



**RSC14/09/2020/Minutes**

**ITEM 4: Minutes from the Fourth Joint Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting**

**Via Skype Conference Call**

**10:00 AM FRIDAY 31 JANUARY 2020**

**Participants**

Mr. Clark Peteru SPREP Legal Counsel and Chairperson

Dr. Andreas Drews – Manager ABS Initiative

Dr. Geoff Burton – GEF Consultant

Mr. Jeffery Leung Wai – UNDP Samoa

Ms. Tilia Asau - Department of Environment, Tuvalu & Polynesian sub-regional representative;

Ms 'Ofa Kaisamy- ABS Legal Adviser, SPREP

Mr Rahul Chand-ABS Capacity Development Officer, SPREP

**Apologies:**

Mr King Sam- Republic of Palau and representative for the Micronesian sub-region;

Dr Manoela Miranda- Task Manager, UN Environment;

Dr Daniel Robinson- Associate Professor UNSW & ABS Initiative Regional Coordinator;

**Agenda Item 1: Opening**

The meeting was opened by Mr. Clark Peteru, the Chair for the Joint Steering Committee. Dr. Andreas, Mr. Jeffery and Ms. Asau joined via skype conference call while Dr. Burton was connected via telephonic call.

**Agenda Item 2: Quorum**

The meeting did not achieve the quorum as required under the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee because only one of the three sub-regions; Tuvalu representing Polynesia attended the meeting on behalf of member countries. The minimum number for the quorum was four that must include atleast two sub regional representatives of the member countries.

Consequently, the Chair decided to proceed with the meeting on the basis that the resolutions of the meeting will be circulated on email comprising all country representatives for the final endorsement.

### **Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

### **Item 4: Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

There were no comments on the minutes of the previous meeting. The Secretariat explained the reasons that led to 'email' being used as a medium to conduct the last meeting. No specific matters were discussed on matters arising from the previous meeting.

### **Item 5: Implementation Reports.**

5.1 The Chair invited the Secretariat to provide an update on the progress in implementation of the Project. The Secretariat provided a verbal update on the progress and achievements of the Project in the 2019 period. Detailed information document to this agenda item is attached as RSC/INFP1/01/2020.

5.2 Following the Secretariat, the Chair invited other members if they had specific inputs to make on the progress of implementation of ABS work in the region. Dr. Geoff Burton provided a brief update on the ABS work in Samoa particularly on the development of the Environment Management and Conservation (EMC) bill. The EMC bill has been extended in scope to include gaps on compliance issues pertaining to the Protocol.

5.3 Dr. Andreas thanked SPREP for its collaboration with ABS Initiative particularly for the jointly held in country missions to Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. The focus of the ABS Initiative has been particularly in the Melanesian countries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Dr. Drews added that an MoU signed between PNG government and ABS Initiative has led to a new project proposal being developed for the country. He briefly mentioned on the involvement of the organisation towards the work being done in Cook Islands as well particularly on the development of the ABS Policy Framework.

5.4 ABS Legal Advisor from the Secretariat updated the members on the progress made on Cook Islands policy development and the pipeline plans for policy development in Tuvalu in 2020.

### **Item 6 : Strategic Decisions on Project Implementation (Challenges and Future Directions)**

6.1 The Chair introduced agenda item 6 which was a decision item and requested the Secretariat to provide further information before he could ask members for endorsement on the recommendations.

6.2 The Committee was informed on the need and justification for the project to be extended till 2020. The extension of the project also meant that project staff contractual agreements may also be extended at no additional cost to the project. A detailed paper on the 'no cost extension' is attached as RSC/DP3/01/2020.

6.3 Dr. Burton and Dr. Andreas commended the work of SPREP and welcomed the proposal for extension. Dr. Andreas highlighted the importance of continuity of the work and the usefulness of a no cost extension to the project to take it till 2021. With the strong support from Dr. Bruton, Dr. Andreas, Ms. Asau and Mr. Jeffery, the Chair felt that the Committee agreed to the proposed recommendations and therefore asked the committee to endorse the recommendation which was dually done.

### **Decision**

**The Steering Committee endorsed that the Project be extended (no-cost extension) to December 2021; and that the contractual agreements of ABS Legal Adviser; ABS Capacity Building Officer and ABS Technical and Financial Officer be extended till the end of the extended period of the project (Dec 2021).**

#### **Item 7: Annual Work Plan and Budget For 2019**

7.1 The Chair invited the Secretariat to present the budget and annual work plan which was attached in meeting papers as document RSC/DP4/01/2020.

7.2 In its presentation, the Secretariat informed the members that the Project wishes to have two regional workshops (ABS Capacity Building – Noumea and ABS Regional workshop Post CBD COP ) in collaboration with ABS Initiative where possible. Apart from the two regional workshops a Biodiscovery Forum to be held in Brisbane has been identified as collaboration between ABS Initiative, Queensland Government and SPREP. The activities presented by the Secretariat also highlighted workshops (including national consultations) in five countries namely Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Tonga and Kiribati.

7.3 The Secretariat also proposed a sub-regional capacity building workshop for the northern pacific (Palau, RMI and FSM) and a side event for the Pacific ABS Regional Project at the IUCN World Congress.

7.4 The budget breakdown tabled at the meeting provided an estimated expenditure for staff salaries for three staff at USD \$329,755 ; travel and daily subsistence allowance for staff at USD \$110,136 ; USD 25,000 for country allocations; USD \$87,000 for sub regional workshop; USD \$ 5,000 for communication services and a buffer of USD \$ 111,378 in the budget. The total budget tabled for 2020 period was USD \$ 668,269.

7.5 Ms. Asau representing the Polynesian group expressed her support for the budget but sought clarifications from the Secretariat in view of a request made by Tuvalu for policy development and capacity building workshop in the country.

7.6 The Secretariat clarified that Tuvalu's request has been considered and allocations in the 'buffer' shall be used to provide the assistance since the papers were drafted (and budget prepared) last year well before the request for Tuvalu was made. The Chair then requested the Secretariat to amend the budget and reflect Tuvalu's request before endorsement can be made on email.

7.7 Dr. Burton, Dr. Andreas and Mr. Jeffrey commended the work of SPREP and supported the proposed documents to be endorsed by the committee. With the amendments proposed in regard to 7.6 above, the Chair accepted the changes and subsequently the Committee endorsed the budget and workplan.

**Decision: The annual workplan and budget with amendments to include assistance to Tuvalu as per the country's request was endorsed. (No additions were made to the overall budget)**

#### **Agenda 8 : Other Matters**

8.1 The Secretariat informed the members of the upcoming 10 Nature Conference on Protected Areas (website <https://www.pacificnatureconference.com/node/192> ) and requested if information can be shared with partners. In particular the Project team encouraged members to register to participate and if they are able to bring experts / facilitators for the ABS Regional workshop that would be held back to back with the conference will be greatly appreciated for its collaboration.

8.2 The members acknowledged the leadership of the Chair and thanked him for chairing the session especially when online meetings are difficult to manage. The Chair also conveyed his gratitude

to all members especially Dr. Andreas due to time difference and other members Ms. Asau and Mr. Jeffery for their participation. The Chair also acknowledged the presence of Dr. Burton who was connected via telephone to be part of the meeting. Finally, the Chair acknowledged the Secretariat that prepared and coordinated the meeting which went without any major issues and hindrance.

8.3 There being no other item left on the agenda, the Chair closed the meeting at 11.35 am.