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The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.



Twenty Seventh SPREP Meeting of Officials

Alofi, Niue

19 – 21 September 2016

Agenda Item 6.1: Strengthening Regional Linkages update

Purpose of the Paper

1. The purpose of the paper is to update Members on the progress on Strengthening Regional Linkages.

Background

2. The 2010 SPREP Meeting endorsed the concept of establishing a sub-regional presence for SPREP in the Pacific region. After commissioned consultancies the 2012 SPREP Meeting recommended the placement of SPREP contracted Desk Officers in the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands on a trial basis and subject to funding. The meeting also directed that the sub-regional presence should be implemented by the Secretariat in a cost effective manner, with funding from the core budget and other sources.
3. In 2014 the Secretariat assessed its modality for implementing in-country projects that require appointment of long-term project staff. The more cost effective and efficient approach for greater impact was to base project managers and technical staff in the countries where projects are being implemented, rather than at the SPREP Headquarters. This modality has ensured projects have sustained support particularly at the sub-national and community levels as demonstrated through the USAID Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change Project in Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands concluded in 2015 and the Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC) project.

SPREP Project Based In-country Officers

Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change project

4. SPREP has enhanced its sub-regional presence in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu through the PEBACC project which focusses on strengthening and protecting the role of natural ecosystem services to enhance resilience with activities in the three countries. The 5-year €5 million project which began in 2015 is funded by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and is implemented by SPREP in partnership with the governments of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The Suva office supports the three-country project, and complements the field offices in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The Vanuatu Country Manager is based in Port Vila at the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat; and the Solomon Islands Country Manager is based in Honiara at the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.

Signing of the Host Country Agreement and Launch of the Fiji Office

5. A Host Country Agreement was signed with the Government of Fiji on 13 June 2016 and the SPREP Fiji Office officially launched on 26 July 2016 by the Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Foreign Affairs Minister of Fiji. The establishment of the office has been made possible with the support of the PEBACC project. The Fiji Office is situated at 8 Thurston Street, Suva and has four project staff which includes the Project Manager; Finance and Administration Officer; Project Officer; and Communications Officer.

Desk Officers in Republic of Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia

6. RMI - The former SPREP Technical Expert (Water Sector) based at the Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC) resigned on 25 September 2015 to become the Head of RMI's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Secretariat in consultation with OEPPC advertised a replacement for the position in July 2016. The recruitment process is currently underway.
7. FSM – The Solid Waste Management Expert, North Pacific (SWME) started official duties on 5th of January 2015, and is based in the Pacific Community Northern Pacific Office in Pohnpei. The Solid Waste Management Expert has been instrumental in representing providing expert input on solid waste management and representing SPREP at various national initiatives. The Solid Waste Management Expert has also served as a SPREP liaison point assisting with the Adaptation Fund proposal for FSM and the in-country coordination of official visits by SPREP staff.

Issues

8. The 2015 SPREP Meeting recommended that the Secretariat defer the undertaking of a cost benefit analysis of the Desk Officers arrangement until no later than 2017; and directed the Secretariat to explore opportunities for alternative funding including operational funds for regional Desk Officers in Pacific island Member countries and territories. Due to the limited resources available to the SPREP core budget, the Secretariat does not have the current capacity and resources to enact the recommendations.
9. Noting the financial situation of SPREP it is recommended that a cost benefit analysis be undertaken when resources and in-house capacity are available. With respect to alternative funding for regional desk officers including operational funding for such an arrangement, the Secretariat cannot enact the recommendation without sufficient resourcing.
10. As noted in the KVAConsult 2012 commissioned cost benefit analysis on the sub-regional presence, the Northern Pacific was identified as the best option due to geography and costs of access to SPREP technical staff and resources. Furthermore the 2012 SPREP Meeting directed the Secretariat that the sub-regional presence should be implemented in a cost effective manner, with funding from the core budget and other sources.

11. To date SPREP has ensured the enhanced sub-regional presence is innovative and cost effective with the allocation of limited funds from the core budget and project funds. SPREP has co-located with institutions such as the Office of the Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination in the Marshall Islands; Pacific Community Northern Pacific Regional Office in the the Federated States of Micronesia; the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat in Vanuatu; and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology in the Solomon Islands. As noted above the new SPREP Office in Fiji has a project complement of four staff and provides supplementary support of the PEBACC in the three countries of focus.

Recommendations

12. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the signing of the host country agreement with the Government of Fiji and official launch of the SPREP Fiji Office in 2016;
- **note** that SPREP is finding innovative ways to reduce the costs of sub-regional offices including aligning to project activities and budgets, and co-location with other organisations;
- **defer** the undertaking of a cost benefit analysis of the Desk Officers arrangement, until resources are available to fund the review.