

2006

17th SPREP Meeting
Officials & Ministers

SPREP

Report on the

17th SPREP Meeting of Officials and Environment Ministers' Meeting

11-15 September 2006
Noumea, New Caledonia

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Secretariat of the
Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

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Contents

Report on the 17th SPREP Meeting of Officials	1
Agenda Item 1: Official Opening	1
Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair	3
Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures	3
Agenda Item 4: Action Taken on Matters Arising from the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting	4
Agenda Item 5: Performance Review/Overview of Developments in 2005	7
Agenda Item 6: Staff Remuneration - Triennial Reviews	23
Agenda Item 7: Regional Conventions	27
Agenda Item 8: 2007 Work Programme and Budget	29
Agenda Item 9: Institutional Matters	67
Agenda Item 10: Regional Cooperation	69
Agenda Item 10: Items Proposed by Members	76
Agenda Item 12: Statements by Observers	76
Agenda Item 13: Other Business	76
Agenda Item 14: Date and Venue of Eighteenth SPREP Meeting	77
Agenda Item 15: Adoption of Report	77
Agenda Item 16: Closure of the Meeting	77
Annexes	79
Annex 1 List of Participants	80
Annex 2 Address by the Outgoing Chair: France	95
Annex 3 SPREP Director's Introductory Remarks	96
Annex 4 Welcome Speech Host Country: New Caledonia	99
Annex 5 Adopted Agenda	102
Outcomes of the Environment Ministers' Meeting	105
Statement of the 2006 SPREP Environment Ministers' Meeting	107
Summary of Major Issues Addressed by the 17 th SPREP Meeting of Officials	110
Agenda	114
Acronyms used and their explanation	115



Report on the 17th SPREP Meeting of Officials

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Noumea, New Caledonia

Introduction

1. The 17th SPREP Meeting (17SM) was convened in Noumea, New Caledonia from 11 to 15 September 2006. Representatives of the following SPREP countries and territories attended: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Observers from a range of regional, international and non-governmental organizations were present. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

Agenda Item 1: Official Opening

2. The Chair of the SPREP Meeting of Officials, Mr Patrick Roussel, Permanent Secretary for Pacific Affairs for the Government of France, called the Meeting to Order. Before opening the Meeting he announced with deep regret the passing of His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV of Tonga at Auckland's Mercy Hospital the previous night. A minute of silence was observed by the Meeting.

3. At the invitation of the Chair, Father Roch Apikawa offered a prayer for the Meeting and in remembrance of those who lost their lives on 9/11. He then blessed the Meeting.

4. The Chair made his opening remarks, noting how SPREP had been operating under its new structure. He highlighted key issues for the Meeting and referred to France's input such as in the Coral Reef Initiative for the South Pacific (CRISP), and in hosting the Oceania Summit in Paris. French chairmanship of the SPREP Meeting coming to an end, he thanked the Secretariat for its support. His remarks are included as Annex 2.

5. The Director of SPREP, Mr Asterio Takesy, also conveyed his condolences to Tonga for the passing away of their King.

6. The Director welcomed all delegates and thanked the Government of New Caledonia for its hospitality. He thanked the Director-General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) for his support, and the support of SPC staff for hosting the Meeting in this technologically advanced conference facility. His remarks are included as Annex 3.

7. The Chair thanked the Director, and complimented the Secretariat for the excellent preparation of the Meeting.

8. He then invited the Hon. Didier Leroux, Member of the Government responsible for Sustainable Development of New Caledonia, to make his opening address.

9. Mr Leroux stressed the importance of environmental issues for New Caledonia and its effect on the quality of life. He noted the effect that international disasters had on the Pacific. These might be hard to influence but at least the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) could try and do something about those things that are within their control, and he commended the adoption of the Protocols during the previous day. He also stressed the importance of biodiversity protection in the Pacific. This was of major importance to New Caledonia – not least because the country contained the second largest coral reef and hence he was very pleased about the CRISP project. New Caledonia had recently been accepted as part of the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) network; the exchange of skills and techniques would enable it to tackle its invasive species issues. He touched on the need for economic activities such as mining which needed to be balanced against the need to preserve the natural environment. Good mining practices had been introduced to rehabilitate where possible the negative effects of nickel mines. He looked forward to making further progress on improving the environment and hoped the meeting would contribute towards meeting that objective. He then declared, on behalf of the President of the Government of New Caledonia, the 17th SPREP Meeting of Officials open. The full speech is included as Annex 4.

Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

10. The Meeting appointed with acclamation the Representative of New Caledonia, responsible for regional cooperation and external affairs, as Chair, who then made a brief opening statement. In accordance with the SPREP Meeting Rules of Procedure, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas would be Vice-Chair; but in their and Palau's absence and, at that time Papua New Guinea also, the representative of French Polynesia was elected by acclamation as Vice-Chair.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

11. The Representative of Marshall Islands sought the inclusion in the agenda of the future of SPREP, in view of the proposed streamlining of regional institutions under the Regional Institutional Framework (RIF) proposal to be considered by Forum Leaders next month. He queried how the proposal would affect the delivery of services to Member countries.

12. The Representative of Samoa sought further documentation on this item as proposed by Marshall Islands if this were to be addressed in the agenda later in the week.

13. The Secretariat stated that the report of the RIF was only completed two weeks ago for initial tabling at the Pacific Plan Action Committee. It was scheduled for discussion next month at the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) before being referred to the Forum Leaders. The Secretariat would endeavour to make a draft available to the Meeting if it were to include this in its agenda.

14. The Representative of Cook Islands supported inclusion of the item under agenda item 10, wanting to know views of other countries.

15. The Representative of American Samoa suggested it would be premature for the Meeting to make a decision on this issue before the final report was completed, and suggested to adhere to the original agenda. The report needed to be studied properly.

16. The Representative of Vanuatu felt it was timely to consider the draft and have a preliminary discussion on it, as a Forum decision would make it too late for SPREP to comment on the matter.

17. The Chair summarised the discussion and concluded that the RIF would be included on the agenda to allow an exchange of views while there was still time. It would thus be included as Item 10.2.

18. The Meeting adopted the adjusted Agenda (Annex 5) and adopted the proposed programme and hours of work.

19. The Meeting also appointed an open-ended Report Drafting Committee comprising Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, New Caledonia, Samoa, United States of America, Vanuatu and the Secretariat, with the Vice-Chair French Polynesia chairing the Committee.

Agenda Item 4: Action Taken on Matters Arising from the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting

20. The Secretariat presented Working Paper 4 (WP4) on action taken on decisions of the 16th SPREP Meeting and explained that a number of items in the report are further addressed in separate subsequent agenda items. The report is mainly for noting. The Secretariat provided updates to indicate that the Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project (PIGGAREP) is now approved for immediate implementation by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)'s Secretariat; and on a less positive note, that the proposed GEF post for the Pacific funded by Australia and New Zealand was withdrawn for consideration by the GEF Secretariat.

21. The Director elaborated on GEF negotiations and would be working with Australia and New Zealand to further work on this. The position was still considered necessary for Members to benefit from the GEF.
22. The Representative of Samoa stressed the importance of having a GEF position at SPREP, given the urgency of preparing project proposals and accessing of GEF funds which might be redirected elsewhere if not utilised by Members.
23. The Representative of Niue underlined how much the position to access GEF funds was required. It was timely and urgent as countries were already behind in requesting GEF assistance.
24. The Representative of Fiji stated that all Pacific countries faced this and supported the creation of the position in SPREP with the help of Australia and New Zealand.
25. The Representative of Cook Islands supported these comments saying the process had already started and needed to be progressed urgently, as funds were available for a limited time only.
26. The Representative of American Samoa also supported the position.
27. The Representative of Vanuatu supported the initiative but wanted to see a clear terms of reference for the position. Getting access into the GEF bureaucracy would be better for Pacific island countries with a position in SPREP. This could bring GEF closer to Pacific Island Countries (PICs) so it is more aware of the region's difficulties and could become more supportive.
28. The Representative of Australia stated his country was mindful of the importance to the region of accessing GEF funding, for example for the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work (IBPOW). He agreed that the terms of reference needed to be clearly identified.

29. The Representative of New Zealand offered his continued support for the position, and agreed with Vanuatu and Australia that the position should be clearly defined to make best use of opportunities presented.

30. The Secretariat appreciated the concerns expressed about the terms of reference. This was not an aim to increase the number of SPREP staff but a clear response to a request from Pacific Island Members. The region lags behind others in accessing GEF resources and the position should improve access to GEF resources by bringing all parties closer. The position should work with Governments. A meeting with Australia and New Zealand during the week would move the agenda along.

31. The Chair summarised the discussion as identifying a definite and urgent need for a position in SPREP to help countries access GEF funding, with the need for a clearer definition of the duties and role of the position.

32. The Representative of New Caledonia stated that territories of the Pacific do not have access to these funds. She recalled that, at the 15th SPREP Meeting held in Pape‘ete in 2004, territories had asked the Secretariat to investigate the eligibility of territories for international funds.

33. The Representative of Marshall Islands sought clarification on the timeframe of appointment of this person.

34. The Secretariat responded it could not give a precise date, as discussions with donors such as New Zealand and Australia were proceeding. He thought the position might be operative by early next year.

35. The Representative of New Zealand stated his country is co-funder of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) in the Pacific (an agreement with United Nations Development Programme, UNDP). New Zealand had recently appointed a regional coordinator who was currently travelling in the region.

36. The Representative of Samoa reminded Members that the GEF initiative started on 1 July 2006, with 30 June 2008 being the date for its first review. Hence appointment next year may be too late. He urged the Secretariat to fill the position as soon as possible.

37. The Meeting noted the paper and actions taken by the Secretariat on the decisions of the 16th SPREP Meeting. It also urged the Secretariat to pursue its discussion with New Zealand and Australia to establish the position as soon as possible, so Members could access GEF funds as early as possible.

Agenda Item 5: Performance Review/Overview of developments in 2005

5.1: Presentation of the Annual Report for 2005 and the Director's Overview of Progress since the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting

38. The Director tabled the Annual Report for 2005 and presented his Overview of progress since the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting (attached as Annex 6). For the first time, the Annual Report had been distributed with the Working Papers, so Members had the opportunity to study it.

39. The Chair thanked the Director for his overview and invited comments on the report.

40. The Representative of Tonga acknowledged the kind words of sympathy by the Meeting regarding the passing of Tonga's monarch.

41. He congratulated the Director for the report and its quality and detail. He sought clarification on two minor issues, relating to the filling of vacancies: (i) whether the Climate Change position had been filled given its importance, and (ii) information on the regional adaptation to climate change.

42. The Director stated the Climate Change post is well underway to being filled, possibly by next month. On the second question, the project had been transformed with AusAID deciding to take on the implementation of the project.

43. The Representative of Australia responded that AUD4 million for vulnerability and adaptation projects was being allocated for on-the-ground work; AUD2 million over 3 years for community level initiatives in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa; AUD1m for Tuvalu water projects; and AUD1m for the Pacific Islands Climate Prediction Project. This was the result of negotiations between Australia and SPREP.

44. The Representative of Fiji sought information on the strategic direction concerning alternative energy projects.

45. The Secretariat responded by providing information on the PIGGAREP project which was being funded by GEF.

46. The Representative of American Samoa expressed concern about invasive species, especially Mynah birds, and asked if any of the other Members had managed to solve the problem and could share any solution with the Meeting.

47. The Representative of New Caledonia congratulated the Secretariat on all the work done in 2005 and the quality of the report. She said New Caledonia will receive a report in October concerning all invasives in the territory and would be happy to share any conclusions and practical results from the experts from Europe, United States and Australia. The Meeting of SPREP in Apia which was held in June 2005 sought to improve collaboration with territories and countries and this would be a good opportunity to put that into effect.

48. On the issue of climate change, New Caledonia was moved by the fact that the Lateu Village residents in Vanuatu were the first environmental refugees, and would like to assist this village if needed in the framework of cooperation between New Caledonia and Vanuatu. New Caledonia depends on imports of fossil fuel when it would rather not be reliant on them. It would like to explore alternative solutions and was ready to share experiences and hear from others.

49. The Secretariat responded to America Samoa by stating that experiments in cooperation with the Samoan government on eradicating Mynahs had not yet been very successful.

50. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked the Secretariat and suggested the programmes were working well. Invasives, climate change and renewable energy were big and long-term issues for Vanuatu. High turnover of people working in this field was of great concern both at national and regional levels. He also raised concern that very few people in each country were working on these big issues. Vanuatu was in a highly active tectonic area and parts of its islands were submerging. This cause was hard to separate from the effects of climate change which remained a big issue. In terms of high staff turnover, he sought consistency and continuity with people dealing with these issues.

51. The Representative of Samoa recorded his thanks for the excellent report. He raised in respect of the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) project whether there were opportunities for expanding this to other areas, trying to clear Pacific countries of other unwanted materials. He thanked Australia for work to date.

52. The Representative of Australia said his country had also learned a lot, and was pleased with the outcome. It was hoped that the project would be expanded to Papua New Guinea. Australia was willing to look at other applications of a similar process.

53. The Representative of Tokelau also congratulated the Director on his overview but had found that Tokelau was not included in a single activity in the Annual Report – it was only mentioned in Members' contribution. He admitted that his country had not been very active in its approach to SPREP programmes. He informed that his Government had just endorsed a strategic plan for the environment and will be approaching SPREP on the basis of this very soon. He urged the Secretariat to look at other means of funding for Territories that could not currently access GEF.

54. The Representative of Guam stated the report was good at not only giving insight into SPREP's activities but also its relationship with the outside world. He found it had good focus. The Year of Action Against Waste was a successful campaign but the management of solid waste was of course a long-term issue. He noted parallel efforts with regard to recycling in Micronesia and thanked SPREP for its support of this.

55. The Representative of Marshall Islands said the Annual Report reflected well on the Director and Secretariat's performance. He stressed the importance of renewable energies.

56. The Representative of France remarked on CRISP and noted that although funding had been slow in coming, cooperation has actively developed in favour of the Project and funding was now available. The current situation is therefore more positive than is presented in the Secretariat's report.

57. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia stated the report and the delivery of programmes it described had been excellent. He noted with appreciation the role Australia and New Zealand had played in accessing GEF funds. He moved that the report be adopted.

58. The Representative of the Cook Islands commended the report, the Director and the Secretariat. He reported the difficulty his country had with asbestos and was working with New Zealand to deal with this. He hoped Australia would also come to their assistance. Over the last three years, asbestos roofs had been removed but storage on the limited land space provided problems.

59. The Representative of Tuvalu commended the Secretariat for the Annual Report and thanked Australia for accepting the POPs waste to be destroyed in Australia. He also thanked New Zealand for accepting the waste transit through New Zealand waters.

60. Australia joined the emerging consensus on the overview of 2005 and the team effort that had gone into the Annual Report. The new format was excellent and he strongly supported SPREP in its intention to do both internal and external evaluations. Australia is willing to consider other applications of the POPs in PICs model with its PIC partners.

61. The Chair noted the consensus for the Annual Report to be adopted and thanked the Secretariat's team for the excellent work provided.

62. The Meeting then agreed to adopt the Annual Report.

5.2: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) on the 2005 Work Programme and Budget

63. The Secretariat, in presenting its internal Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) for 2005, explained that this report is a requirement under the Rules of Procedure and in keeping with good accountability practice. It not only serves the Members but it also helps the Executive identify areas where difficulties were encountered and improvements needed, as well as emerging issues and challenges.

64. The Secretariat explained linkages between the various SPREP documents and strategies as follows: The PMER dealt with the Secretariat's detailed work programme for 2005, showing achievements related to outputs and performance indicators. The work programme outputs and performance indicators are related to the Outputs and indicators of the medium-term Strategic Programmes. The Strategic Programmes represent the Secretariat's strategy to deliver its contribution towards achieving the Region's Action Plan outcomes.

65. This detailed performance accounting complements the Director's Overview to be followed by the later presentation of the Secretariat's financial performance for the same period.

66. Overall the Secretariat was able to expend on programmes and other operations in 2005, 99% of the funds it received. The Secretariat had taken on board previous suggestions from the SPREP Meeting and included in the expenditure column brief explanations where there are significant variations between budget and actual expenditure.

5.2.1: PMER - Island Ecosystems

67. The Secretariat presented an overview of the Island Ecosystem Programme.

68. The Representative of Niue thanked the Secretariat for its paper. He found that the inclusion in the report of actual spending and reasons for it, very helpful and commended staff in delivering the outputs. He noted in particular the improvement in the area of coordinating National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the Regional Strategy for Nature Conservation. Niue welcomed the invitation of countries to join the Round Table on Nature Conservation, to complement Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and donor involvement. He stressed the need to improve coordination between Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific (CROP) Agencies to effectively implement programmes such as envisaged in the Pacific Plan.

69. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for going ahead with the ecosystems approach and raised two issues. The first was access to land, in particular in Samoa where 80% of land is community land hence the need to balance public versus private aspirations was great. The second issue was the need to strengthen institutional capacity within the countries to improve implementation on the ground.

70. The Representative of Tonga referred to WP 5.2, item 1.4.2 and queried the status of the "Communications" item.

71. The Secretariat informed that training activities had started in Kiribati and Fiji in 2006, and further funding is available. Members including Tonga are welcome to indicate the type of assistance required.

72. The Representative of Fiji asked about the status of CRISP and PILN.

73. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that other partners such the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) are involved with CRISP. The Project document was finalised last December. United Nations Foundation (UNF) and France finalised the funding agreement on 10 July 2006. No activities had been carried out yet by SPREP although other Partners may have begun theirs. PILN was being undertaken in phases; Fiji is in phase 2 which will commence in 2007.

74. The Representative of Tokelau raised the question of the status of territories' eligibility under GEF, in particular in relation to the invasives project.

75. The Secretariat responded that funding was secured from France to facilitate involvement of territories in this project.

76. The Representative of Marshall Islands informed that her country is a new member to the United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) which includes FSM, Palau, Guam, Saipan and American Samoa, all of which are SPREP-affiliated. She urged the Secretariat to participate more actively in this initiative. She thanked the Secretariat for its assistance with their report to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and was looking forward to receiving the final draft report to merge with the Country draft. The RMI also looked forward to an updated schedule of visits for the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), Pacific Environmental Information Network (PEIN) and PILN as discussed with the Secretariat in late 2005.

77. The Secretariat responded it had participated in the USCRTF Meeting in Palau last year and looked forward to this year's meeting in October, but had yet to receive an invitation.

78. The Representative of New Caledonia thanked the Secretariat for its presentation. She was interested in the Communication tools produced by SPREP and requested if they could be sent to all Members for adapting to their own needs in direct or modified form. In the context of the Year of the Sea Turtle, she noted that New Caledonia had instituted a ban on fishing on all species of sea turtle in two of its Provinces.

79. The Secretariat accepted the availability of materials as a valid point and asked New Caledonia to indicate the tools of interest.

80. The Representative of France informed the meeting that extending the scope of CRISP to include activities in North Pacific countries was discussed in the margins of the second France-Oceania Summit, held in Paris on 26 June 2006. While such an extension was not an issue, it would need the approval of the Governing board of the French International Development Aid Agency (AFD), to which this proposal could be submitted in the near future.

81. The Representative of Kiribati said the Secretariat's presentation answered a number of frustrations that they had at the national level. She thanked the Secretariat for support to the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP8) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) preparations but felt that the region was disorganised at Curitiba. She suggested having a negotiations training session before future CBD COPs, similar to those done prior to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP5. Kiribati raised its concern about a paper presented to the CBD by the Secretariat prior to consultation with Pacific Parties. She thanked the Secretariat for the kind assistance provided to Kiribati on the human resource development, National Action Plan (NAP) and the NCSA project.

82. The Secretariat apologised to Kiribati for not clearing the paper submitted to CBD and welcomed further discussion with Kiribati to address this issue constructively.

83. The Representative of American Samoa asked whether there existed a compendium of success stories in regional training.

84. The Secretariat replied that it did not have a compendium of lessons learned from workshops and various training exercises at this time but it has started conducting participant evaluations of courses. It invited Members to likewise share their evaluation of SPREP workshops and courses.

85. The Representative of New Zealand emphasised that reporting on results of work conducted was very important as well as reporting on progress towards more long-term objectives. It was good to see the annual reporting in a longer-term context.

86. The Representative of Vanuatu stressed that, similar to his comments on this item in previous meetings, the work programme belongs to both the Members and the Secretariat. The Secretariat presents a performance report and is judged on this every year. Members need to start reporting on their national implementation; only when this is done will there be a complete picture of what is being done in the environment of the region, and a balanced evaluation of the performance of the organization.

87. The Chair informed the Meeting that further discussion on national reporting was envisaged under agenda item 8.4.

88. The Representative of Australia supported New Zealand's comments on the need to continue to improve reporting. She noted that these reports are an important way to achieve better accountability and securing future support. She also noted improvements to date in the Secretariat's reporting to Members.

89. The Representative of Niue supported Vanuatu in the need to improve national reporting. However there was a need to put in place a mechanism to coordinate reporting for a range of conventions. Having a regional template will assist in this regard, and he suggested the SPREP website could be used to pull the reports together.

5.3.2: PMER - Pacific Futures

90. The Secretariat presented an overview of the Pacific Futures Programme. Most of its effort and resources in this Programme were devoted to climate change, pollution and waste.

91. The Representative of Fiji acknowledged the good work on the International Waters Project (IWP) and its demonstration project in Fiji. Fiji is nationalising lessons learned from the project through the provincial programmes. He also expressed interest in the Samoan Landfill, particularly for considering landfill options in Fiji.

92. The Representative of Samoa asked for clarification on the issue of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) and why this had been taken over by the Forum Secretariat. He also mentioned in relation to their landfill the Japan-Samoa exchange programme, and that Samoa was keen to share the waste management lessons learned with Members.

93. The Secretariat clarified that the Forum Secretariat was the central agency coordinating sustainable development among regional organizations, but SPREP still retains its role in helping PICTs achieving environmental sustainability. Environmental assessment remains a core item in the work programme and the Secretariat is currently recruiting a position to be in place before the end of the year.

94. The Representative of Samoa stated environmental planning and assessment was a very important role for SPREP. With urban population increasing in the Pacific, this was becoming even more important.

95. The Secretariat referred further discussion to the agenda item on the Work Programme and Budget for 2007.

96. The Representative of Tonga expressed appreciation for work by the Secretariat to assist in drafting a bill in relation to the chemical conventions, and requested an update on access and benefit sharing. He further expressed pleasure for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Secretariat and the World Council of Churches. He informed the Meeting that the Department of the Environment is now working with the Wesleyan Theological College in Tonga to teach a course in eco-theology. The Secretariat had assisted with Tonga's State of Environment (SOE) reporting and Tonga hoped to advance this work. On the POPs in PICs project, he thanked Australia for its assistance.

97. On Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), the Secretariat explained that it was a GEF Medium Size Project in collaboration with United Nations University (UNU) through UNDP. Letters of endorsement were being collected. Nine had been received but with the rules now changed it has become harder for this project to get through. In the meantime UNU has sought funding from the Christensen Fund to work on this issue.

98. The Representative of the Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for its work on the Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation Measures in Pacific Island Countries (CBDAMPIC) project and commended the staff of the Secretariat for its efforts. He outlined that a priority component for the Cook Islands was component 2.5.1 (Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA). Cook Islands had received funding from the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) for this work and requested that the Secretariat prioritise it.

99. The Representative of Niue asked for clarification on subregional projects being approved out of the GEF. One of the difficulties they experienced related to co-financing, and he asked for assistance and consideration on this issue.

100. The Representative of Federated States of Micronesia was happy with the work done in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and thanked the Secretariat and UNEP for its negotiation training. With Second National Communication Funds received from UNDP, she requested technical assistance from SPREP in its implementation. Under the Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS) Regional Strategy Project, they have not received its final disbursement; nonetheless she thanked the Secretariat for its assistance with reporting to the Ozone Secretariat. She also sought updates on the ODS proposal on collection and disposal of ODS which was circulated at the 16th SPREP Meeting. She thanked the Government of Australia for the POPs in PICs project.

101. The Secretariat clarified that a broad proposal on collection and disposal of ODS had been developed but that there is no mechanism to get funding through the Montreal Protocol. The Secretariat has included this activity in wider waste proposals for presentation to donors, but as yet hasn't succeeded in getting funding.

102. The Representative of Vanuatu stated that many issues being discussed were cross-cutting in nature. The challenge is to look into whole-of-government approaches in dealing with environmental issues, rather than working with just environment departments. Also, the Pacific has yet to establish a good information management system that would link into the decision-making processes. It was everyone's business to put these systems in place – particularly in terms of reporting. He strongly urged SPREP to start promoting a whole-of-government approach and building an information management system in-country.

103. The Representative of the United States of America recognised the Secretariat for hosting the Pacific Islands Global Climate Observing System (PI-GCOS) position. She highlighted that the Pacific is far in advance of other regions in terms of its regional GCOS effort. It is a very important region climatically and it is appropriate that the region is leading the world in global climate change observation. The USA also recognized its climate bilateral partners, Australia and New Zealand: along with the US-GCOS Program office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), they have provided the necessary resources to assist in this effort.

104. The Chair requested the Forum Secretariat and UNDP-GEF representatives to clarify the issue of co-financing.

105. The Representative of the Forum Secretariat clarified that co-financing will become more difficult under the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) of GEF. She expressed the need for more creative approaches to co-financing, one strategy being to look at the CROP Agency budgets, and other partner budgets, as co-financing options. The Forum Secretariat is currently working with GEF Secretariat, CROP Agencies, UNEP and UNDP to look at the co-financing issue.

106. The Representative of the UNDP-GEF highlighted GEF's philosophy not to fully fund projects. He suggested that various ways for raising co-financing need to be explored.

107. The Representative of Australia agreed with the Representative of Vanuatu on both the whole-of-government approaches and the information management system. It was a challenge for all Member countries. He said that for SPREP Membership this was an even greater challenge in terms of the extent of the area, working in island ecosystems of outstanding international significance, and facing significant threats. Australia had listened to the challenges in reporting at all levels by countries and applauded the Secretariat's work in Tonga, and its efforts in improving its own reporting. He committed Australia to cooperating with the region on seeking to simplify MEA reporting requirements. Part of Australia's response is the secondment of a senior Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) Officer to be a Strategic Programmes Adviser to the Secretariat. This role will increase the capacity of SPREP in developing and managing performance information in relation to the strategic programmes. He also said this position could assist countries with GEF support in the lead-up to the new GEF position based at the Secretariat.

5.2.3: PMER - Executive Management and Corporate Support

108. The Secretariat reported on the work of the Executive Management and Corporate Support.

109. The Representatives of Niue and Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for its improvement in work in relation to financial management and also for the preparation of meeting documents.

110. The Meeting then agreed to accept the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) on the 2005 Work Programme and Budget.

5.3: Financial Reports

5.3.1: Report on Members' Contributions

111. The Secretariat reported on Members' contributions as required by the financial regulations. Since the paper was issued at end of June 2006, there has been further receipts of over USD300,000. This notwithstanding, unpaid contributions as at 8 September 2006 were USD408,299 or 44% of total annual membership contributions – still an unacceptably high level of arrears for a regional organization that has the lowest collective and individual level of membership contributions.

112. The Representative of Tuvalu thanked the Secretariat for providing the information. He noted the large financial arrears problem that has been going on for years. He understood the financial difficulties faced by small countries but encouraged Members to meet their contributions in order for the Secretariat to carry on.

113. The Representative of American Samoa apologised for the late payment of its contribution which it had made at the start of this SPREP Meeting.

114. The Secretariat acknowledged that it was conscious of the economic challenges faced by small island countries in respect of their contribution and sincerely thanked those that had paid up. Appreciation was also expressed for those who had paid their contribution in advance, particularly Australia and New Zealand. It urged Members to improve their performance in this area. The Secretariat stated that commitment to the environment could be best demonstrated not through what is said but by what is done.

