

**Third SPREP Executive Board Meeting  
8 – 9 September 2022**

Virtual Platforms

12:00pm – 5:00pm Samoa Standard Time

**Agenda Item 7.3: Ocean Related Events and Engagement**

**Purpose of paper**

1. Update Members on ocean related events and engagement relevant to the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026, which has an overarching ocean focus across all areas SPREP's work.

**Background**

2. Members endorsed an overarching ocean focus across all areas of SPREP's work in adopting the 2017-2026 SPREP Strategic Plan. Regionally and nationally there has been growing momentum to better conserve and manage the ocean and its resources. Pacific Leaders have committed to take the Pacific Oceanscape Framework and the Blue Pacific Narrative forward through the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent endorsed by Pacific Leaders at the 51<sup>st</sup> Forum Leaders Meeting in Suva, Fiji.
3. The impacts of COVID-19 have delayed many international meetings and 2022 marked the opening up of borders for travel and/or application of a hybrid approach. Despite these difficulties the 'Our Ocean Conference' was a great success led and hosted by the Government of Palau with the support of co-host the United States, and with strong participation across the Pacific and international community. Due to the difficulties of travel related to COVID-19, the Secretariat did not physically participate but were part of virtual events that included the Pacific Islands Blue Economy Roundtable and with USAID co-hosted the side event 'Ending Plastic Pollution in Island Nations' with Clean Cities, Blue Ocean.
4. Other key ocean related events which the Secretariat participated in or will engage in and support, include the:
  - a. Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held virtually and in Nairobi, Kenya from 28 February to 2 March 2022;
  - b. Meetings of the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in Geneva, Switzerland from 6 to 17 June 2022;
  - c. Second UN Ocean Conference with the theme 'Scaling Up Ocean Action Based on Science and Innovation for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Stocktaking, Partnerships and Solutions' held in Lisbon, Portugal from 27 June to 1 July 2022;
  - d. Fourth and Fifth Sessions of the Intergovernmental Conference negotiations for a Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in New York, United States of America;
  - e. 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27) to the United Nations Framework for the Convention on Climate Change to be held in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt from 6 to 18 November 2022;

- f. First Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC1) to negotiate a global legally binding agreement to address the whole life cycle of plastic pollution, which is to be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay from 28 November to 2 December 2022; and
  - g. Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity for the development and agreement of the post-2020 Targets in Montreal, Canada from 5 to 17 December 2022.
5. Our member states individually and collectively at these meetings present a strong vision for ocean conservation, management and sustainable development of its resources. under the banner of the Blue Pacific Continent. The Secretariat will continue to support Members' engagement in these important events within the capacities of the Secretariat and interests of Members.

## Key Highlights

### Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

6. The Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly agreed to the resolution to “End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument” and the formation of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to negotiate a new binding global agreement covering the whole life cycle of plastics. The process started with the Open-Ended Working Group held on 30 May to 1 June 2022 to prepare for the first INC in Uruguay from 28 November to 2 December 2022.
7. The UNEA 5.2 resolution is in line with the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and its impacts expressing the grave concern of Pacific Leaders about the impacts of plastic pollution at each stage of its life cycle on environmental, social, cultural, economic, human rights, human health and food security.
8. As was done in preparation of UNEA 5.2, the Secretariat hosted a virtual preparatory workshop on 2 February 2022 and will again assist Member Governments prepare for the first INC. The Secretariat has received funding from the Government of Australia to support Members' engagement in the INC process commencing with the first Pacific Regional Preparatory Workshop for the INC to be held on 16 to 18 August 2022 in Suva, Fiji. The aim of the hybrid workshop is to provide Member Governments with the assistance they may need in negotiating a global agreement to address plastic pollution covering the whole life cycle of plastics.

More information can be found in WP.7.1.

### UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal

9. As requested by Members, the Secretariat hosted in partnership with CROP a virtual scoping workshop on the UN Ocean Conference held on 4 May 2022. The workshop was viewed as an opportunity to identify and agree on the areas of assistance to Members, particularly in the coverage of the UN Ocean Conference Pacific Technical Briefs, building on the work undertaken by the Secretariat in 2017 for the First UN Ocean Conference; and with respect to the Interactive Dialogues in 2022; and to ensure there was effective communication, planning and coordination for successful engagement by the Pacific with the support of CROP. The Secretariat worked alongside Samoa, the Chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and CROP, to prepare the technical briefs outlined in WP.7.3/Att.1 for use by Pacific Members, which were formulated for all Interactive Dialogue themes, to assist with country interventions and negotiations in the lead up to and at the UN Ocean Conference.

10. The Secretariat participated in several side events that covered Ocean Acidification, Coral Reefs, Marine Pollution, and By-catch. Other pertinent side events the Secretariat attended outside of the Pacific led events included: Depolluting oceans through controlling trade in plastic waste and combatting illegal traffic under the Basel Convention; and Ocean partnerships and science-based solutions for strengthening sustainable ocean economies in SIDS, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries. There was also discussion on the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) which was of interest to countries especially SIDS/PSIDS to access finance to support ocean actions.
11. The Secretariat provided support to Pacific Members including for the PSIDS official UN Ocean side event 'Leveraging Partnerships to Achieve Action for SDG 14', as well as extensive media coverage to help amplify the Pacific Ocean Voyage. The Secretariat also co-hosted with SPC an official UN Ocean side event 'A Sustainable Blue Pacific Continent: Scaling up action through Ocean Science and Traditional knowledge for informed governance'. Refer to WP.7.3/Att2 and WP.7.3/Att3.

### Next steps

12. The Secretariat will continue to support Members within its available financial and technical resources to elevate the issues regarding the Pacific Ocean, as prioritised in the SPREP Strategic Plan and will continue to lead and work alongside CROP and other key partners, in a coordinated manner to ensure there is no duplication of effort and maximises limited resources available to Members.

### Recommendations

13. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
  - 1) **Note the work of** the Secretariat on Oceans which is an overarching priority of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026; and
  - 2) **Encourage** Members to work together with the Secretariat on strategic engagement on global ocean events to amplify Pacific voices and priorities.