

Sixteenth meeting of the Noumea Convention

Sixteenth ordinary meeting of the contracting parties to the convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and related protocols (Noumea Convention)

Virtual – Apia, Samoa
02 September 2021

Introduction

1. The Noumea Convention, negotiated under the framework of the Regional Seas Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was adopted in 1986. The Convention and its two related Protocols - Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping and the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the South Pacific Region - entered into force on 22 August 1990.
2. The 12 Parties to the Convention are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and United States.
3. Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention met for their Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting on 2 September 2021 Samoa time via virtual platform.
4. Present at the virtual Meeting were representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and United States. A full list of participants is contained in Annex I.
5. The official languages for the Convention are English and French and the sessions were held in plenary.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The Meeting commenced with an opening prayer from the Secretariat.
7. Papua New Guinea, Chair of the Fifteenth COP Meeting presented an opening address.
8. The Director General of SPREP reflected upon the role of the Convention in addressing growing environmental challenges and stressing the relevance of the Noumea Convention in helping to meet these, thanked all Parties for their engagement in the Meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Organisation of the Meeting

9. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention, a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson were elected from the representatives by a simple majority vote.
10. The Parties elected Samoa as Chairperson and Nauru as Vice Chairperson.
11. The incoming Chair Samoa thanked Papua New Guinea for their role as Chair over the past two years.
12. The outgoing Chair Papua New Guinea thanked all colleagues for their hard work in addressing the environmental challenges collectively. Papua New Guinea congratulated Samoa and Nauru as Chair and Vice Chair respectively and wished them all the best.

The Meeting:

- **Elected** Samoa as Chairperson and Nauru as Vice Chairperson

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda

13. The Secretariat proposed an amendment to the Provisional Agenda under Agenda Item 7 to add Working Paper 7.4 on Pacific Declaration on Plastics for information and noting by the Parties.
14. Australia and the United States sought clarification on the additional Agenda Item 7.4 whether it is seeking endorsement of the Meeting or for noting.
15. The Director General explained that Agenda Item 7.4 was for information purposes only and is not seeking endorsement or adoption at this meeting and will be presented to the Environment Ministers' High Level Talanoa.

The Meeting:

- **Adopted** the Provisional Agenda including the amendment proposed and agreed to by the Parties.

Agenda Item 4: Report of the Secretariat

16. In accordance with Rule 12(vi) of the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention, the Secretariat presented a Report on work undertaken from July 2019 to July 2021 in fulfillment of the provisions of the Noumea Convention.
17. Australia, France, New Zealand, Samoa, and United States noted the Report tabled by the Secretariat and commended the Secretariat on the successful and effective implementation of activities during these challenging, global times.

The Meeting:

- **Adopted** the Report of the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 5: National Reports on the implementation of obligations under the Noumea Convention

18. Parties were invited to report on the national implementation of their obligations under the Noumea Convention for the reporting period from July 2019 to June 2021.
19. Reports were received from Australia, New Zealand, and France's territories.
20. Australia reported that it had implemented a range of measures across 2019 and 2021 under its obligations to the Noumea Convention, several of which include the AUD 16 million Pacific Ocean Litter Project in partnership with SPREP as well as progress made towards becoming a signatory of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
21. New Zealand reported that it is working towards ensuring clean and safe marine environments, including effective pollution control from land and sea, mitigating climate change and reducing domestic plastic pollution. New Zealand further noted that additional information can be found in its Report.

The Meeting:

- **Tabled** their respective reports on the national implementation of their obligations under the Convention for the reporting period July 2019 to June 2021.

Agenda Item 6: Financial Statements for 2019/2020

22. In accordance with Regulation 28 of the Financial Regulations of the Noumea Convention, the Secretariat tabled the audited Financial Statements of the Noumea Convention for the financial years 2019 and 2020.
23. France expressed its apologies to the Secretariat regarding an outstanding payment and advised that it will follow up with its Government to ensure the payment is received.

The Meeting:

- **Adopted** the Financial Reports and Statements for 2019 and 2020.

Agenda Item 7.1: Review of the Noumea Convention

24. The Secretariat presented an update on progress of the review of the Noumea Convention and its Related Protocols.
25. Mr. David Sheppard, consultant engaged to carry out the review of the Noumea Convention, presented the current status and progress of the review and updated the Meeting of the Parties that have been consulted and those yet to be consulted.

26. Australia, France, New Zealand, and Samoa expressed appreciation for the review and Australia further indicated its commitment to completing the review questionnaire. France confirmed it will encourage all territories to complete the review questionnaire and Samoa noted it has completed the consultation and would be happy to provide further information if required.