115. The Representative of Tonga thanked the Secretariat and noted the outstanding contributions from some Member countries. He asked for clarification on what the Secretariat had done to settle this matter, other than having discussions with those two countries which apparently were not effective as indicated by the figures given.

116. The Secretariat stated it had followed up commitments made after the last SPREP Meeting by a number of reminder letters that had resulted in the collection of USD300,000. Without funds the Secretariat cannot operate effectively. The Executive plans to visit the relevant countries and make personal representations to the highest level to draw attention to this situation.

117. The Representative of Federated States of Micronesia said that it was hopeful that the remaining balance of its dues would arrive before the end of the year.

118. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna asked whether the Secretariat had yet received its payment of contribution.

119. The Secretariat clarified that it had not physically received Wallis and Futuna's contribution but had been informed of an electronic problem that had not enabled the transfer to get through. It was hopeful however that the money would be received shortly.

120. The Meeting, having considered the report and addressed the substantial arrears problem, agreed to:

- a) note the unsatisfactory status of debts relating to Members' contributions; and
- b) commit itself collectively and individually to paying current contributions and arrears in full in 2006.

5.3.2: Audited Annual Accounts for 2005

121. The Secretariat presented the Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2005.

122. The Representative of New Zealand noted that the Secretariat was developing a revised financial rules and procedures manual and asked whether Members would be asked to comment.

123. The Secretariat clarified that while it did not generally expect the Members to be involved in the revision process, Members would be welcome to contribute if they wished to. It further advised that the document is quite large and foresaw some difficulty in how input from 25 Members could be effectively coordinated. The Secretariat stated that it is standard practice in the governance arrangements of regional and international organizations that governing bodies lay out policy directions for Secretariats, but matters of routine administration are left to the Executive which governing bodies appoint and have given their confidence.

124. The Representative of American Samoa asked about arrears from previous years, what the Secretariat has done to collect the outstanding monies, and whether there were guidelines to collection of payments before a report is given to the Council.

125. The Secretariat referred back to the previous reply in agenda item 5.3.1 regarding efforts to recover outstanding monies. It stated that arrears are a longstanding issue similar for other regional organizations. But SPREP is unique among regional organizations in that Members' assessed contributions are regarded by some Members as voluntary. It was timely to ask, in the light of the full ratification of the Agreement Establishing SPREP (AES), whether assessed contributions are now legal obligations.

126. The Representative of Australia welcomed the clear audit findings, and thanked the Secretariat for providing a summary of the audit in the 2005 Annual Report. He referred to Page 2 of the auditor's report in relation to NZAID and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and that it was spent in accordance with the relevant contractual agreements. He asked for clarification on the matters raised in the report to management.

127. The Secretariat read out the two matters from the Management letter report for the year ended 31 December 2005, concerning the draft financial rules and procedures manual.

128. The Representative of Australia thanked the Secretariat for being transparent and agreed that the financial rules and procedures manual should be dealt with as an internal administrative matter.

129. The Representative of Marshall Islands asked that financial matters relating to health insurance be also reflected in future financial reports.

130. The Meeting adopted the audited Financial Statements and Auditors' Report and commended the Secretariat for the unqualified audit.

Agenda Item 6: Staff Remuneration – Triennial Reviews

6.1: Triennial CROP Remuneration Review on Professional Staff

131. The Secretariat put before the Meeting the review report and its recommendations, the CROP Heads views, and the SPREP Management's comments on the Consultant's recommendations; and sought the Meeting's approval of the relevant recommendations.

132. The Representative of Fiji sought clarification from the Secretariat on whether this was just an internal salary restructuring or an issue across CROP Agencies. The Secretariat indicated that this was a CROP-wide salary harmonization.

133. The Representative of France sought clarification as to the financial implications of the recommendations, notably for the years 2008 and 2009. The Secretariat reported there would be no increase in Members' contribution in the immediate future: the Secretariat would finance the increase from ongoing productivity and efficiency gains and a range of cost-saving measures that it would put in place. However such cost savings would not take away the need to increase the Members' contribution in the future to address increasing demands for services, increased cost of operations, and the need for Members to have secure funding for at least some priority programmes.

134. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia supported the recommendation of the report but was wary of the sustainability of the increase.

135. The Representative of American Samoa asked the Secretariat whether this increase was only for the next three years. He did not have a problem with the increase as it did not affect Member contributions and supported the recommendation.

136. The Secretariat clarified that every three years a review was carried out on the competitiveness of the salaries and terms and conditions of support staff.

137. The Representative of Niue said that this issue had been discussed in the last two Meetings and his main concern was the delivery of programmes. He believed the Secretariat has been successful in delivering the work programmes and supported the recommendation by American Samoa.

138. The Representative of New Zealand also supported American Samoa and requested clarification on the issue of staff recruitment and retention.

139. The Secretariat clarified that retention is not a problem, but recruitment is increasingly becoming an issue with both the number and quality of applicants.

140. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked the Secretariat for the presentation. Vanuatu indicated that the reasons for the increases were justified but raised two issues. The first was in relation to the sustainability of the increases. He felt that to continue to fund increases in salary from cost-saving measures only was not sustainable. He requested the Secretariat to come up at the next SPREP Meeting with a long-term strategy so that current and future increases would be considered in an informed manner, taking into account a range of factors such as Member contributions, arrears, delivery of priority programmes, appropriate resourcing for its programmes, and other funding sources.

141. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna expressed surprise that many senior positions remain unfilled. He indicated that the work of SPREP is important and Members have a duty to sustain the organization, especially its resourcing. He supported the increase.

142. The Representative of Tonga supported the recommendation to be adopted. Given the Secretariat's explanation that this increase will be funded from gains in cost savings, he recommended that the gains from the cost-savings measures be reported to the next SPREP meeting. He noted the example of Japan's effort at energy conservation and welcomed that an organization such as SPREP was carrying out measures that could set an example for Member countries.

143. The Representative of Guam indicated being unsettled by the basis for the increase in salary, particularly the issue of sustainability. He supported the increase but would go along with Vanuatu that a strategy be put in place to look at this in the long term.

144. The Representative of Cook Islands supported the recommendation and the comment by Tonga and Vanuatu that there is a need for long-term sustainability strategies.

145. The Representative of New Zealand supported Vanuatu's comments but wanted clarification from Vanuatu on what the plan of resourcing should entail. He thought it should look at the total cost of sustaining SPREP's core functions including staff costs.

146. The Representative of Marshall Islands supported the recommendation as long as it does not increase Members' contributions, as stipulated in the report by the Secretariat.

147. The Representative of Samoa sought clarification from Australia and New Zealand on the regularity of their public service review.

148. The Representative of Australia indicated that the public service salaries are reviewed subject to variation between agencies; the Representative of New Zealand would advise Samoa later.

149. The Representative of Australia supported adopting the recommendations.

150. The Chair concluded that the discussions had been very positive and that the Meeting's consensus was to approve the recommendations of the paper while noting the proposal by Vanuatu for a longer-term strategy, and by Tonga for a report on cost-saving measures to be tabled at the next Meeting.

151. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) approve the Consultant's recommendations 1 to 4, 6,7 and 10;
- b) approve the consensus of CROP Executives and SPREP Secretariat on recommendations 8 and 9;
- c) note the Consultant's recommendations 5 and 11 to 13;
- d) in respect of recommendation 8, approve increases to Grades J, K, L and M of 6.6% to be effective from 1 January 2007;
- e) no increase to Grade I as it is already well within the average of the 3 reference markets; and
- f) the cost of the increase to be met by the Secretariat from efficiency gains and cost savings and not require increased Members' contributions or compromise programme delivery to PICTs.

6.2: Triennial Remuneration Review on Support Staff

152. The Secretariat summarized the findings of the Consultant's review and sought approval of the Report's recommendations.

153. The Representative of Australia thanked the Secretariat for the review paper and considered that the support staff are responsible for an amazing amount of work, "in a charming, courteous and helpful manner". He asked to put on record that Australia recognized the efforts of support staff and moved that the paper's recommendation be approved.

154. The Representatives of American Samoa, the Cook Islands, France, Marshall Islands, Niue, United States of America, and Vanuatu jointly indicated their support.

155. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) approve the Consultant's recommended new salary scale as in Appendix 1 of his report; and
- b) the new salary scale to take effect from 1 July 2006.

156. The Director of SPREP on behalf of the Secretariat thanked the Meeting for the decision and the kind words of appreciation to his staff.

Agenda Item 7: Regional Conventions

7.1: Report on the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea (SPREP) Convention

7.2: Report on the Joint Conference of the Parties of the Noumea and Apia Conventions

157. The Chair invited Australia, Chair of the Joint 8th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Apia and Noumea Conventions and the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea Convention, to present the outcomes of those meetings.

158. The Representative of Australia summarised the outcomes of the meetings as contained in the reports of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea (SPREP) Convention, and the Joint COP to the Noumea and Apia Conventions. He tabled these reports for noting and commenting by the Meeting.

159. The Representative of Samoa thanked the delegates who attended and spoke about the difficulties in getting to these meetings, especially when delegates are away from their offices for extended periods of time. He asked if consideration could be given to having these meetings during the SPREP Officials' Meeting, possibly in the evenings. He also mentioned how the CBD has superseded the Apia Convention and was prepared to shelve the Apia Convention if this was needed, albeit with a heavy heart in as it bore their name.

160. The Representative of the Marshall Islands requested clarification on what recommendation was being made on this item, with respect to the reports tabled.

161. The Representative of Australia clarified that the report is for noting and commenting by the Meeting only.

162. The Representative of France stressed that he fully supported the Australian concept paper concerning the future of the Apia Convention.

163. The Chair advised that the SPREP Meeting would only be commenting on the report and not make any decision on the future of the Apia Convention. An open discussion was to be held later in the week either in the context of the SPREP Meeting if Members felt inclined, or within the confines of the Parties to the Apia Convention, to further address this issue.

164. The Meeting noted both reports of the 8th joint meeting of the Parties for the Noumea and Apia Conventions, and the Meeting of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea Convention. The Meeting also noted the concept papers by the Secretariat and Australia in relation to the Apia Convention.

7.3: Report on the Conference of the Parties of the Waigani Convention

165. The Representative of Niue, who had chaired the COP3 of the Waigani Convention, presented his report and asked the meeting to note it.

166. The Representative of Marshall Islands thanked the COP3 Chair for allowing her delegation to participate as a non-party in the discussions. She also clarified that while not a Party, the RMI has an on-going review of the Waigani Convention.

167. The Representative of Cook Islands summarised a discussion with the Polynesian Group which had agreed that Samoa would represent the Polynesian subregion on the Steering Committee for the Pacific Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions (PRC).

168. The Representative of Samoa commented that regional arrangements similar to PRC should be made for the Rotterdam Convention, and asked the Secretariat to consider this.

169. The Meeting noted the report of the Third Conference of the Parties of the Waigani Convention.

Agenda Item 8: 2007 Work Programme and Budget

8.1: Island Ecosystems Programme Issues

170. The Secretariat provided an overview of the proposed activities of the Island Ecosystem Programme, summarising key issues addressed in WP8.1.1–8.1.5. It noted a number of cross-cutting areas such as environmental assessments and sustainable development that are being implemented jointly with the Pacific Futures Programme.

8.1.1(a): Final Status Report on the International Waters Project

171. The Secretariat summarised the working paper which provided a Status Report on the IWP implementing the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the International Waters of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This was the final status report on the IWP to the SPREP Meeting before its conclusion in December 2006. It included activities in 2005 and work carried out to June 2006.

172. The Representative of New Zealand noted the status report, congratulated the achievements of IWP, and noted how SPREP's role is clearly mandated by Members in the agreed work programme. He supported the recommendations and lessons presented and suggested better regional coordination with other regional initiatives, such as in water resource management. This could also apply to future GEF projects to ensure good co-ordination.

173. The Representative of Fiji reiterated its congratulations to IWP for work done in Fiji and referred to the interest shown by the provincial councils for this work. He referred to the need to recognise the role of the community and facilitate assistance at this level.

174. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked the Secretariat for a well structured presentation, endorsed the lessons learned and recommendations, and expressed the hope these could be applied to new initiatives. He requested in addition to reviews of projects just before or at the end of projects, that there be reviews two or three years down the line to check sustainability and measures of success.

175. The Secretariat expressed similar concerns and agreed that the test of sustainability will be how successful the pilot projects are in the long term. There is no funding under the project for a post-termination review which is why the review was carried out 6 months before its end.

176. The Representative of Samoa noted the report and endorsed its recommendations. He stated that IWP was only one of the big projects implemented by SPREP. He stressed that in reviewing similar projects, changes that have occurred on the national/community level should be taken into account. Over time both SPREP and countries change, so it is important that lessons learned be seen in this light.

177. The Secretariat agreed that the region must be careful on how to apply the lessons learned but countries could consider and apply general lessons as appropriate.

178. The Representative of American Samoa noted the report but had questions on sustainability, and who would be responsible for continuing the work.

179. The Secretariat responded that over the last 12 months it has been formulating sustainability strategies for pilot projects. The regional programme will end in December 2006 but the pilot projects will continue, and the Secretariat was looking at how they could be integrated into nationally funded activities or how other avenues of funding could be found. Six of eight countries have indicated that the pilot projects will be absorbed into their national budgets.

180. The Representative of Kiribati acknowledged that IWP is the first regional project that has many positive effects on the ground in Kiribati, and urged SPREP to have more regional projects that are making a difference within its Member states. Kiribati called for IWP phase II and was encouraged by the Secretariat's consultations to make this possible. She then enquired about the status of the communications planning guide.

181. The Secretariat advised that this guide was not yet finalised.

182. The Representative of Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for the paper and the activities carried out. The Cook Islands was among the countries absorbing the pilot projects into their national budgets and will continue to seek assistance to replicate activities in other sites. He recognised the role of the community in such initiatives and acknowledged that IWP had provided an avenue to facilitate community engagement.

183. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna sought further information on various projects carried out in the region, such as the development of sustainable agriculture in particular where there are overlaps. He enquired after the links, and whether similar activities have already been carried out by SPC and other agencies.

184. The Secretariat explained that while there is coordination within CROP, individual agencies have their specialised functions and mandates. Overlaps such as biodiversity are addressed by joint programming and coordination, and coordination at the national level.

185. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna raised the current initiative for better regional integration. He thought territories could better integrate the regional programmes and their own programmes, especially where the activities, objectives and donor sources are similar.

186. The Chair requested that the need for better coordination and collaboration be recorded.

187. The Secretariat recognised that there has always been the challenge of integration and coordination. It is a challenge for Pacific island countries, territories and even developed countries. Initiatives such as the Pacific Plan are aimed at improving regional efficiencies. This challenge needs addressing at the regional and national level.

188. The Representative of Niue recalled that IWP covered three focal areas: waste management, coastal fisheries management and freshwater management. Countries were asked to select pilot activities in only one of these focal areas. He suggested the Meeting take note of the success stories, convey them to other Members and see how to replicate them in other countries. He recognised that the Secretariat was already doing this, and noted this is the strength of this type of project.

189. The Secretariat outlined the process of formulation of IWP and the three focal activity areas. In some cases, countries had been able to address more than one focal area under their activities.

190. The Representative of New Caledonia reminded the meeting that territories are not part of the project yet they want to share their experience. She outlined the activities carried out under environmental protection such as:

- a) Integrated Coastal Management, ensuring public access to coastal resources;
- b) planned listing of coral reefs on the World Heritage list, integrating the concepts of “participatory management” and “watershed management”;
- c) new mining legislation to bring this in line with the freshwater management plan;
- d) solid waste management initiatives aiming to eliminate illegal dumping of waste by 2009 and looking into sorting and recycling processes;
- e) the management of hazardous waste included sending batteries (300 t) to Australia (who is a major partner, for which New Caledonia is grateful);
- f) new fisheries legislation in the Northern Province has been put in place to better manage resources as a source of income to local populations; and
- g) a policy to control plastic bags is still lacking while some Members are setting a good example in this area.

191. The Representative of Australia noted that the lessons-learned section of the IWP report contains things that come up all the time. They are important to document in order to retain the corporate memory and are also good lessons for donors. The report is well put and punchy. He welcomed comments from the Secretariat on the initiative through the Pacific Plan for regional integration.

192. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia supported the recommendations of the paper and expressed sadness that the project cannot continue. He hoped it would be implemented under national programmes.

193. The Representative of Tuvalu supported Kiribati’s call for another phase of IWP or to have similar projects. Tuvalu endorses the lessons learned from IWP and is looking at a number of funding sources including the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) to replicate the pilot projects.

8.1.1(b): Report of the IWP Multipartite Review Meeting

194. The Secretariat presented a report on the IWP Multipartite review meeting held the previous Saturday, 9 September 2006.

195. The Representative of Tonga wished to record his appreciation to the Pacific Environment Consultants Limited for the support provided during the most crucial stage of the IWP programme.

196. The Meeting noted the report on the IWP Multipartite review meeting.

8.1.2: Invasive species: Development and Update

197. The purpose of this paper was to update the Meeting on efforts being undertaken in relation to invasive species in the region. The IBPOW of the CBD identifies invasive species as one of the most important issues for island biodiversity, which needs urgent, concerted and sustained action.

198. The Representative of Samoa asked about co-financing under the invasive programme. He suggested that for implementation under RAF, some countries' allocations might be able to be used.

199. The Secretariat said it had looked at co-financing under Project Development Facility - phase B (PDF-B), to see if anything was left in the regional component. It was currently seeking clarification from the GEF on funding under either regional or national allocation.

200. The Representative of Tokelau thanked the Secretariat for the update and inclusion of territories in the project.

201. The Representative of Vanuatu was encouraged that funding is forthcoming. Since the project has been in development for 3 years, the Secretariat would be well served to consult Members again when the invasive species officer position is filled.

202. The Representative of the United States of America commended the Secretariat for its initiative and thanked it for the inclusion of territories.

203. The Representative of Guam thanked the Secretariat for staying the course and asked that the Secretariat press ahead with the initiative.

204. The Representative of New Zealand commended the Secretariat on its island biodiversity and other conservation activities which fit into the mandate of SPREP. There is a challenge with coordination and ensuring national government ownership.

205. The Representative of New Caledonia considered invasive species a priority and was supportive of PILN. The territory had recently endorsed efforts to prevent and address invasives species and was particularly interested in issues relating to bio-security and training for capacity building.

206. The Secretariat stated it is working closely with SPC but does not currently have the post filled to deliver training courses.

207. The Representative of Australia was encouraged that coordination with other agencies was taking place: as this area involves many agencies, coordination is crucial. He also encouraged ongoing interactions with other organizations such as the Pacific Plant Protection organization, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) project on Forest Health Surveillance and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Asia Pacific Forestry Commission. He related that Australia is currently addressing the coordination of effort on invasive species at the national level.

208. The Representative of French Polynesia informed the Meeting of its activities in this area, for example on iconia and fire ants. Invasive species are a common problem that can be transported from country to country. French Polynesia welcomed calls to pool resources, share lessons and coordinate efforts.

209. The Representative of American Samoa noted that all countries have their own problems and reiterated his request for information from fellow Members on successful control measures on Mynah birds.

210. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) note current activities underway to deal with the issue of invasive species;
- b) endorse the need for effective national and regional coordination of invasive species work that is often dealt with at different levels and different sectors locally, nationally and regionally;
- c) request development partners to assist with activities which address this threat;
- d) commend the efforts of the partners and founding teams involved in the Pacific Invasives Learning Network and its innovative approach to building capacity to manage invasive species issues in the Pacific islands region; and
- e) note with appreciation the range of invasive species-related partnerships in the Pacific islands region.

8.1.3: Island Biodiversity: Update on Regional Progress

211. The Secretariat advised the Meeting on the status of the IBPOW CBD, related issues of the CBD COP8, and highlighted developments in relation to island biodiversity across the region.

212. The Representative of Fiji asked how the 2010 target was defined and what the reporting requirements were.

213. The Secretariat informed that the target reflects the CBD targets and that there are no reporting requirements.

214. The Representative of New Zealand congratulated the countries involved with the Micronesian challenge, as well as Fiji and Kiribati for their recent declarations on biodiversity; and the Secretariat for efforts to better coordinate biodiversity work, including revitalising the Round Table for Nature Conservation and using it to coordinate activities.

215. The Representative of Marshall Islands requested the Secretariat to spell out the names of the Micronesian Challenge countries in order to avoid any confusion.

216. The Secretariat replied that it comprised Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands and Northern Mariana Islands.

217. The Representative of Tuvalu thanked the Secretariat for support during the CBD and congratulated it for the supportive work toward the approval of the IBPOW at COP8. He acknowledged New Zealand's and France's support in enabling countries to attend and congratulated the Micronesia Challenge members, and Fiji and Kiribati on their declarations.

218. The Representative of the United States of America stated that the USA was pleased to support the participation of the Micronesian Challenge Members at Curitiba and stated support for the Challenge. While not a party to the CBD, the USA was active in the negotiations for the IBPOW: a wide range of American agencies are active in the area covering terrestrial, marine and aquatic issues. He welcomed SPREP's participation in initiatives including the Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum (PBIF) and PACINET (the 2006 Conference of the Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society, PacISOC); and encouraged participation in the new Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) which is a web-based provider of global geo-referenced information on marine species.

219. The Representative of French Polynesia informed the Meeting that his government has drafted a strategy on the conservation of biodiversity. The legal requirements to ensure its implementation, and allow a review every five years, are being put in place.

220. The Representative of Australia congratulated the Pacific island delegations to the CBD COP8 for what they achieved and thanked New Zealand and France for assistance with attendance. He stressed the need to ensure that implementation is effective, the need to set priorities and plan for implementation.

221. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna enquired on the status of the inventory of biodiversity in the region. Having read the New Caledonia report he wondered if other Members have similar ones available.

222. The Secretariat stated that the knowledge base across the region is variable. In French territories, much work has been done by universities and research institutes, but not so much in other states. There is a need to build a regional data base to monitor the state of biodiversity and other resources.

223. The Representative of New Caledonia agreed with the Secretariat on the need to improve the regional biodiversity database. She said better knowledge means better protection. New Caledonia has much work done by universities and research institutes, but more research and inventories are required to improve knowledge in areas such as marine resources, particularly for the proposed UNESCO World Heritage sites.

224. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia thanked the Secretariat for its work on Island Biodiversity. He also thanked The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International and urged donor countries to find assistance for the Micronesian Challenge.

225. The Representative of Fiji asked whether SPREP can assist in the development of the database.

226. The Secretariat replied that it would like to set up the database but needs cooperation between CROP Agencies and Members who are the custodians of the data.

227. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked those who had pushed the IBPOW. He endorsed the call by Australia that the region now needs to produce results. Vanuatu finds it difficult to measure progress because of the lack of data, and appreciates the French government initiative to conduct research in Vanuatu under the Santo 2006 initiative. He informed the Meeting of the initiatives to set up both the National Scientific Research Council, and the Information Technology Centre.

228. The Representative of French Polynesia noted that it was often necessary to study what we want to protect before implementing protection measures. But this was not always necessary, especially if there was an urgent need to intervene. He outlined the measures his government had put in place to protect sharks from the shark fin trade. In 2006, his government decided to protect them despite a lack of precise scientific data in this area, invoking the precautionary principle, and putting the onus on shark fishing operators to show that it was harmless to the species.

229. The Representative of France informed the Meeting that a component of the French biodiversity strategy specifically targets the French Pacific territories. The three French territories each proposed a local action plan for biodiversity, which identifies priority actions for the 2006-2010 period. The launching of CRISP and the ongoing funding of IFRECOR both come under the objective of preserving island biodiversity. In response to Vanuatu's query, France assured this country that French experts would be available for the SANTO 2006 project.

230. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) commend the Micronesia Challenge countries (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, and Northern Mariana Islands), and Kiribati and Fiji, for their leadership in biodiversity conservation;
- b) support the need to continue to advocate and develop partnerships to attract resources and support for the implementation of this programme of work and related biodiversity conservation activities;
- c) note that the 2007 Pacific Islands Nature Conservation and Protected Areas Conference will be held in Papua New Guinea;
- d) note partnerships with the World Council of Churches, the Round Table for Nature Conservation, IUCN Oceania Regional Office, Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum, PacINET and others as a key means to deal with many regional capacity issues; and
- e) note the importance of the next GEF Governing Council in November 2006 with regards to responding to the decisions reached at COP8 of the CBD and ensure that issues of importance to Pacific SIDS, as highlighted in this paper, are supported for implementation.

8.1.4: Strategic Priorities for Biodiversity Conservation: Regional Framework for Marine Protected Areas

231. The Secretariat advised the Meeting on the development of a regional framework to support the establishment and management of marine protected areas (MPAs). These would include community-conserved and managed areas as a tool to protect and sustainably manage the marine biodiversity of coasts and oceans, as part of an overall ecosystems-based approach. A draft Declaration on Deep-Sea Bottom Trawling was tabled for discussion.

232. The Representative of France supported the declaration. However, he wished to record the following reservation: recommendation 2 of the draft declaration, which provides for a separate arrangement for destructive fishing practices, does not seem relevant in this framework as regulating or banning fishing practices is typically the responsibility of regional fisheries organizations.

233. The Representative of the United States of America thanked the Secretariat for bringing this issue to the Meeting and noted USA engagement in international discussions on this issue, including those through the UN General Assembly. She expressed concern that this document prejudices the outcome of the UN General Assembly discussions in November. The USA also appreciated the environmental nature of this issue and supported SPREP engagement. However, SPREP endorsement was not considered to be appropriate in this instance and she was willing to work with colleagues to find the right formulation.

234. The Representative of New Zealand fully supported the development of a regional framework to protect marine biodiversity. He encouraged collaboration with the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and SPC, and supported the amended draft declaration to go forward to the Forum meeting for consideration, later this year.

235. The Representative of Australia associated himself with the remarks of New Zealand.

236. The Representative of New Caledonia commented that one of the most important results of a programme carried out in New Caledonia is a survey of living and non-living resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). One of the outcomes has been an improvement in their knowledge of their marine biodiversity. The government has realized how important this biodiversity is and has banned bottom trawling in the waters off New Caledonia.

237. The Secretariat clarified that the FFA/SPC declaration and the framework for MPAs were separate issues. The MPA Framework is about implementing countries' priorities in relation to marine biodiversity.

238. The Representative of Vanuatu supported the regional framework to enable countries to work together. He also supported the draft declaration from FFA/SPC.

239. The Chair noted that there was no consensus on the FFA/SPC draft declaration and held over discussion on this matter. He encouraged countries who expressed reservations to come to a consensus decision which is the SPREP way.

240. The Secretariat clarified that the purpose of the paper was to seek consideration and support of the Meeting on the development of a regional framework for MPAs. The declaration attached was one adopted by the Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Ministers in response to a directive by the Forum Leaders to SPC and FFA on advice on the matter of deep-sea bottom trawling. Because the declaration dealt with biodiversity, SPREP was invited to observe in the development of this declaration. For Members, this issue is for information and support because of our interest in biodiversity. The Secretariat further suggested a need to deal with the MPA issue first and then the declaration subsequently.

241. The SPREP Meeting then agreed to:

- a) note the increasing regional and international interest and developments in marine biodiversity conservation;
- b) invite FFA and SPC collaboration on a regional initiative for the establishment and management of MPAs to strengthen the conservation of marine biodiversity of coasts and oceans; and
- c) endorse the Secretariat's plan to convene a regional workshop in 2007 in collaboration with relevant CROP Agencies and international partners, to scope and develop a programme of work (including a resourcing strategy for the implementation of a regional framework to support the establishment of MPAs) and report on outcomes to the 18th SPREP Meeting.

242. The issue of the declaration was considered separately with the Representative of Australia proposing the following text for consideration.

”The SPREP Meeting:

- a) “shares the concerns expressed by the Pacific Islands Forum meeting on the protection of biodiversity in the high seas, from the impact of bottom trawling;
- b) “appreciates the work carried out by the SPC and FFA in developing the draft declaration endorsed by the 61st FFC Ministerial Meeting for submission to Forum leaders; and
- c) “agrees that this declaration should be forwarded to the Environment Ministers Meeting and to Forum Leaders for their consideration.”

