

## 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5, 6, and 7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

### Agenda item 9.2.1: Progressing SPREP Key Marine Activities to 2030

#### Purpose of paper:

1. To seek endorsement of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026.
2. To seek Member commitment to implement the PIRMSP 2022-2026.
3. To update Members on implementation of the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plane 2021-2030.
4. To update Members broader SPREP engagement with ocean initiatives and seek commitment to the UN Decade of Oceans actions on the science for threatened and migratory marine species and corals.

#### Background:

5. The Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme (PIRMSP) is a regional strategy to guide the cooperative conservation and management by Members of dugongs, marine turtles, whales and dolphins, sharks and rays, and seabirds.
6. Oceania has an exceptional diversity of migratory marine species which are fundamental elements of Pacific island culture and heritage. Marine species are used as flagship species for Pacific marine ecosystems where they play a significant ecological role in the functioning of coastal and oceanic habitats and systems. Their life history characteristics make them vulnerable, and they are increasingly threatened with extinction. As migratory species Pacific island countries and territories must work together to ensure their survival and the retention of the important traditional and cultural links with these iconic species.
7. SPREP and its partners have developed, reviewed and implemented three consecutive consolidated regional Marine Species Action Plans since 2003 – an initiative designed, endorsed and implemented by SPREP Member countries and territories. In 2009, the Regional Plan of Action for Sharks was developed and launched jointly by The Pacific Community (SPC), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and SPREP. This has now been integrated into the latest iteration of the Marine Species Programme along with an action plan for seabirds for the first time. The development of the Seabird Action Plan was co-led by Birdlife International.

8. This latest 5-year plan is the culmination of a review of the previous plan 2013-2017 supported by a secondment from the NZ Department of Conservation. The review was shared with Members and is available on the SPREP website. Consultation workshops of the new draft plan developed by SPREP were held online in July and August 2021. The workshops were followed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Pacific Islands Cetacean MOU held in Samoa. The Whale and Dolphin Action Plan becomes the Action Plan for Pacific Cetaceans MOU.
9. The final [PIRMSP 2022-2026](#) is now available online and in hard copy in English and French. Copies will be made available at the SPREP meeting.
10. SPREP has developed two UN Decade of Oceans actions for Oceans – Threatened and Migratory Marine Species Science and Pacific Coral Reef Science. These actions highlight the gaps and priorities needed to help Members meet the challenges faced by biodiversity in our Pacific ocean.
11. The Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan was endorsed by all members at the 30<sup>th</sup> SPREP Meeting in 2021. The Plan identifies 8 Action areas where regional cooperation will benefit Members. SPREP will support implementation by any actors in the region.
12. Implementation of the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan is progressing with the early focus on building science partnerships with the Australian Institute of Marine Science, NOAA, CSIRO, CRIOBE, IRD and SPC to strengthen access to science and knowledge for Members and to build opportunities to bring scaled up reef restoration technologies to the region.
13. The Pacific ReefCloud project has commenced in Samoa. This project will develop community and government-based reef monitoring across the region. Work has commenced in Samoa in partnership with MNRE and MAF with the Australian Institute of Marine Science, with funding support from Australia. The monitoring will be rolled out next to Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Federated States of Micronesia under Pacific BioScapes Programme coral related activities.
14. Since 2017 SPREP has been implementing KRA5, Bycatch and Integrated Ecosystem Management Initiative, of the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership programme now scheduled to complete in 2025. Planning is underway with the EU to formulate a second phase focusing on ocean governance that, at time of writing, will among things strengthen Member implementation of ocean commitments and the 2050 Strategy through to 2030.

**Recommendation:**

15. The Meeting is invited to:
  - 1) **Endorse** the Pacific Island Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026;
  - 2) **Commit** to implementation of the PIRMSP 2022-2026 and the Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030; and
  - 3) **Recognise** and **commit** to supporting the UN Decade of Oceans actions on the science for threatened and migratory marine species and corals.