



Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

TWENTY-FIRST SPREP MEETING

Madang, Papua New Guinea
6 – 10 September 2010

Agenda Item 9.2.2: Review of Regional Meteorological Services

Purpose of Paper

1. To update SPREP Members on the Review of Regional Meteorological Services, called for by the Pacific Forum Leaders in their 2008 Forum Communiqué, and as discussed at the 20th SPREP Meeting.
2. To report on the Secretariat's progress towards developing a proposal on the development and establishment of an institutional response to Pacific meteorological needs, as endorsed by the 20th SPREP Meeting. The Secretariat proposes establishment of a Regional Desk for Pacific National Meteorological Services and at SPREP, and restructuring of the existing SPREP Regional Meteorological Services Directors (RMSD) collective into a Pacific Meteorology Council.

Background

3. Access to regular, timely, and quality weather and climate information is of extreme relevance and importance to the Pacific. Safety in maritime transport and aviation depends on actions taken in response to weather conditions. It is also of importance to agricultural and fisheries productivity, and industries such as tourism, including its use in predicting the availability of water for human consumption. These and other key sectors are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events brought about by climate change.
4. Over recent years interest in the provision of meteorological services in the region has grown for two primary reasons: i) the increasing realization of the contribution of weather and climate services to economic and social wellbeing, particularly in view of the impacts of extreme events, on lives and property; and ii) concern over the sustainability of regional services provided by Fiji Meteorological Service, which plays a central role in the provision of weather services including severe weather warnings in the region.
5. The importance of addressing these issues was emphasized at the 15th World Meteorological Congress in May 2007, the 12th Meeting of RMSD in July 2007, and the 16th and 17th Smaller Island States (SIS) Leaders Meetings in October 2007 and August 2008.



6. The Pacific Island Forum Leaders' 2008 Communiqué called on SPREP “to urgently carry out a comprehensive review of regional meteorological services, reporting intersessionally to Leaders as soon as practicable on all options, including building on existing arrangements and consideration of other service providers.” The 2009 20th SPREP Meeting “urged the Secretariat to continue the implementation of this activity and to report inter-sessionally with a view to submitting a final report to Members at the 21SM in 2010.”

7. The RMSD was initiated following the 1992 SPREP Meeting to establish a forum for the discussion of meteorological issues, in support of improving the understanding of climate change and access to data and information. Since it first convened in 1993, SPREP has provided the secretariat function to facilitate the RMSD meetings with support of the WMO and technical institutes in developed partner countries (Australia, New Zealand, and the USA). The RMSD meeting has become over time a key meeting for tabling regional and national issues before a regional audience that includes donors, and recently for presenting meteorology related initiatives for the endorsement of National Meteorology Directors.

8. The Regional Strategic Action Plan for the Development of Meteorology in the Pacific 2000-2009 highlighted priority areas of focus for developing and improving the capacities and capabilities of meteorological services. This identifies priority areas of observing systems, telecommunications, infrastructure, climate change and variability, disaster management, capacity building, and recently, institutional strengthening. It is in this light that SPREP is recommending enhancing the role of the RMSD through the development of a Pacific Meteorology Council.

Update on the Review of Regional Meteorological Services

9. A Review Team commissioned by SPREP completed its tasks in April 2010 with the presentation to SPREP of their Final Report. Copies of the Review were sent to all SPREP Members and hard copies will also be available at the 2010 SPREP Meeting. The Review’s main objective was to recommend to Forum Leaders:

“...options for the provision of viable and effective regional meteorological and climatological services, including regional specialized meteorological and climatological services to all Pacific Island Countries and Territories as provided by the specialized RSMC Nadi, Fiji Meteorological Service (FMS), and other regional service providers.”

10. The Review Team liaised closely with national meteorological services and technical organizations, donor and policy oriented organizations and the SPREP Secretariat. Four PICs were visited (Samoa, Fiji, Kiribati and Vanuatu) and discussions were also held with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Fiji SPREP focal points made special arrangements for high level consultations with representatives of the Government of Fiji, in 2009 and early 2010.

Review's findings and recommendations:

