



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Executive Board Meeting

2 – 4 September 2020

### Agenda Item 7.1: 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas

#### Purpose of paper

1. To update Members on the revised approach for convening the postponed 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in 2020.

#### Background

2. The 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Nature Conference was to be held April 2020 in New Caledonia, but was postponed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Conference has been rescheduled to 23-27 November 2020 and will be delivered in a revised format using a full virtual media approach. While disappointing to not have the face-to-face conference, the virtual conference does have some potential advantages including a slightly reduced cost, minimal carbon-footprint, possible broader participation of Pacific Island representatives, and the opportunity for very focussed sessions on key priorities and issues within the region.
4. SPREP is grateful to the Government of New Caledonia for offering to host the 10th Conference and its hard work and commitment in preparations for the original event planned for April. The virtual event will maintain a strong New Caledonian feel through artwork, branding, names of virtual rooms and sharing of local environment events that are planned to showcase conservation action in New Caledonia.
5. The conference was endorsed at the 29th SPREP Meeting as an important process for providing regional input into the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Although the conference was postponed, various processes and preparation activities will still contribute input into the global Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
6. The Conference remains the key opportunity to set a Pacific based and initiated agenda for conservation in the region beyond 2020. The high-level declaration will define key messages and commitments for providing input into the regional and global agenda. Historically a guiding regional conservation commitment has been prepared and adopted at the Conference. The 9<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2013 adopted the *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2014-2020*.

7. The *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2014-2020* has been reviewed with input from Members and other stakeholders provided through surveys. This review informs the development of a new draft regional Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas for beyond 2020. A draft is being prepared in advance of the conference for review and finalisation by participants.
8. The virtual conference will include a High-level Session hosted by the Government of New Caledonia, focussed on endorsing key priorities and commitments for the region post-2020.
9. Youth engagement is acknowledged as an important component of the conference and representatives will be provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute. The virtual conference provides increased opportunities for youth participation.
10. The second Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards (PIELA), which celebrates outstanding contributions towards achieving an environmental and resilient Pacific, will be postponed until 2021 when it can be held as a face-to-face event.
11. A conference planning committee leads the revision of the original conference agenda and its outcomes. Outcomes sought include:
  - Review the current *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas* and formulate a new Framework for the next inter-conference period.
  - Launch of the second State of Conservation in Oceania (SOCO) report.
  - A High-Level Declaration with regional priorities for nature conservation.
  - Capacity building, knowledge management and learning related to biodiversity conservation.
  - Addressing sustainable funding initiatives and creating a framework for robust governance around nature conservation work.
12. While the budget for the live conference planned for April 2020 was \$1.3 million, the virtual conference is anticipated to cost approximately US\$600,000 including conference preparation, virtual platform and associated tools, professional services for technical support for the event, translation and interpreter services, Ministerial high-level segment and the preparation of supporting reports and publications. The conference is normally funded through contributions and grants from a wide range of sources including existing projects, grant applications, partner contributions, SPREP operating budgets, sponsorships, in-kind support as well from the host country which meets a number of costs.

## Recommendations

13. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
  1. **Note** the postponement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Nature Conservation and Protected Areas Conference as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the change of delivery modality to a virtual conference;
  2. **Endorse** national participation in consultation and sessions on the draft Framework held prior to, and as part of, the Conference; and
  3. **Endorse** national support of the conference by encouraging participation of key national stakeholders to participate virtually, or other contributions.