243. The Meeting agreed to adopt the proposed text from Australia.

8.1.5: Regional Arrangements for the Conservation of Marine Species of Special Interest and the Regional Marine Species Programme Framework 2003-2007

244. The Secretariat advised the Meeting on the development of regional arrangements for the conservation of cetaceans, turtles and dugongs under the auspices of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in the Pacific islands region. The paper also sought the support of the Meeting for the review of the Regional Marine Species Programme Framework (RMSPF) 2003–2007.

245. The Representative of France referred to the advice received by his legal team and requested that the title of the French text be changed from “mémorandum d’accord” to “mémorandum d’entente”.

246. The Chair reminded the Meeting that the text was prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention and asked the Representative of the CMS to clarify the situation with the translation.

247. The CMS Secretariat noted that the MOU would be open for signature on Friday, 15 September and 10 countries have signalled their intention to sign. He explained that the document could not be changed.

248. The Representative of Australia encouraged the CMS Secretariat to facilitate an acceptable outcome to France and its territories.

249. The Representative of New Zealand echoed Australia's comment placing much importance on cetacean conservation, and thanked Samoa and the Secretariat for leading the development of the MOU. He highlighted other related CMS agreements to which New Zealand is a signatory and believed it will be a powerful tool for use in the Pacific. He also reminded Members that they had committed themselves to reviewing the Marine Species Action Plans, and that these should become the programme of work under the proposed MOU.

250. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for the work carried out on marine species under the Marine Species Framework. He thanked the Secretariat for its work on the MOU and urged Members to sign it.

251. The Secretariat clarified that there were four CMS parties in the region but that non-parties to CMS have the ability to sign the MOU.

252. The Representative of Vanuatu stated that marine mammals and sea turtles are already priorities under their national laws. He believed that as they are migratory species, a regional approach is important in order to conserve and protect these species.

253. The Representative of the United States of America would not be able to sign the MOU for legal reasons, but noted USA support for the efforts of SPREP and the Secretariat to conserve the marine environment. The USA will continue to work with SPREP and is already engaged in the development of the next SPREP Whales and Dolphins Action Plan.

254. The Chair noted that the CMS Secretariat and France had found agreement on the French wording of the MOU.

255. The Meeting then agreed to:

- a) encourage participating PICs to sign the MOU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific islands region under the auspices of CMS;
- b) note the development and progress of the MOU for the Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Pacific under the auspices of CMS;
- c) urge Members who are parties to the CMS, and partners, to support the timely development and finalization of the MOU on the conservation of marine turtles;
- d) encourage dugong range states and territories to be fully involved in the development of the MOU for conservation and management of dugongs in the South-east Asian region under the auspices of CMS;
- e) endorse the review process of the Marine Species Programme Framework 2003-2007 and to consider inclusion of other marine species of special interest to the region;
- f) direct the Secretariat to submit the revised Marine Species Programme Framework to the 2007 SPREP Meeting for endorsement by members; and
- g) encourage Members who are not parties to CMS to consider becoming parties given the relevance of CMS to the region.

8.2: Pacific Futures Programme Issues

256. The Secretariat introduced its work in the Pacific Futures Programme. This currently has 12 staff working primarily on climate change, pollution and waste, and other issues such as legal advice. Adaptation was recognised as a priority area and new initiatives were being developed in both adaptation and mitigation.

257. The Representative of Australia thanked the Secretariat for both programme overview presentations, particularly the focussing on the high-level context of how the programmes are operating. The general overview and stressing of linkages between programmes demonstrated a really strong shift to the programmatic approach and improvement in delivery to Members, which helps Members understand what is happening. He noted with concern the limited resources that have gone into monitoring and evaluation of the work programme and budget.

8.2.1: Regional Strategy on Shipping-Related Introduced Marine Pests

258. The Secretariat provided an overview of the draft “Regional Strategy on Shipping Related Introduced Marine Pests in the Pacific Islands (SRIMP-Pac)” and sought the Meeting’s approval of the draft strategy. In introducing the paper the Secretariat thanked the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for financial and technical support for an activity that has been ongoing for the past two years.

259. The Representative of New Caledonia fully supported both recommendations, noting that a text on biosecurity will be considered by the Congress of New Caledonia. It had been the subject of an extensive consultative process with stakeholders and will cover all shipping consignments arriving there. From August 2006, all commercial ships arriving in New Caledonia will have to discharge their ballast water six miles from the coast, with some exceptions. This rule has been endorsed by the French High Commission and approved by the Government of New Caledonia and the three provinces.

260. The Representative of Australia congratulated the Secretariat for the work that has gone into this proposed strategy, stating that it the approach taken in Australia to manage marine pests. He outlined that the work plan includes all the areas his government considers necessary to implement a successful strategy. What has also been progressed in Australia includes a monitoring manual, bioguidelines and communications. Australia would be happy to pass on that information as it has significant experience in this work.

261. The Representative of Australia however said that his government cannot support the draft strategy’s reference to the precautionary principle. He suggested the following alternative text for Page 25, consistent with global agreements:

“Precautionary Approach:

“As agreed in the Rio Principle 15 and at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) the precautionary approach shall be applied by countries according to their capabilities, so that where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation by marine pests.”

261a. In regard to the identification of AusAID as a potential source of funding for projects, Australia has moved to a programme-based funding approach for regional organizations.

262. The Meeting supported the text change as suggested by Australia.

263. The Representative of the IMO informed that it had undertaken technical cooperation activities with the Secretariat over many years and will actively continue to do so. IMO is proud to work with SPREP as a partner in the development of this strategy and considers the region one of the high priorities of its GloBallast programme. It will support two activities within the strategy: (i) the development of a regional model training course (training and capacity building); and port survey (survey and monitoring). Information generated by the GloBallast Partnership Programme will be made available to SPREP Members and the Secretariat through publications and the website.

264. The Representative of Vanuatu welcomed the initiative and stressed that the strategy was timely because pests and invasive species had become a real challenge to Pacific island countries. He requested information on how much consultation had been done at a national level.

265. The Secretariat clarified there were two years of consultations through regional forums such as SPC Quarantine and their Maritime programme, and that lead agencies had been consulted. The Strategy was endorsed by the Association of Pacific Ports and the Maritime Association before being presented to the SPREP Meeting.

266. The Meeting then agreed to:

- a) approve the draft Regional Strategy on Shipping Related Invasive Marine Pests in the Pacific Islands (SRIMP-Pac) with the change to paragraph 25 in relation to the precautionary principle; and
- b) commit itself and all Members to fully support and participate in implementing the Strategy.

8.2.2: Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation Measures in Pacific Island Countries

267. The Secretariat informed the Meeting of the conclusion of the CBDAMPIC project and of follow-up programmes in place. It highlighted that the CBDAMPIC project had provided opportunities for four countries pilot adaptation projects. The Secretariat thanked the countries that had been involved in the project for the support given and outlined a newly developed initiative: the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project. The PDF-B for this project has been approved and consultations are now taking place with 11 Pacific island countries. This project will bring USD11.2 million to the region for adaptation implementation.

268. The Representative of Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for assistance with this programme which had been well received. They had benefited from this programme and are using it as a model for work in the outer islands. He expressed hope that the work of the Secretariat will continue to support the work of the countries under this programme.

269. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for this excellent project. He said that this really addressed the issue of implementation at the community level, both in the water sector and community coastal adaptation sector. He believed it had been so successful that his department is now moving into engineering-type work and hoped that the PACC project was to be based on the CBDAMPIC model.

270. The Representative of Marshall Islands stated that, although not being involved, RMI was very appreciative of the community focus of the project.

271. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked the Secretariat and acknowledged its support and that of the Canadian Government. Vanuatu had greatly benefited from this project, particularly through the relocation of a threatened community in Vanuatu. He thanked the staff member involved and raised two issues. He firstly noted that while the region is focused on the adaptation project, there was a need to consider the planning process—particularly in mapping out vulnerable areas. Secondly he noted that adaptation should become part of the strategy for adapting to climate change—particularly the different options for developing sustainable financing options to assist countries in dealing with adaptation issues.

272. The Representative of Tokelau expressed interest in the PACC initiative, particularly given their vulnerability, and asked whether Tokelau would be involved in the project.

273. The Secretariat clarified that the funding for the PACC project would come through the GEF and that territories are not eligible through that mechanism. It would look for other sources of funding to involve territories in this work.

274. The Representative of American Samoa was interested in looking at the Cook Islands' efforts in relation to salinity. He also asked whether scientific methods had been considered to assist in the salinity issue rather than providing water tanks.

275. The Secretariat outlined that for the Cook Islands project, the underground water was very saline and the project was looking at options on how the community could harvest and store fresh water such as rain water from roof catchments.

276. The Representative of Fiji thanked the Secretariat, and requested that the lessons learned be adapted and options continued to be looked at. He also said that the outer islands in Fiji are increasingly used for tourism, creating a need to look at the related water issues.

277. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna commended the countries involved in these activities; he said that the impacts of climate change meant that countries need to pay great attention to this issue. He asked for any reports to help better understand the activities that were carried out in these islands.

278. The Secretariat stated that a few publications are coming on line from the project and these will be sent to Wallis and Futuna.

279. The Representative of New Zealand congratulated the Secretariat and Members for the results achieved under this project and noted that it was a highlight of the 2005 Annual Report. He said that development of an action plan and roundtable process for adaptation is a positive sign. He encouraged the Secretariat to pursue its mandate for such a coordination mechanism, as it would provide an effective access point for resources and support, given the wide range of opportunities available.

280. The Representative of Australia associated himself with these remarks.

281. The Representative of Kiribati commented that the CBDAMPIC was real implementation with the provision of water tanks and coastal protection, in comparison to their two national adaption projects which had only produced plans. Their position and understanding in regards to financing is that Kiribati uses local resources to carry out its baseline activities, and will continue to do this in future. It should not be taken that they limit their scarce resources to adaptation and she strongly suggested that these costs should be met by the polluters, particularly the Annex 1 parties to UNFCCC. She noted that the participating countries to CBDAMPIC were not obliged to use their own resources for adaptation measures. She supported the regional PACC project.

282. The Representative of Papua New Guinea said that adaptation is the key area for attention in the Pacific. He supported the point made by Vanuatu, national frameworks being an important part of ensuring that activities carried out are sustainable. He stated that the political level and the community level are where most change can be effected. He believed the Secretariat should look again at the issue of awareness as an important part of any activities, particularly in relation to national frameworks.

283. The Representative of New Caledonia stated that the Loyalty Islands province is the most sensitive in terms of water supply. While Maré and Lifou have access to ground water, the island of Ouvéa has been operating a desalination plant for 10 years. Copra is being used as biofuel on this island.

284. The Meeting noted the successful completion of CBDAMPIC and the progress with the PACC project addressing climate change adaptation in the region.

8.2.3: Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Project

285. The Secretariat advised the Meeting of the closure of the Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Project (PIREP) and the status of its follow-on project: the PIGGAREP, and other PIREP-related parallel initiatives and plans.

286. The Representative of Tonga thanked the Secretariat for its assistance to Tonga through the project which is expected to be completed soon, and endorsed the recommendation of the paper.

287. The Representative of Niue noted the recent announcement of PIGGAREP being approved, and sought advice from the Secretariat on the proposed allocation of resources for individual countries.

288. The Secretariat advised that 11 countries will be involved in the new project.

289. The Representative of Fiji raised the issue of mechanisms in place for coordinating donor funding for the energy issues.

290. The Secretariat indicated that the Energy Working Group has been operating and is active in coordinating energy issues in the Pacific.

291. The Representative of Tuvalu supported the recommendation and thanked the Secretariat for progressing the PIGGAREP proposal. He is grateful to see that the project is moving towards implementation of work on the ground.

292. The Representative of Marshall Islands thanked the Secretariat for its effort in coordinating the PIREP Project which led to the development of the first renewable energy (RE) Project proposal submitted to the GEF. The RMI encouraged the Secretariat and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) to continue cooperating on this type of project.

293. The Representative of New Caledonia stressed the importance of this project for the region in the face of climate change and the rising price of fossil fuel. New Caledonia has in place an energy policy which includes tax incentives to encourage renewable energy use and has established several anticyclonic wind farms, including one in the Northern Province, which produces 12 megawatts. She referred to the French territories' major European Union (EU) project "TEP vertes" which includes 3 phases: (i) the sharing of know-how; (ii) the establishment of facilities in the three French Pacific communities; and (iii) the sharing of outcomes with other countries and territories from the region. She reiterated the need to better integrate French territories expertise and activities into the region.

294. The representative of Vanuatu noted the successful completion of PIREP and welcomed the new PIGGAREP project. He raised 3 issues: (i) national policies were needed to guide energy programmes; (ii) to ensure that scarce resources are used wisely, it was important to complete existing projects and learn from them before moving on; and (iii) there is much need for information to be shared between countries. He encouraged collaboration with other CROP Agencies to assist Member countries on those issues.

295. The Representative of Australia supported Vanuatu and the need to consolidate before moving on. He noted the engagement of Australia with renewable energy in the Pacific, including a workshop in May which was attended by CROP Agencies, the Secretariat, and other parties in the region. He noted that it was a good mechanism to identify priorities for assistance to the region. He requested the Secretariat to keep Australia informed when priorities are identified.

296. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna commended the excellent work of New Caledonia in developing and securing funding from the EU for the "TEP vertes" project; it was a good model for others to follow.

297. The Meeting agreed to note the closure of the PIREP and the progress with the PIGGAREP and other PIREP-related parallel initiatives and plans.

8.2.4: Regional Strategy for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol in the Pacific Region

298. The Secretariat summarised the final phase of the Regional Strategy to phase out ODS and drew attention to activities that still needed to be completed to achieve the objectives of the strategy. It also described potential future activities in relation to the control of ODS, in particular the phasing out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

299. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for its efforts to assist countries in complying with the Montreal Protocol. Samoa is not part of this project, but has in place legislation and recently banned the importation of CFCs.

300. The Representative of Fiji commented that, like Samoa, it has worked directly with UNEP on compliance activities including legislation, training and the establishment of a national central storage facility for confiscated ODS and their containers.

