proposed the consideration of mercury noting the mercury-free Pacific campaign now underway. SPREP confirmed work has progressed under this campaign inclusive of activities in partnership with the World Alliance on Mercury Free Dentistry Mercury (Fiji).

The Chair noted the Minamata Convention is at the core of the Waigani Convention.

The Meeting:

- a) **Noted** the updates provided by the Secretariat on its work above

Agenda Item 4.3: Legal, Governance and Enforcement matters

The meeting was presented an overview of the Legal Governance and Enforcement Matters and the Amendments to Basel Convention Annexes II, VIII, and IX on E-Waste.

The Chair noted the relevance of this issue for the Marshall Islands, highlighting the importance of the Waigani Convention for RMI.

Tonga noted the Waigani Convention addresses radioactive materials in the Pacific seeking information on work undertaken by this Convention to address this issue for which the Secretariat provided an update highlighting this topic was raised during the 31st SPREP Meeting of Officials in 2023 upon which a Friends of the Chair resulted in the following recommendation:

“Directed the Secretariat to conduct an assessment of capacity to coordinate the monitoring of the Pacific marine environment for radioactive contamination in collaboration with expert groups including CROP agencies, and research institutions and report back to Members at the Executive Board in 2024.”

The Director confirmed as of 2024 that this issue sits with the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific and its Expert Group which is led by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and includes SPREP and the University of the South Pacific.

The Secretariat further noted the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, also known as the Rarotonga Treaty, which is under the mandate of PIFS.

The Secretariat confirmed it will continue to explore this issue and streamline work for synergies, further clarifying the STAC has the mandate to discuss this issue and provide advice to the Waigani Convention Parties as appropriate.

The Chair noted the Secretariat will work on this with relevant agencies.

The Meeting:

1. **Noted** the status of the 2023 amendments to the Waigani Conventions and the steps taken to bring them into force.

2. **Endorsed** SPREP's coordination with Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to ensure timely notification and submission of instruments by Parties.
3. **Considered** the implications of the Basel Convention's e-waste amendments for the Waigani Convention and advise on the necessary actions; and
4. **Recommended** regional harmonisation efforts and capacity-building initiatives to assist Parties in implementing the new e-waste classifications and controls.
5. **Requested** the Secretariat conduct an intersessional body of work regarding Article 4.3 of the Waigani Convention to identify the appropriate Convention from the list provided in Article 4.3 that considers environmental monitoring of radioactive waste dumping, as appropriate to seek an update on environmental monitoring from the relevant secretariat and to report back to Parties at Waigani COP13.

Agenda Item 4.4: National Reporting

The Secretariat presented seven reports were received from the from the 13 Parties to the Waigani Convention for the 2021 – 2022 reporting cycle. These were Australia, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu.

The Chair noted each reporting cycle, the Parties are to submit a report to the Secretariat, requesting Parties that have submitted a report to share experiences and lessons learnt.

The Secretariat confirmed the reporting process is biennial noting the next report due is for the 2023 – 2024 Report in response to a clarification from Cook Islands that noted it is now preparing its report for the Waigani COP.

The Cook Islands noted an annual report is to be developed for the Basel Convention and the biennial report for the Waigani Convention seeking clarification between the two forms. The Chair further questioned if this report is similar to that of a report form filled in the past.

The Secretariat presented the reporting form and outlined the criteria noting this must be filled and submitted for the Secretariat to enable the development of an analysis.

The Chair sought clarification if it is still possible for Parties that have outstanding reports to still be able to submit them for which the Director confirmed it welcomes all outstanding reports prior to the 2021 – 2022 report period and noted the 2023 – 2024 Report that must be submitted before the Waigani COP takes place.

The Cook Islands confirmed their understanding of the Waigani Convention Reporting form, highlighting the similarities with the reporting form for the Basel Convention that applies an efficient online approach known as the Electronic Reporting System. Cook Islands proposed the Secretariat explore a similar approach to avoid duplication for reporting against the Waigani Convention.

Tonga requested the Secretariat facilitate training for Parties on how to fill the forms clarifying the challenges experienced when new to this process.

The Secretariat confirmed it can provide support to members should it be needed for legislative frameworks to empower the Waigani Convention nationally.