11. The Review grouped its ten recommendations into three (3) strategic areas as follows:

1. Regional Coordination and Support
 - i. That a Regional Desk for Pacific National Meteorological Services be established
 - ii. That key development partners review their donor/support policies to provide surety of ongoing support for Pacific island NMSs, given their critical role in the safety, security and sustainable development of Pacific Island Countries and Territories.
 - iii. That a donor/development partner forum be scheduled in association with the annual meeting of Regional Meteorological Services Directors, to align donor investment with regional needs and promote donor coordination.
2. Strengthening National Meteorological Services
 - i. That Pacific Island Governments assign greater importance to the work of NMSs by mainstreaming them into their respective overall policy and decision-making processes; as well as according NMSs greater share in the allocation of budgetary resources.
 - ii. That development partners support NMSs' contribution in the development and implementation of national action plans being developed by PICs so that the work of the NMS and other linked fields (such as hydrology, disaster risk reduction and climate change) can be integrated.
3. Regional Specialized Meteorological Services
 - i. That the FMS be constituted as a stand-alone entity of the Fiji Government as described
 - ii. That the Fiji Government maintains its commitment to provide resources that enable FMS to fulfill its role as RSMC Nadi, in association with development partners.
 - iii. That development partners continue to provide support to FMS through its transition and under its new organizational structure.
 - iv. That Pacific Island Forum Leaders request SPREP initially to provide a 2010 interim report on the FMS restructuring progress and subsequently call for an annual report from the Pacific Desk (as per Recommendation 1) focusing on the sustainable delivery of meteorological services including the capacity of FMS to meet its RSMC commitments over the approaching cyclone season.
 - v. That FMS develop bilateral agreements with other national meteorological services to which it provides services.

Way forward

12. There are many key issues for the region to strengthen its regional meteorological services. In particular, the close engagement of the Fiji Meteorological Service, and hence the Fiji Government is essential in developing any future regional institutional arrangement. The review process and the Secretariat consulted closely with representatives of Fiji in 2009 and 2010. The Fiji Government is planning to reform the Fiji Meteorological Service in 2010-2011. An update on the plans for the corporatization of the FMS, if available, will be provided to the 21st SPREP Meeting.

13. The Review findings include a ‘Next Steps’ guidance for consideration in the implementation of the recommendations. These are simplified into two general areas: (a) the establishment of a ‘Pacific Desk’ which aims to provide a regional support framework for meteorological services support, and (b) development of the Regional Specialized Meteorological Services (RSMC). The review suggests leaders designate a CROP agency to undertake the development and role of the Pacific Desk, as well as to support plans for the corporatisation of the FMS. Furthermore, Leaders are asked to urge donors to maintain and increase where possible the level of support to the regional meteorological services.

14. On the Review’s suggestion for a Pacific Desk, it should be noted that the SPREP Secretariat has supported meteorological services and their development since its inception. This role was established to strengthen understanding of the Pacific’s weather, climate variability and change. This role has since expanded, creating partnerships with technical agencies such as the WMO, US NOAA, NIWA, Australian BoM and the NZ MetService to facilitate meteorological support in various areas. The Secretariat has also been responsible for the RMSD forum, which provides guidance for national and regional priorities for meteorology support, and oversight of a regional strategy produced by SPREP and partners in 2000. The Secretariat hosts technical programmes related to meteorology support and its recent experience in hosting other specialized meteorological programmes has helped shape and support the regional meteorology work area.

16. The above Review recommendations were discussed in a paper submitted to the Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC) meeting in July, and were noted in the letter by the Chair of the PPAC to the Forum Leaders for consideration at their August 2010 meeting in Vanuatu. The Secretariat will provide an update to the Meeting on any Forum Leaders decisions affecting SPREP.

17. The 20th SPREP Meeting asked the Secretariat to provide a proposal for an institutional response to the governance and support of meteorological issues in the region. The details of the proposed formation, core role and functions of a Pacific Meteorology Council, and the type of secretariat support to be given, are provided in Attachment 1.

SPREP Pacific Desk for National Meteorological Services

18. The recent Review of Regional Meteorological Services strongly advocated a strengthened regional coordination of meteorological mechanism, a so-called Pacific Desk. The Secretariat with its long history of support for meteorology development in the region would be ideally placed as the host of this mechanism. The Secretariat also is making efforts to strengthen its existing pool of resources to service the meteorology support role for the region.

19. A level of support exists within the Secretariat for the formation of the Pacific Desk, harnessing resources across a number of positions to make for an effective initial support base for meteorology support. SPREP shall also leverage its partnership with the WMO to provide additional support. It is important to note that the Pacific Desk requires new and additional resources.

Recommendations

20. **In consideration** of the recommendations put forward by the Review, the Meeting is invited to:

- **endorse** the Recommendations and the Next Steps as outlined by the Review of Regional Meteorological Services;
- **agree** to the nomination of SPREP to undertake the role of the **Pacific Desk** to provide support to the efforts of countries and the region in coordinating and facilitating regional coordination and implementation of relevant meteorological services;
- **endorse** the formation of a Pacific Meteorology Council and **direct** the Secretariat to develop terms of reference for the Pacific Meteorology Council and to submit them for endorsement at the Council's first meeting in 2011;
- **urge** Members, donors and partners to assist including strengthening existing technical support to SPREP as well as additional resources;
- **request** the Secretariat to report on the implementation of these decisions to the 22nd SPREP Meeting.

21. Recognizing the current arrangements for the supply of regional specialized meteorological services to support national meteorological services the Meeting is also invited to:

- **acknowledge** and **express appreciation for** the role played by Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, United States and France in support of regional meteorological services in the Pacific, and to the ongoing support provided by development partners, particularly Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United States and Finland, and the global network of meteorological services;