**Sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the Noumea Convention**

A meeting of the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention for the Protection of Natural Resources and Environment in the South Pacific, known as the Noumea Convention, officially convened on 2nd of September 2021, with Parties and Observers joining virtually.

The Noumea Convention which entered into force in 1990, is a comprehensive umbrella agreement for the protection, management, and development of the marine and coastal environment of the Pacific region. It is the legal framework to ensure that environmental management and sustainable development of natural resources are implemented throughout the Pacific. SPREP is the Secretariat for the Convention. There are twelve Parties to the Noumea Convention: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and United States of America.

Since the last COP meeting in 2019, the Secretariat managed to carry out some of the key activities to support the Parties’ capacity to implement their obligations under the Noumea Convention, despite the challenges associated with COVID-19 pandemic resulting in border closures across the Pacific.

Some of the key activities that were carried out during the lockdowns since the COP meeting in 2019:

* There has been a significant focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasising the support to address marine litter and plastic pollution through the implementation of the Pacific Regional Marine Litter Action Plan 2018 – 2025.
* The programme on capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries is in its third phase which commenced fully this year. The most unique feature of this Programme is that it now covers the capacity building and support to Parties to implement their obligations under the Noumea Convention.
* The Secretariat established an oil spill response agreement with the Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) for all Pacific Island Countries and Territories, including Parties to the Noumea Convention, with funding support by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and technical sponsorship from Maritime New Zealand.

Moreover, the COP meeting in 2019, identified the challenges that existed under the current legal framework of the Noumea Convention. To address these, the COP meeting called for the review of the Noumea Convention. Through the virtual COP meeting this year, it was an opportunity to take a closer look at how we can transition the post-review Noumea Convention to respond to the imminent environmental challenges we currently face. The 16th COP also gave the Opportunity for the ACP/MEA Phase 3 Coordination team to coordinate and facilitate the secretariat work for the Noumea Convention on behalf of SPRE as an organisation.

**Eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention**

The Eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Waigani Convention on banning 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, officially convened on 3rd of September 2021, with Parties and Observers joining virtually.

The Convention was adopted in Waigani, Papua New Guinea in September 1995 and entered into force in 2001. There are thirteen Parties to the Convention: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The meeting highlighted the ongoing support provided by the Secretariat to its Parties during these extraordinarily challenging times and urged all Parties to remain vigilant on the impacts of chemicals and hazardous wastes on our lives as well as on the environment. The Secretariat continues to work with Parties and participating countries through the ongoing Pacific Waste Management Programme (PacWastePlus) funded by the European Union. Further, the Secretariat received funding application for the GEF7 funding cycle to secure a $20 million ISLANDS Pacific Child project that will be helping members with their challenges on chemicals and hazardous waste.

**Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Third Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting 17-18 August 2021**

The Pacific Regional preparatory meeting was hosted through a virtual platform with more than 25 participants from Pacific focal points of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and resource people from SPREP Programmes, and a small set of regional partner organizations and NGOs involved in CBD negotiations.

Countries that attended at least part of the preparatory meeting were Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, Solomon Islands and Samoa. The resource people and presenters included Chair of the OEWG, WWF, SPC-Climate Change and Biodiversity, Climate Analytics, and SPREP Programmes.

The regional preparatory workshop discussed six of the 21 Targets. These were selected by the participants and where as follows:

* Target 3 (protected areas including 30 by 30)
* Target 5 (sustainable harvest of wildlife, incl fisheries)
* Target 6 (invasive alien species)
* Target 7 (pollution, incl plastics)
* Target 8 (climate change, incl 10 GtCO2e per year contributed to mitigation)
* Target 10 (sustainable agriculture and aquaculture and forestry)

This workshop was supported through funding provided by the ACP MEAs 3 regional components executed by SPREP with UNEP as the Implementing agency.

**30th SPREP Meetings of Officials 7th – 9th September 2021.**

“*Accelerating Actions for a Resilient Blue Pacific*” is the theme that the 30th Meeting of Officials of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme convened. The meeting was hosted by the Secretariat via virtual platform that brought together 21 Pacific Islands and 5 Metropolitan Member countries and territories to discuss strategic programmes and governance issues pertaining to the organisation, as well as to approve the 2022-2023 work programme and budget.