Cook Islands and Solomon Islands provided updates on their national legislations in which the Waigani Convention is addressed with Solomon Islands seeking further assistance from the Secretariat to review their Draft Environment Bill now in the final stages. The Secretariat confirmed it can undertake this.

The Meeting:

- a) **Noted** the analysis of the 2021-2022 national reports.
- b) **Supported** initiatives to improve reporting compliance and data collection.
- c) **Welcomed** capacity-building efforts for hazardous waste management in Pacific Island countries.
- d) **Encouraged** legislative reforms and stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure full compliance with the Waigani Convention.

Agenda Item 4.5: Electronic Approaches to Notification and Movement Documents

The Secretariat presented an update on the Electronic Prior and Informed Consent form (ePIC) pertaining to electronic approaches to notification and movement documents.

Papua New Guinea stressed the crucial role of the ePIC for efficient implementation of the Waigani Convention noting the current manual process is tedious and time consuming thus proposing a regional framework to help address this issue across the Pacific Islands region.

Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands submitted their interest in being part of a pilot activity applying the ePIC noting several initial meetings took place in 2023 with the ITI Company to develop such a form however very little, if no, progress has since been made.

The Director confirmed a lack of funding interest to support this initiative has stalled the progress of this activity in response to a clarification from the Chair and Tonga. The Secretariat outlined the initial discussion that took place at the last Waigani COP in 2023 to explore opportunities and the feasibility of having an ePIC system with a global information technology group, this was followed by several subsequent meetings to progress the work which was then hindered by the lack of financial support and interest.

Papua New Guinea reiterated the importance of the ePIC and urged the Secretariat to explore other financial options, also requesting an information note and concept to support national interest in funding the ePIC system.

The Director acknowledged Papua New Guineas request highlighting this is a priority work item and will re-engage with partners interested in the technology and the system, seeking alternative financial funding streams to establish a system and the need to build capacity to implement this work.

The Meeting:

- a) **Noted** the current status and challenges of the ePIC initiative
- b) **Endorsed** the recommended actions for SPREP to:
 - i) Re-engage with ITI and other potential ICT partners
 - ii) Seek alternative funding sources
 - iii) Pilot an alternative digital approach if ITI led project remains stalled
 - iv) Explore capacity-building options for digital PIC management
 - v) Seek to ensure alignment with existing reporting platforms
- c) **Encouraged** pilot countries to engage in the digital capacity-building initiatives for hazardous waste notification and tracking under the Waigani Convention.

Agenda Item 4.6 Capacity Building

The Chair welcomed Parties to share experiences of capacity building activities that have taken place across the Pacific Islands region since STAC9.

Solomon Islands presented an overview of Basel Convention and Waigani Convention training conducted in partnership with Pacific Regional Centre SPREP and Australia which was a successful event. Australia noted the broad range of participants attending the training and highlighted the positive impact that can be made through the small actions that lead to enhanced efficiency.

The Secretariat commended Australia for its support and interest highlighting the future opportunities to build capacity as the Codes of Practice and the HWMS are finalised also noting training in these areas have also been conducted through the PacWastePlus Project including those on E-Waste, Healthcare Waste and Asbestos management.

Cook Islands noted the training underway on E-waste with the following week to provide training on asbestos under PacWastePlus.

The Meeting:

- a) **Noted** the successful delivery of the training workshops.
- b) **Encouraged** and **supported** SPREP in further collaboration between SPREP and other partners to build technical expertise in the region.

Agenda Item 4.7 International Cooperation

SPREP presented a verbal update on the global meetings planned such as the Second Part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on plastic pollution and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conferences of the Parties.

The Chair opened the floor for discussions on meetings for which no further comments were made.

The Meeting:

- a) **Noted** the discussion on International Cooperation

Agenda Item 5. Work Programme for STAC 2025 – 2026

The Secretariat presented the draft work programme for 2025 – 2026 for review and endorsement of the forward actions of the review of the Waigani Convention to be addressed during the proposed discussion sessions to take place on Day Two.

The afternoon of Day One on 13 March and the morning of Day Two on 14 March was focused on Group Work across the Parties to review and input into the development of a Work Plan. Templates were provided to each group to populate and distributed to the Secretariat for storage and action. Upon completion of Day Two each group reported back to the Party as to the outcomes of their discussions.

Group One explained their discussions against their template that was presented.