301. The Representative of Niue thanked the Secretariat for its assistance and indicated that its relevant legislation was nearing completion.

302. The Representative of New Caledonia admitted that the protocol has not yet been implemented in New Caledonia. A discussion paper is under development by the government services. After the Meeting this will be followed up as there is a desire to proceed towards compliance, in line with the region. New Caledonia attended the 3rd Regional Thematic Meeting to the Montreal Protocol in Fiji in January 2006.

303. The Representative of Tuvalu requested technical assistance from the Secretariat to progress on its regulations and licensing system.

304. The Representative of Vanuatu noted that Vanuatu had phased out CFCs and, like Tuvalu, requested assistance from the Secretariat to progress on its regulations and licensing system.

305. The Representative of the United States of America sought clarification of para 10 of the working paper related to the nature of the Regional Network.

306. The Secretariat responded it referred to a human network and the proposal was that it would meet once a year.

307. The Representative of Australia supported the need for a network for the implementation of the Protocol and indicated that the Secretariat and DEH needed to discuss how best to address the compliance to the Protocol. He noted that the decrease in ODS is linked to climate change. A network was important to ensure coordinated donor funding to support compliance. He sought an update on the revised proposal to the Multilateral Fund to be submitted by mid September.

308. The Secretariat reported it had met with DEH and the Bangkok UNEP representatives the previous week and had prepared papers for presentation to the meeting of the Executive Committee, which decides on funding. The Secretariat noted that full reporting from countries was needed to increase the likelihood of additional funds becoming available. The Secretariat advised that technical support to countries was available.

309. The Representative of Kiribati reported that Kiribati is doing its best to progress compliance at the national level, but it is not always easy to get the support of top-level decision makers who have other competing responsibilities and challenges. However, Kiribati is pursuing temporary measures of restricting ODS under the Customs Legislation, and will improve compliance to the Montreal Protocol once the Environment Amendment Bill is passed later this year.

310. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia admitted it had not been compliant for three years, but had returned to compliance with assistance from the Secretariat. It now has its national legislation ready for enactment. FSM still requested technical assistance from the Secretariat for a licensing system. She thanked New Zealand for supporting the development of the national strategy and legislation.

311. The Representative of UNEP was invited to comment. Although not personally involved in this project, she commented that similar regional networks in the Caribbean and South America had been successful in assisting countries with compliance. She noted that it is not just a matter of compliance, but also of addressing trans-boundary issues.

312. The Representative of American Samoa noted that not all Pacific countries implement regulations to the same extent. In American Samoa the laws of the US Environmental Protection Agency applied.

313. The Secretariat advised that this issue was not part of the Montreal protocol obligation and a SOPAC project was addressing it.

314. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) note progress with the control and phasing out of ODS under the Regional Strategy;
- b) note the Secretariat plans to continue to provide technical support and advice to countries under the current project until its conclusion at the end of 2006;
- c) urge countries that have not yet done so to implement ozone regulations as soon as practicable and complete their reporting requirements under the Montreal Protocol;
and
- d) note that SPREP is working with UNEP and the Government of Australia to maintain ongoing support for control/phase-out of ozone depleting substances beyond 2006.

8.2.5: Activities in relation to financing for regional environmental projects from the Global Environment Facility

315. The Secretariat reported on activities related to financing for regional environmental projects from the GEF. It indicated that the regional component of the 10th round of the European Development Fund (EDF10) process was under way with two focal areas of natural resource management and human resource development.

316. The Representative of New Zealand noted and welcomed the stronger focus on GEF issues at this Meeting. He supported and encouraged the Secretariat to take an active coordination role in this area. He noted that e.g., the Secretariat has new GEF projects in climate change and invasive species, and also a clear mandate in the strategic programmes to coordinate the range of regional activities in these areas.

317. The Secretariat stated a core role is to deliver assistance to countries, through its own means and other agencies through CROP working groups.

318. The Representative of New Zealand also informed the meeting of the NZAID co-funding partnership in the GEF-SGP (NZD6 million over 3 years) which focused on community-based resource management. Allocation of these resources is decided by country committees, and New Zealand could provide further information if requested.

319. The Representative of Marshall Islands acknowledged New Zealand for the information of the SGP and informed the Meeting of its first proposal, the GEF medium-size project developed with the assistance of the Secretariat and UNDP. The outcome and experience from the PIREP along with the experiences and current activities of the RMI, led to the development of a USD1million project proposal which has been submitted to the GEF. Technical assistance was provided by the Secretariat in collaboration with the RMI and the UNDP. The RMI also thanked New Zealand for the extension of the SGP which supports the communities of the Islands in carrying out environmental projects. She informed the Meeting that she will convey this information to her Government, non-government partners and communities as soon as possible.

320. The Representative of Niue thanked NZAID for co-funding the GEF-SGP for the region, noting that a component of co-financing will be spent on capacity building over the next three years.

321. The Representative of Samoa was impressed with the way the Secretariat has been addressing the issue of access to GEF funding to support countries, noting how critical this role was. He noted with interest the point made by the Secretariat regarding the future funding of regional activities, suggesting that countries themselves could co-finance regional activities through their RAF allocations.

322. The Representative of Australia welcomed the NZAID/GEF-SGP partnership and stressed the need to ensure those funds mesh into the Secretariat programme of work. Australia has provided AUD60 million to GEF and sought to ensure greater access by the Pacific region. GEF funding should meet the priorities of the region and not the other way around. Australia also mentioned its recent funding initiative under the Regional Natural Heritage Programme.

323. The Secretariat noted that its work on developing regional strategies and action plans are in the context for regional priorities and the regional component of its work. They can be provided to donors as priorities for funding.

324. The Representative of Australia indicated that Australia, New Zealand and the Secretariat had discussed the GEF position in SPREP and that the DEH Officer attached to the Secretariat could provide interim support while the GEF post is being recruited.

325. The Secretariat noted that the EU has agreed to the same model for Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT), which will assist harmonisation of projects across the region.

326. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) note the work carried out by SPREP, the Forum Secretariat and other regional organizations to support countries' and regional access to GEF funds; and
- b) note that the EU has promoted a "Green-Blue" concept for regional programming under the EDF10.

8.3: Regional Collaboration: Greater Engagement of Territories in SPREP Activities

327. The Secretariat provided an update on activities since the 16th SPREP Meeting, addressing opportunities and mechanisms that foster a greater involvement and participation of territories in the work of the Secretariat, as well as enhance regional engagement and exchanges between island Member countries and territories. The Secretariat stressed the need to progress environmental issues across the region and pointed Members to the Annual Report list of activities for which countries could consider collaboration.

328. The Representative of Guam noted the efforts of the Secretariat in engaging territories in its work, stressing that integration is a process that takes time. He supported the role of the Secretariat in stimulating regional collaboration. He also noted and thanked the US environmental and natural resource agencies, as well as the US State Department, for their support of territorial involvement in regional activities. He also noted that additional resources from donor organizations, the USA, and the territories will make up the primary basis for improved territorial engagement through SPREP. Guam can assist Members on technical and other support, and provided as an example the 2006 Wastewater Management in Coastal Cities training at the University of Guam. The training was sponsored by SPREP, SOPAC, Guam Environmental Protection Agency, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO-IHE (Institute of Hydrolic Engineering), and other international organizations.

329. The Representative of the United States of America supported the Secretariat on this positive development and encouraged further support for the participation of territories in SPREP projects. He noted the USA and its territories' desire to share technical expertise and learn from the Pacific islands countries, such as on the invasive species. He highlighted some examples of ongoing collaboration with US Territories and Freely Associated States, such as the territories sharing knowledge with countries in environmental laboratories and water quality. He stressed that territories represent a real strength within the SPREP partnership.

330. The Representative of New Caledonia noted the strengthening of relationships since the June 2005 meeting of the territories. There are numerous areas of collaboration where territories can contribute to regional projects; can share expertise and know-how with PICs; and learn from PICs in turn such as about invasives, biodiversity strategy, and ABS reef management. Communication to French territories in their language is critical to the strengthening of participation in regional activities. New Caledonia indicated that the EU funding under its own Pacific strategy for OCT also focuses on the environment, so that there is an opportunity for projects in the territories to be co-financed from CROP and achieve regional goals.

331. The Representative of Tokelau stressed the importance of being part of the SPREP family and the work of the Secretariat. Since the 2005 territories meeting, Tokelau has welcomed the work on waste management and on invasives.

332. The Representative of American Samoa indicated an engagement in environmental initiatives which are of value to others, on several key areas (such as water quality, coral reef management, marine sanctuaries) that are all in line with SPREP programmes. American Samoa has also been engaging with Samoa as a close neighbour.

333. The Representative of French Polynesia expressed its wish to integrate into SPREP activities and supported the points made by New Caledonia. Territories should increase the sharing of experience, expertise and knowledge such as on invasives, waste management and integrated coastal management. He also stressed the need to work on communication tools so that countries get to know each other better. He suggested holding technical meetings in territories. French Polynesia was keen to host a meeting on invasive species.

334. The Representative of France noted the profusion and earnestness of the statements made by all the territories, which reflect the relevance of the issue of regional integration. He supported the recommendations, which fit in well with France's legislation that includes greater delegation of responsibility to the territories for environmental management.

335. The Representative of Vanuatu noted the progress made, stating that the environment has no boundaries; it is therefore critical to integrate better. He stressed the need to share expertise and knowledge with territories and indicated how Vanuatu has been a recipient of certain privileges such as research. Vanuatu looked forward to formulating joint proposals in the marine area and thanked the Secretariat for facilitating this process.

336. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna commended the Secretariat for pursuing integration despite some difficulties, in the best interest of the region and its communities.

337. The Representative of Marshall Islands looked forward to working collaboratively with territories, and noted the on-going efforts within the Micronesian region. She also recommended that a reference to the Micronesia Challenge be included in the range of initiatives as contained in the document, as this is a new initiative supported at the highest level.

338. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) note the progress towards improved integration of territories in the work of the Secretariat;
- b) encourage all SPREP Members and the Secretariat to continue to expand the positive dialogue and increase tangible actions on environmental issues, activities and projects of relevance; and
- c) urge both donor Members and the broader donor community to supplement or extend funding for environmental projects to include territories.

8.4: Country Profiles as a Means for Members' National Reporting under the SPREP Action Plan (2005-2009)

339. The Secretariat presented a discussion paper on the draft Country Profile Template. Members could use this to document relevant international, regional and national instruments and actions that contribute to achieving the outcomes of the regions Action Plan for Managing the Environment. The Secretariat explained that country profiles are not about countries reporting to the Secretariat, but a way of sharing information that will benefit everyone. The format of the template can be improved over time with contributions from Members.

340. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for the initiative and advised that while SPREP had the work plan, it was not complete without some sort of feedback from countries to complete the picture. He then asked if the template could be simplified to make it easier to complete, perhaps as a multiple-choice type questionnaire.

341. The Representative of American Samoa stressed the value of such reporting. They did this on a regular basis, usually quarterly or six-monthly. Using the template would create a status report on exactly where the implementation of PICTs' environmental management work programme is at.

342. The Representative of Tonga welcomed the product as presented. This was the result of a number of past discussions intended to give the Secretariat and Members a clearer picture of what is happening in the region. He expressed concern that streamlining too much might not give enough information; his delegation would not go along with that proposal but supported the adoption of the country profile template as presented.

343. The Representative of Guam supported the recommendation. He saw two components in the provision of information: (i) what does not change regularly, and (ii) what changes annually. He suggested the Meeting consider showcasing success stories to inform other Members of what is happening in the countries. At annual meetings, Members can use the country profiles for presentations in side-events.

344. The Representative of Vanuatu asked the Meeting to consider several points. First, when Vanuatu supported this issue initially, it was geared towards viewing SPREP as the organization and not as the Secretariat. He added that Members had scrutinized the SPREP as the Secretariat for too long, and not SPREP as the organization. He felt that verbal information provided at such presentations can be easily forgotten. Second, the lessons learned from previous projects undertaken in-country should be reported and progressed upon. Encouraging the Meeting to move away from only raising issues but also following them up, he fully endorsed the recommendation of the Secretariat.

345. The Representative of Cook Islands supported the recommendation. He advised that this was done regularly in his government and international MEAs. Given the burden of reporting he supported streamlining the template.

346. The Representative of New Zealand expressed support on the country profiles. He proposed that short verbal national presentations would allow exchange of information in future meetings, in line with the proposal as discussed at the 16th SPREP Meeting. This needed some framework, perhaps a Meeting agenda item.

347. The Representative of Marshall Islands advised she did not have a problem with endorsing the paper. She felt that Guam had given an eloquent view of things but struggled with some aspects of sharing information.

348. The Representative of Fiji reiterated his support for the paper and for simplifying the template. Annual statements should be brief and not prolong the Meeting.

349. The Representative of Samoa clarified that he suggested simplicity to make sure that the reporting is done. Endorsing the proposal now would mean that the template as presented would also be adopted. He wanted to see how the reports could be simplified yet give appropriate and adequate information.

350. The Representative of Australia supported the idea of annual verbal reporting at the Meeting while recognising that this reporting should not become an extra obligation.

351. The Representative of French Polynesia supported the recommendation and said the reporting would help French Polynesia and the territories to know more about what is happening in the region. To facilitate the process, he suggested that the forms could be pre-filled using the information available to the Secretariat and then completed at the capitals with the help of the Secretariat.

352. The Secretariat responded it had already started work on this with Samoa. The template could be improved over time with experience as PICTs undertake this exercise.

353. The Representative of New Caledonia reiterated his support for country profiles, previously expressed at the last SPREP Meeting in Apia. He noted that such a document is valuable on three levels: (i) national, to increase the dissemination of environmental actions and, for territories, to increase their integration with the work of SPREP; (ii) regional, to increase the interaction between countries and territories; and (iii) international, to increase the visibility of its countries and territories to donors.

354. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia advised that his delegation believed that this template would also assist them in evaluating their activities; it would be linked closely to their status of the environment reports.