In accordance with SPREP Meeting procedures, Tokelau was elected as the new Chair and Kiribati as the Vice Chair.

In this meeting, leaders of member countries reaffirmed that “climate change is the single greatest threat facing the Blue Pacific, has meant recommitment to the goals of the Paris Agreement and a call for bold, decisive and transformative action to address the challenges of climate change under the Kainaki II Declaration”.

A comprehensive overview of the work of the Secretariat during 2020 was presented by the Director General, which outlined many challenges that provided disruption in its normal work. Thus, the impact on budget with delivery of project activities and programmes, as well as members, partners, and communities. On the other hand, the pandemic provided the opportunity for the organization to recognise the importance of enhancing communications and the use of technology for virtual delivery and consider innovative ways to engage with member countries. SPREP’s four programme areas, Climate Change and Resilience, Environmental and Monitoring Governance, Islands and Ocean Ecosystem, and Waste Management and Pollution Control carry out webinars as part of “Transitioning to a Post-Pandemic Pacific” webinar series.

Key reports that were presented and discussed are as follows:

* Securing climate financing to build resilience to climate change in the Pacific region.
* Enhancing management of disaster waste resilience
* Development of a “Mercury Free Pacific Campaign”.
* Strengthening the Waste Management of Hazardous Waste in the region.
* Sustainable Financing Mechanisms for Waste Management.

Three key documents developed by the Secretariat were endorsed by SPREP member countries:

1. Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas 2021-2025.
2. Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan
3. State of the Environment and Conservation Report.

The meeting ended with Mr. Kosi Latu addressing the SPREP meeting for the last time as the Director General of the Secretariat. Mr. Latu’s contract will end on 3rd April 2022. The new Director General of SPREP, Mr Sefanaia Nawadra will officially commence from 4th April 2022.

**Pacific Environment Ministerial and High-Level Representatives Meeting 10th September 2021**

Pacific Environment Ministerial and High-Level Representatives gathered virtually to participate in a “Talanoa” (dialogue) to discuss some of the pertinent key priority issues bearing direct impact on responsive and pragmatic actions for a resilient Blue Pacific.

The focus of the Talanoa was conducted through three focus panels with Ocean being the overarching theme: Ocean and Climate Change; Ocean and Pollution; and Ocean and Deep-Sea Mining. The Honourable Ministers and High-Level Representatives reaffirmed that the Pacific Ocean is the lifeblood of society in the Pacific, and that climate change is the single greatest threat facing the Blue Pacific. They encouraged all Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to ensure that the 26th Conference of the Parties which will be held in October this year to recognise and advance the work on Oceans in the UNFCCC, recognizing its centrality to the Blue Pacific Continent.

Ministers and High-Level Representatives urged the Pacific rim to implement relevant measures to prevent and effectively manage marine pollution and marine litter in accordance with international law. The issue on Deep-Sea Mining was discussed in 2019 but noted there has been a significant shift towards seabed mining for economic reasons. Although, they recognized deep-sea minerals offer potential economic benefits, the ecology of the deep-sea environment and deep-sea mining’s adverse effects are poorly understood and recognised the importance of cooperation between Members and Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), to provide scientific expert advice on seabed mining, deep sea ecology and oceanography.

**INFORM E-Learning Platform Officially Launched**

The INFORM Project of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) officially launched the Pacific INFORM e-learning platform. This is a tool designed for the management of environmental data and the application of indicator reporting tools and adds to the growing catalogue of SPREP e-learning resources. The official launch of this e-learning platform was carried out through a webinar where the INFORM team introduced the modules or courses developed to support enhanced environmental data access and use for decision making and reporting by SPREP members.

The e-learning platform has 2 available units: 1) Environment Data Management; and 2) Environment Reporting (Indicator Reporting Tool). More modules will be developed and rolled out to complement the 2 existing modules.

The INFORM Project is a 4-year project (2017-2022) funded through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UN Environment. It is executed by SPREP in the 14 Pacific island countries of the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

More information on the webinar series “Our Pacific Environment in a COVID-19 World” on <https://www.sprep.org/webinars>.