In reference to the recommendation to amend the name of the Waigani Convention to remove the word “South” Australia noted the impact of this will include adjustments on all communication resources in place including the website. Expressing concern towards the timeline to undertake this noting current workspaces and commitments across all Parties, Australia sought consideration of this to allow all Parties to prepare for the amended Treaty.

In reference to the Recommendation 1 noting Solomon Islands is Party to the Basel Convention and to remove them from this recommendation.

The Chair sought a query as to the Activity 1.1 if this is seeking cabinet approval at this time for which Fiji confirmed its national process requires the mandate first before it can start noting this activity centers on an international treaty and it will involve a review of the assessments to Fiji should this be approved. Once mandate is provided, Fiji can then begin the process. The Chair requested the Secretariat to amend the table to suit.

The Secretariat noted the attendance to the Waigani COP is funded by the Parties with the Small Islands States Parties being funded by the Secretariat. The Secretariat further requested the STAC be included in the list of Potential Partners for Recommendation 1.

Group Two explained their discussions against their template that was presented.

Commenting on Recommendation Two, Tonga noted assistance from the Secretariat to develop legislation Hazardous and Chemical Waste 2010 was provided which is available to act as the Model Legislation helping to implement this activity swiftly. Australia noted Tonga’s Model Legislation is available on the SPREP website however highlighted the link must be activated. The Chair proposed amending the Additional Activities to review the Model Legislation from Tonga to act as the Model Legislation.

The Secretariat clarified it will not be able to undertake the additional activity under Recommendation Two which outlined the recruitment of a legislative drafter to develop model legislation in response to request from Australia. The Secretariat further noted it will provide guidance to the consultant to implement this consultancy. The Secretariat further confirmed funding is available for this activity under GEF ISLANDS, also noting GEF ISLANDS is able to support Members to promulgate this legislation with these two activities already in its work plans.

The Chair requested the STAC be included as a Potential Partner under Recommendation Two.

Under Recommendation Four, the Chair noted while the Inform Project has closed, there are other opportunities available to review digital processes highlighting Federated States of Micronesia were able to develop a portal which is used to store all work which is accessible to the public for those that wish to utilise this information. The Secretariat sought an amendment to Recommendation Four to replace the Inform Project with the Environmental Data Portal.

The Chair further noted the lack of ePIC in the table of recommendations for which the Secretariat requested an additional activity under Recommendation 4 to include the recommendation agreed upon by STAC 10 in agenda item 4.5.

Group Three explained their discussions against their template that was presented.

The Chair sought clarification on Recommendation Nine and the role of the STAC during times such as oil or chemical spill for which the Secretariat confirmed the STAC has an advisory role however in the instance of an oil or chemical spill it would require a response role which may come under the PACPLAN. The Secretariat, supported by Australia, noted the opportunity to better raise awareness of the STACS advisory role to relevant bodies noting this provides an opportunity to further utilise and grow the skills of the STAC. The Secretariat also highlighted this could extend beyond oil spills from ships to used oil stocks stored.

The Director commended the Parties for their group work.

Following the feedback from each group, the Chair formed a Friends of the Chair group representing the Secretariat and a representative from each of the three groups to review and streamline all three reports into the one table of recommendations. Australia presented this table to the Meeting.

The Secretariat noted this and proposed three clusters to work on reviewing and updating before sending them to the STAC for their approval before being submitted to the Waigani COP. The three clusters proposed are 1) Legal Frameworks and Policy Amendments, 2) Reporting and Communications and 3) Strategic Direction.

The Meeting discussed and endorsed forward actions to progress finalisation of the 2025 – 2026 Work Programme.

The Meeting:

- a) **Discussed and endorsed** forward action to progress the finalization of the 2025-2026 Work Programme;
- b) **Noted** the Draft Work Programme of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee for 2025-2026
- c) **Invited** Members to submit comments to the Secretariat by 30 May 2025.
- d) **Requested** the Secretariat to provide the Revised Draft Work Programme; and
- e) **Agreed** on submission of the Final Work Programme to the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention.

Agenda Item 7: Adoption of the report

The Meeting:

- **considered** and adopted the draft report of the STAC10 meeting.
- **noted** the final report of the STAC10 meeting will be distributed to members.

Agenda Item 8: Closure of the Meeting

The Chairperson:

- formally **closed** the tenth meeting of the Waigani Convention STAC.