355. The Representative of Tuvalu supported the profile and enquired if this reporting requirement would be annual.

356. The Secretariat encouraged the Members to look at the countries profiles as a diary of the work undertaken at the national level, to capture experiences over time based on the SPREP Action Plan. It was up to the Meeting to decide on the New Zealand suggestion for such reports, especially the success stories, to profile in the annual SPREP Meetings.

357. The Representative of United States of America supported the country profile paper; her delegation supported the Secretariat's suggestion that the template would be fine-tuned as it was put into use.

358. The Representative of Vanuatu advised that completing the pre-filled forms should be the responsibility of the PICTs as they had the knowledge of how their environmental management work had progressed over the specified period. As PICTs already undertake reporting under various MEAs, reporting this to the Secretariat should be part of that process.

359. The Representative of Australia supported the idea expressed earlier by the Secretariat that, with fine-tuning, the country profile could also assist PICs with reporting obligations to the various Conventions they are parties to.

360. The Chair summarised that two issues had emerged for consideration: (i) There was overwhelming support for the recommendations as presented and (ii) Reporting was to be done every year. He suggested that the Meeting approve the recommendations given in the paper but take note of the issues raised around the table, particularly on moving towards streamlining reporting.

361. The Representative of New Zealand supported the template as presented and its development but wanted the Meeting to note the issue of sharing of information particularly at the annual SPREP Meetings. He was not proposing an extra reporting requirement to Members, but instead an opportunity in the next Meeting agenda to allow countries to highlight key successes or difficulty on a selected issue. He suggested that this be tried next year, with each Member being allocated three minutes. If countries then wanted to know more about what others are doing, they could exchange their profile template on the margins of the Meeting.

362. The Representative of Marshall Islands apologised that she had misunderstood the New Zealand proposal to mean an additional item to the already proposed country profile matrix prepared by the Secretariat. After clarification, she had no difficulties with the proposal.

363. The Meeting adopted the Country Profile template for immediate implementation, while taking note of the issues raised earlier; and agreed that at next year's Meeting members exchange information on developments related to Natural Resources Management, the first focal area of the Action Plan.

8.5: Consideration and Approval of the Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2007 and Indicative Budgets for 2008 and 2009

364. The Secretariat presented the Work Programme and Budget, highlighting that in the past three years it had worked hard to link the Strategic Programmes and the Action Plan. While the environmental concerns are mounting, budgetary constraints at the regional and national levels were also an issue. The Secretariat put the budget to the Meeting, the total being USD7.2 million. A balanced budget, in accordance with the financial regulations, it represents a decrease from the 2006 budget, caused by the closure of the International Waters Project. A conservative approach to the development of the budget was taken, with only 13% unsecured.

365. The Representative of New Zealand strongly congratulated the Secretariat on the improvement of the performance indicators. He believed this improvement helps provide Members with transparency and accountability. Some of the best indicators relate to workshops with an evaluation of the particular activity, and he inquired how the Secretariat plans to manage this.

366. The Secretariat clarified that it is now a matter of practice to have participant evaluation of every training course, workshop and even meetings to help the Secretariat improve its delivery. This is part of the Secretariat's process of continuous improvement.

367. The Representative of Vanuatu congratulated the Secretariat on the document and its improvement over previous years. This was a clear indicator of the transparency requested at two previous meetings. The endorsements in terms of increases in salary and extra staffing reflected support for the reports that were presented over the course of the Meeting. He moved the budget to be endorsed, enabling the Secretariat to deliver the programmes that had been agreed.

368. The Representative of Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for the many programmes it had developed; and supported and endorsed the recommendations.

369. The Representative of Marshall Islands also endorsed the budget. He asked for clarification if the salaries were in harmony with those of other regional organizations.

370. The Secretariat stated that all CROP Agencies had the same salary scale.

371. The Representative of the United States of America commended the Secretariat for the budget and endorsed accepting it. She noted that as usual, additional funding might become available during 2007 from the USA and hoped to direct some additional contributions towards SPREP.

372. The Representative of Niue thanked the Secretariat as well as the external funding partners, and moved to adopt the budget and work programme.

373. The Representative of Fiji asked about the vacant positions in the Secretariat.

374. The Secretariat clarified that most vacant positions are under recruitment.

375. The Representative of France commended the Secretariat for the clarity of the document. He supported the proposal for 2007 and stressed that the approval of the 2008-2009 budgets will be discussed at a later stage. On the provisional budget for 2008 and 2009, he noted the proposed 20% increase.

376. The Representative of Papua New Guinea congratulated the Secretariat for its work on the Work Programme and Budget and had no difficulties with its adoption.

377. The Representative of Kiribati asked for resourcing strategies along with action plans, and asked if the Secretariat had identified which countries are participating in the programmes. She also asked for information on ReefBase training via the internet and would prefer hands-on training in countries. Kiribati urged streamlining of the coordination mechanisms with other CROP Agencies to avoid duplication. She enquired whether the Secretariat had assisted any Members on SOE reporting, what activities were being carried out in this area, and how the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) could be implemented at the national level.

378. The Secretariat clarified the improvements to the performance indicators in terms of number of countries to be served on various outputs in any given year. Selecting which countries are going to receive assistance depends on those countries. They need to advise the Secretariat of their national priorities and readiness; the Secretariat would then deliver assistance accordingly. The Secretariat could provide training to Kiribati on ReefBase. On the issue of coordination, the Secretariat stated that there are several regional working groups between CROP Agencies to provide for this. The Secretariat mentioned activities undertaken in the area of SOE, for example in Tonga, and would continue to give assistance where it could. The Secretariat clarified the implementation of the SWMP at the national level. Once the priorities were known and discussed with donors, the work could be programmed for delivery in a timely manner.

379. The Meeting agreed to:

- a) approve the proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2007; and
- b) note the indicative budgets for 2008 and 2009.

Agenda Item 9: Institutional Matters

9.1: Status of Ratifications of the Agreement Establishing SPREP

380. The Secretariat provided a brief report from the Depositary on the status of ratifications to the Agreement Establishing SPREP (AES). After 13 years since the AES was signed, all states and territories are now fully legal participating Members. This was an opportunity for Members to congratulate themselves on this important demonstration of commitment.

381. The Representative of Samoa noted it had taken 13 years for the membership to go through this process and expressed happiness to have reached this milestone.

382. The Meeting applauded the fact that all states and territories are now full Members and participants in SPREP.

9.2: Performance Management and Development for Post of Director (A Paper by Australia)

383. Before the paper was introduced, the Chair asked the Director if he wished to leave the room while the agenda item was being discussed.

384. The Representative of Australia intervened by saying that the paper was for noting only and suggested that the Director remain present. He outlined that this paper came from an offer by Australia at the 16th SPREP Meeting to consider a performance management and development process in relation to the Director. The paper outlines a performance development process used in Australia and suggests that the Chair and Vice-Chair could develop this type of process in consultation with the Director. He noted that the current Director, in whom he had absolute faith and confidence, would not finish his contract till 2009 at the completion of six years of service. He requested therefore that the Meeting note this paper as a general approach and focus, for discussions in the lead-up to the appointment of the next Director.

385. The Meeting agreed to note the paper prepared by Australia on performance management and development for the post of Director and thanked Australia for its work.

9.3: Report by the Director on Staff Appointments Beyond Six Years

386. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that the Staff Regulations required that, when professional staff had served six years of consecutive service, their position should be advertised. The incumbent may reapply and if judged the best candidate the Director may reappoint for a further term, but this should be reported to the next SPREP Meeting. The post of Marine Pollution Adviser was readvertised to which the incumbent Mr Nawadra applied. After a very transparent recruitment process, Mr Nawadra was recommended and therefore reappointed.

387. The Representative of Samoa thanked the Secretariat for its transparency and said that it was one of the few CROP Agencies that went through this process.

388. The Representatives of Tonga, Marshall Islands and Cook Islands thanked the Secretariat for its transparency and recommended the paper be noted.

389. The Meeting agreed to note the reappointment of Mr Nawadra.

9.4: Appointment of Auditors

390. The Secretariat sought the Meeting's approval for the appointment of Auditors for SPREP accounts for the financial years 2006 and 2007. It was noted that the fee from the recommended firm is slightly higher than the alternative quote. Its choice of auditors was based on thoroughness of process and depth of examination, and the Secretariat's preference was to have more audit visits during each year.

391. The Meeting agreed to approve the appointment of the firm Lesa ma Penn for auditing the Secretariat's accounts for the financial years 2006 and 2007.

Agenda Item 10: Regional Cooperation

10.1: Report of the CROP Heads Meeting

392. The Director tabled, for the Meeting's information, the Summary report of the CROP Chief Executives from their meeting of August 2006. He thanked his CROP colleagues that participated.

393. The Representative of the United States of America commented on paragraph 9 which referred to a limited level of USA engagement. She noted that, as was evident at this SPREP Meeting, the USA is actively engaged in a range of issues in the region.

394. The Representative of Australia commented on paragraph 16 of the summary report, stating that he did not agree with the negative assessments. He formally requested paragraph 16 to be removed. He stated that recruitment of the majority of the Regional Assistance Mission - Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is through open advertisement which strongly encouraged regional applicants and Australia would welcome CROP Agencies' encouragement of regional applicants. He pointed out that RAMSI is not involved in fisheries, forestry or health so the paragraph was in error. He also commented on paragraph 26 of the report which implies that the Pacific Plan had somehow changed the nature of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). While the PACER provides a broad framework for closer economic integration in the region, it does not cover development assistance guarantees and joint security agreements; nor, for that matter, does the Pacific Plan. Nevertheless Australia supported CROP Agencies' initiatives to raise awareness among stakeholders about the links between national priorities and regional priorities.

395. The Representative of Samoa raised concerns on a number of issues including paragraphs 6, 7 and 9. He shared Australia's concerns and pointed to the number of annual engagements with the USA in the context of the US Treaty and other regional meetings. He advised that the SPREP Meeting cannot alter the CROP Heads report. Perhaps in the future, such reports should be submitted to the FOC Meeting only and not to the CROP Governing Council Meeting. He also commented that CROP Heads have gone beyond their mandate, which is confined only to institutional/coordination issues.

396. The Secretariat noted the concerns and advised that the report was based on the best information given to them at the time; and expressed regret if this was inadequate. The Director would advise other CROP Heads of the concerns.

397. The Meeting agreed to note the report with the concerns expressed by delegates and requested the Director to inform his CROP colleagues of the concerns and comments raised.

10.2: Regional Institutional Framework

398. This agenda item was proposed by Marshall Islands. The Secretariat tabled the report on the RIF which was commissioned in the context of the Pacific Plan Task Force (now the Pacific Plan Action Committee). This report had been tabled to that Task Force two weeks before the 17th SPREP meeting and would be presented to the FOC Meeting and Forum Leaders Meeting later in the year. The Report is a thorough review and provides an opportunity for countries to air their views.

399. The Representative of Niue asked why countries were not involved initially in the consultation process for the report.

400. The Secretariat clarified that the team of consultants that produced this report went to every country and territory. The initial report was the result of consultation with the regional organizations only.

401. The Chair referred the Meeting to page 19 of the Report which lists the countries and territories consulted.

402. The Representative of Marshall Islands thanked the Secretariat for including this agenda item.

403. The Representative of Australia thanked the Marshall Islands for enabling discussion on this topic. He asked for clarification: (i) whether the SPREP Meeting will be forwarding comments on the report; (ii) whether these will be presented to the Forum Leaders or the Task Force; and (iii) what mandate the Meeting had to comment on the report.

404. The Secretariat stated it had no position on it, but the intention of this agenda item was to enable Members to make preliminary comments, and the Meeting could decide what to do with those.

405. The Representative of Niue reiterated Australia's query on the Meeting's mandate for discussing this paper. He said he was not in a position to comment on the paper and that it was important to focus the discussion on the status of the Secretariat. Delegates need to go back to capitals to consult in order to have an informed position.

406. The Representative of the United States of America echoed comments from Niue and Australia. While being aware of these discussions, and that further discussions will take place in October, her government is considering the paper and cannot comment definitively on the report at this time. She stressed that her government considers this as a proposal but not a final word.

407. The Representative of Samoa agreed with Australia, Niue and the USA but stressed the importance to discuss the issues given the lack of consultation in producing the initial report. He felt that it was a better document than the first report by Tony Hughes, but there were still legal issues to be addressed, such as the relationship between the SPREP Treaty and the Forum. He noted also that governance, institutional and staff contractual issues have not been addressed by the report. It would be useful to have feedback from the review team on how this would affect the delivery of environmental programmes, the future of the SPREP Meeting, and other governance issues. He said Samoa was not in a position to support this report as it stands.

408. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia associated himself with comments from Samoa even though it is not for this Meeting to take an official stand on the matter. He appreciated the suggestion by Marshall Islands to address this matter. Some suggestions in the report FSM thought useful, for example the Post Forum Dialogue Process: a tough issue that needs to be looked at carefully. He would appreciate hearing Members' views so that he could inform his Leader wisely.

409. The Representative of Cook Islands echoed the view of other delegations and indicated his government was still considering the report.

410. The Representative of Vanuatu reminded the Meeting that this RIF idea came about because some Members have been raising issues such as coordination, disconnection between the regional and national level, and so on. He thought Members need to focus instead on how they can make their organizations better, such as through reporting to the SPREP Meeting as agreed earlier.

411. The Representative of Tonga said he was interested in the evolution of the organization from a programme to a fully independent entity within the region. This had enabled the environment to achieve a high status in the region and had contributed to an improvement in the management of the environment. Discussion at the current SPREP Meeting demonstrated great improvements in delivery by the organization, which were a result of changes such as the strategic programmes and mainstreaming. SPREP could continue to improve and he did not want to see these improvements being diluted in the future. He stated his clear position to continue as we are, although there was no mandate to make a decision.

412. The Representative of the United States of America noted that SPREP is an independent international organization and any decisions in relation to its future must be made by the SPREP Meeting as outlined in the Treaty.

413. The Chair noted that this discussion was important as it would clear the air and explore common concerns over the future of the organization.

414. The Representative of France shared the opinions of other representatives, in that the Meeting does not have a mandate to comment on the text. However, it is legitimate that opinions on parts of the report relating to the future of SPREP be expressed here. France and its territories were consulted during the development of this report. France has a position on this document but the French delegation has no mandate to present it at this Meeting; it will be presented to the appropriate forum.