The Meeting:

- **Noted** the status and progress of the review of the Noumea Convention
- **Collaborated and supported** the Secretariat by providing comments to the Consultant undertaking the review and,
- **Agreed** to discuss inter-sessionally the findings and recommendations of the review prior to its formal consideration at COP17.
- **[Tasked the Secretariat to propose a suitable date for Parties to meet inter-sessionally to discuss the findings of the review.]**

Agenda Item 7.2: ACP MEA Phase III Programme Update

27. The Secretariat updated the Meeting on the ACP MEAs Phase III Programme which contributes towards strengthening the management and implementation of the Noumea Convention.

28. Samoa noted that it had submitted their list of proposed activities to the Secretariat.

29. The Secretariat clarified that it will meet with Samoa to discuss further priority areas to progress the work of the ACP MEA Phase III Programme.

The Meeting:

- **Welcomed** the assistance provided under the ACP MEA Phase III Programme and noted the update to support the Noumea Convention; and
- **Collaborated** closely with the Secretariat to implement activities that support the Noumea Convention

Agenda Item 7.3: Regional framework to address marine litter and microplastics

30. The Secretariat updated the Meeting on the progress of work on the development of a regional framework to address marine litter and microplastics and its inclusion in the Secretariat's work plan for 2022-2023.

31. Australia and New Zealand confirmed their commitment towards protecting the world's oceans through addressing marine pollution.

32. The Secretariat clarified that at this stage the details around compliance, monitoring and funding are not final, noting that these will evolve over time in response to queries from Australia, New Zealand and United States on the compliance, enforcement of the mechanism, funding, and monitoring.

33. The Secretariat further explained that the funding to support the process for the development of the framework is through the ACP MEA III Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.
34. The Secretariat also clarified that this process will be developed in partnership with Parties and it will complement discussions at the global level, in response to queries from Australia, New Zealand and United States as to how this will not duplicate the UN Environment Assembly 5.2 (UNEA5.2) process.
35. The Secretariat noted that the Pacific Islands region will be the first across the world, to embark on this process.

The Meeting:

- **Noted** the status and progress of work on the development of the new regional framework to address marine litter and microplastics,
- **Agreed** to include the development of the new draft regional framework to address marine litter and microplastics in the Secretariat's workplan for 2022-2023; and
- **Agreed** to assist and support the process for developing the regional framework.

Agenda Item 7.4: Pacific Declaration on Plastics

36. The Secretariat presented on the development of a Pacific Declaration on Plastics and noted that the draft Declaration is now in consultation with feedback received from Australia, France, United Kingdom and United States. The Secretariat further noted that the draft Declaration will be presented to the Environment Ministers' Meeting High-Level Talanoa ahead of UNEA 5.2 and a workshop is also scheduled to discuss the Declaration.
37. Australia reiterated its support for a global discussion on plastic pollution and indicated interest in a strong Pacific view. Samoa noted the draft Declaration and it looks forward to the discussions to take place.
38. The United States indicated its preference for a voluntary declaration to avoid a lengthy negotiation process due to language presented in the draft.
39. The Director General clarified that the Declaration will be voluntary in anticipation of issues that may arise for Members. The Pacific Declaration on Plastics will provide common ground and Members are not obligated to commit to it when it is presented to the Environment Ministers' Meeting High-Level Talanoa.

The Meeting:

- **Noted and discussed** the Pacific Declaration on Plastics with the hope to finalise and table for voluntary endorsement at the Environment Ministers' Meeting High Level Talanoa.

Agenda Item 8: Consideration and adoption of the Core Budget 2022-2023

40. In accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Noumea Convention, the Secretariat presented the core budget for the biennium 2022-2023 and updated Parties on status of Contributions.
41. Samoa noted its outstanding contributions from the schedule presented and will be in contact with the Secretariat to settle its outstanding contribution.

The Meeting:

- **Considered and approved** the core budget and contributions for the biennium 2022 – 2023: and
- **Committed** to urgent clearance of outstanding contributions

Agenda Item 9: Items proposed by Parties

42. No items were proposed by Parties at the time of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 10: Other Business

43. No other business was noted at the time of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 11: Date and venue of the next Meeting

The Meeting:

- **Endorsed** 2023, prior to the Thirty-first SPREP Meeting as the date of the next meeting and the venue as Samoa

Agenda Item 12: Adoption of the Meeting Record

The Meeting:

- **Adopted** the Summary Outcomes Report of the Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and Related Protocols (Noumea Convention) Meeting.

Agenda Item 13: Closure of the Meeting

44. The Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region and Related Protocols (Noumea Convention) Meeting closed with a prayer from the Secretariat at 4.40pm, Samoa time.