

Mike Donoghue spoke to the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan (WDAP). He began by thanking the many people who had contributed to the final plan, especially Hannah Hendriks, seconded from DOC to assist with the plan's production, and Betty-Lynne Mantell, who had edited the final draft. He congratulated Karen on an excellent plan and thanked her for all her efforts in producing the WDAP.

Mike noted that unprecedented global attention is being paid to the oceans and their threatened species, and that the Marine Species Action Plans are well laid-out and provide clear guidance for SPREP Members, who collectively have management jurisdiction over some 10% of the planet's oceans. He noted that SPREP's BIEM Programme, funded by the EU, has provided significant support for understanding more about the scale and mitigation of by-catch of whales and dolphins in regional fisheries, and he hoped that lessons learned could be rolled out throughout the Pacific islands.

He said that the WDAP contains many familiar topics, but important new innovations, including citizen science, the impacts of climate change on cetaceans, and the role of whales in mitigating climate change had been incorporated. He then briefly reviewed the plan's 9 Themes, its Objectives and Indicators, noting especially new initiatives on the reporting of stranded cetaceans, the role of Important Marine Mammal Areas, opportunities for collaborations and the importance of international organisations including the International Whaling Commission and the Convention on Migratory Species.

He concluded by stating that protection of the Pacific's iconic whales and dolphins has never been more urgent, and that there has never been a better plan to promote their conservation. He wished participants good luck in its implementation.