415. The Representative of Marshall Islands felt the RIF had not clarified how the delivery of services to Member countries would be improved. This is why the Pacific Action Plan committee suggested tabling it at regional organization council meetings, so that Members can share their views. He recommended that Members study the report more carefully and not rush it, as for example the Pacific Plan which seems to encounter various difficulties.

416. The Representative of Fiji agreed that Members should advise Leaders to look at the issue carefully. Many things are not clear such as what merging means, what the costs would be, etc. He felt that it was better to advise Leaders to take it back to the institutions; and he expressed satisfaction with the service provided by the Secretariat over the past few years. “If it is not broke why fix it?”, he asked.

417. The Representative of New Caledonia said that the territory had been consulted on the RIF and felt that any change to the regional institutions would improve their efficiency and would enable greater use of their resources. He stated three key principles that need to be considered: (i) The ongoing participation of parties—if territories could not take part in activities because of this change, then they would not be able to support it; (ii) the importance of maintaining the regional institutions headquarters; and (iii) the opportunity to improve dialogue between partners and stakeholders.

418. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia noted that the project team report left matters relating to education and health as they are. He felt that environment was a very important issue for all Members which needed its own institution. FSM was happy with the improvements that had been made to SPREP.

419. The Representative of Papua New Guinea noted that PNG had been consulted, with a PNG Foreign Affairs staff being part of the task team. He suggested that if the Meeting was going to discuss the paper, then the issues raised by Samoa and others could be noted so officials could brief their supervisors and Ministers upon return to their countries.

420. The Representative of Australia felt that this had been a useful discussion particularly for those SPREP Members who are not Forum Members, and thus were limited in their ability to influence the direction of reform there. He noted a long history of fundamental barriers to effective cooperation, of mandate creep, and uncertainty. Members have always looked for coherence and are starting to reap the benefits. The report was clear that the Agencies should not move. He agreed that the implementation raised by Samoa had not been addressed, but noted that country and territory representatives would form a taskforce to deal with such issues. He reminded Members that the SPREP Meeting is based on consensus, and that several delegates had not been briefed on their country's position. Hence the Meeting should note the report and Members could talk to their own Leaders. Individual countries could present their views in the appropriate channels.

421. The Representative of Samoa referred to the brief history of the organization as outlined earlier by the Secretariat. One of the key issues for Members to consider is whether the environmental concerns of the region would be better delivered from one large organization as was the case before 1993 and as proposed by the study, or with SPREP as an autonomous body. He agreed with Fiji that we should urge Leaders to take a cautious approach to this study.

422. The Representative of France echoed New Caledonia's position. It is very committed to a structure within which states and territories can meet on an equal footing to discuss issues such as the environment. He added that New Caledonia and French Polynesia have applied to become associate members of the Forum while Wallis and Futuna have applied as observers. These applications were forwarded to the Forum and this topic was addressed in the margins of the France-Oceania Summit held on 26 June 2006.

423. The Representative of New Caledonia agreed with France. He believed it is desirable to have a future framework with the benefits of states and territories discussing issues together.

424. The Meeting agreed to note the Report and invited delegations to convey their comments through their governments so that their official position could be presented at the FOC Meeting and the Leaders Forum.

425. The Meeting also encouraged the relevant institutions to share information so that territories can express themselves on this important issue.

Agenda Item 11: Items Proposed by Members

426. There were no other items proposed.

Agenda Item 12: Statements by Observers

427. The following Observers presented their statement: Conservation International (CI); Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CSM); Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS); International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW); International Maritime Organization (IMO); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS); and World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Agenda Item 13: Other Business

428. The Representative of the United States of America notified that an invitation will be sent to the SPREP Director for the US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting.

429. The Representative of New Caledonia stated that an international conference on coral ecosystem biodiversity, "BIODEC", will be convened from 30 October to 4 November 2006 in New Caledonia's IRD Centre. He cordially invited representatives from SPREP Member countries and territories to attend this environmental event of international interest.

Agenda Item 14: Date and Venue of Eighteenth SPREP Meeting

430. The next SPREP meeting would be Apia, Samoa, in accordance with established practice.

Agenda Item 15: Adoption of Report

431. The Meeting adopted the Report.

Agenda Item 16: Closure of the Meeting

432. The Representative of Australia expressed his thanks to the drafting committee.

433. The Representative of Vanuatu thanked the Chair and his colleagues around the table for the constructive discussions and said he looked forward to continuing to work together.

434. The Representative of the United States of America thanked the Secretariat, the interpreters and the translators for a successfully organised and conducted Meeting.

435. In his closing remarks, the Director congratulated the Chair on making the Meeting a resounding success through the firm leadership and congenial atmosphere; he thanked the Vice-Chair for leading the drafting committee, and noted that the Officials had done the real work, with the Secretariat merely providing the materials. He thanked the Secretariat staff for the work put in to organising the Meeting (in particular the Deputy-Director, F. Vitolio Lui); thanked SPC and the government of New Caledonia for being the local hosts, and presented the Chair and Vice-Chair with a gift as token of appreciation. The Meeting was then closed.

Annexes



Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

**SPREP Meetings
7 – 15 September 2006
Noumea, New Caledonia**

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Annex 2: Address by the Outgoing Chair: France

Dear Director,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

The year 2005-2006, in which France has been honoured to chair the SPREP Meeting, has been the first year of operation of both the new internal structure and the two strategic programmes, “Island Ecosystems” and “Pacific Futures”, of our organisation. The major themes addressed by SPREP in the past year have been island biodiversity (which will be discussed at the Environment Ministers’ Meeting on 15 September), international waters and the regional ocean policy, climate change and waste management in the Pacific.

France has meanwhile strengthened its cooperation with SPREP and this year saw the start of the CRISP initiative to protect and manage coral reefs as well as the launching of a new waste management initiative for the Pacific. These two important projects, which reflect the two strategic programmes of SPREP, will receive funding from the French Development Agency and the Pacific Fund for Economic, Social and Cultural Cooperation. Both projects will be outlined during the Meeting. You also know that the preservation of the regional environment was on the agenda of the second France-Oceania Summit held in Paris on 26 June 2006 at the invitation of the President of the Republic. The leaders of the three large regional organisations – the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Community and SPREP – attended this event which, in its final declaration, stressed the importance of the environmental issues facing the Pacific.

This year of chairmanship of the SPREP Meeting is coming to an end and I feel that we have been fortunate to be involved in precious and sustained activities that will be vital to the future of the Pacific region. In this connection, I would like to thank the management, staff and experts of SPREP for the quality of their efforts and the documents prepared for the 17th Meeting.

Annex 3: SPREP Director's Introductory Remarks

Mr Chairman,
The Hon. Didier Leroux, Minister for sustainable development of New Caledonia,
Distinguished Representatives, my Fellow CROP colleagues,
Distinguished Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,
a most pleasant good morning to us all.

At the outset, allow me to convey on our collective behalf, my deep appreciation to our host, the government and people of New Caledonia for their generous and genuinely warm hospitality. My staff and I have been overwhelmed by the reception and support of the administration here. The beauty of the place and friendliness of the people have made it difficult for us to concentrate on the work at hand. And, as if these have not been enough, our host has even succeeded in seeking divine intervention and put on continuous excellent weather for us.

Let me also convey my sincere gratitude to my colleague Director-General Dr Jimmie Rogers for not only the use of his organisation's technologically advanced conference venue but also for putting at our disposal everything that one could need to organise and run a large meeting. This has considerably facilitated our work as well as eased our duties. His helpful and friendly staff have made us feel at home at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Thank you Jimmie and your staff.

Reflecting back for a moment, most of you would be aware of SPREP's pedigree. SPREP was conceived and born here at Anse Vata in Noumea and at SPC in the late 1970s. SPREP was a programme of SPC for over a decade before it was weaned to Apia to grow into adulthood and attain independence. Throughout its adult life as an independent intergovernmental organization, SPREP had held fast to its warm and close relationship with SPC. And like the human species that make up the organization and Secretariat, SPREP too would want to return to its roots to renew family relationships and environmental values. This is the first time since 1991 when we left these shores that SPREP has returned. And we are feeling very much at home with our home-coming reception. We are delighted to be back and fortunate to have relatives like New Caledonia and SPC.

Focusing on the present, Mr Chairman, distinguished representatives, 2006 is also an important milestone in the life of SPREP in another important respect. In January, the government of Vanuatu lodged its instrument of ratification with the government of Samoa, the depositary for the Agreement Establishing SPREP—thus completing the legal process for all Member states and territories as full participating Members of SPREP. I believe the successful completion of this process, which is never a simple nor easy one, signify the commitment of SPREP Members to the organization and the sustainable environment of the region.

Since its establishment we, the Members and Secretariat of SPREP, had, working together and in partnership with other like-minded stakeholders and international agencies, achieved considerable progress in the wise management of environmental resources of the region. We have done this in the areas of biodiversity conservation, global climate change policy and regional climate change adaptation, pollution prevention and abatement

policies, waste management and control, coastal and ecosystems protection, environmental capacity building, training and awareness raising are some examples. I will, in my overview in Agenda Item 5.1, speak in more detail on these collaborative endeavours between the Secretariat and Members on the special responsibility you have entrusted to SPREP.

Our agenda also provides evidence of progress and regional team work. Working with our Members, the Parties to the Noumea Convention, despite the difficulties encountered, now have adopted an amended Protocol on pollution by dumping, and signed new Protocols on combating oil pollution incidents and pollution by hazardous and noxious substances. These amended and new Protocols for the Pacific islands region bring them up to date and consistent with current international instruments in these fields and provide resource linkages to the international conventions.

While we will be reporting to you under Item 8 of our Agenda about some of our large projects coming to an end, we are happy to inform you that our Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project (PIGGAREP) proposal has just been approved by the GEF for immediate implementation. This 5-year project will bring to 11 Pacific island countries over USD5 million in assistance and support in the energy area.

We believe that one of the critical factors for any credible evaluation of efforts at both regional and national levels, towards achieving the outcomes of the current Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the Pacific Islands Region, is a user-friendly form of national reporting to complement the annual reporting by the Secretariat on its contribution towards the outcomes of the Action Plan. New Zealand, supported by other Members, raised this at last year's Meeting which then decided that the matter be further and more comprehensively addressed at this Meeting. Your Secretariat has circulated under Agenda Item 8.4 a proposed template or framework which we have tentatively called "Country Profiles" to provide Members with a mechanism that could not only assist Members in a standard format to report on the Action Plan, but hopefully with further fine-tuning and improvement also help Pacific island countries and territories report on other international and regional instruments that they are party to.

Needless to say, one of the most important matters to any institution or any government is the plan of its activities, operations and resources. Our plan or Work Programme and Budget for 2007 is presented to you under Item 8.5. While the budget request does not call for any increase in Members' contributions, this is only possible by the coincidence of surpluses from previous years that have not been incorporated into the Reserve Fund. Contributions have not significantly increased since 2003 and Members' assessed voluntary contributions individually and collectively are the lowest compared to any regional organization, despite having 25 contributors compared to 16 for most of the regional organizations. Even with this low contributions base, we always carry substantial arrears—usually around half of annual contributions and this fraction is increasing. If the region and SPREP Members are serious about our work both nationally and regionally in the environment, concrete decisive actions would have to be taken to buttress core funding—modest but progressive increases in contributions would have to be confronted in the next two years.

Last but not least, the agenda includes the results of the review of salaries and terms and conditions for both support and professional staff that are done on a 3-year basis. For the

support staff this is the first time since SPREP was established, that they have been recommended comprehensive increases by an independent review. I have said before, and it bears repeating; I am honored and fortunate to lead this SPREP team. It is a winning team—perhaps not as strong as the All Blacks, but more formidable. Since assuming the helm, I have tried my best to excite them enough to dig for the gold within themselves. I have tried my best to inspire them to go beyond the normal call of duty. To date, it is I that have learned from them. They have helped me to develop the right lenses for seeing wonders they have caused around me and the region. I hope you would recognize their merit and allow me to give them their fair reward. I do not intend to fund this by asking you for more money or by compromising programme delivery at the country level. I believe this can be met through increased efficiency and cost-saving measures.

I have raised some serious issues which might not be pleasant to the ear but I hope you can forgive me as it is, I believe my duty to raise with you, my bosses, both good and uncomfortable news.

My staff and I stand ready to provide you Mr Chairman and Representatives the best of our service. I thank you.

Annex 4: Welcome Address Host Country: New Caledonia

Mr Director of SPREP,
Mr Director of SPC,
Honourable ministers,
Distinguished representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the President and the government of New Caledonia, I have the honour and pleasure of welcoming you to New Caledonia for the 17th SPREP Officials Meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for hosting us in its magnificent premises and providing us with an environment which, I hope, will foster constructive dialogue and fruitful interaction.

Environmental issues are of major significance to New Caledonia. In a world marked by increasing globalisation of trade and knowledge, it is important that we preserve and value our resources and our environment for the benefit of future generations.

The quality of life of our people encompasses both their standard of living and their physical environment. And our natural environment contributes greatly to our physical environment. It is incumbent upon all of us to take care of it and to provide measures for its sustainable future.

Sustainable development implies not only the responsible management of our natural resources and environment but also the development of human activities so that our people enjoy a reasonable standard of living.

SPREP, as the regional organisation responsible for the environment, and you, as representatives of its Member countries and territories, have an important role to play in advancing discussion on this issue, as sustainable development is reshaping the issue of the quality of modern development.

On the one hand, our sensitivity to environmental problems has increased over time and as a result of our awareness of current dysfunctions and the impacts of various natural disasters. Among these are global warming, floods, forest fires, oil spills, earthquakes, landslides, storms and cyclones.

On the other, we can often feel overwhelmed by events whose scale, interconnection and challenges seem beyond our reach.

Beyond the internal processes of the organisation, over the coming week you will consider SPREP programmes in which you took part as well as those planned for the future. It is through these programmes and through reciprocal cooperation in a spirit of partnership that together we can face the challenge of environmental development and try to find solutions to the environmental problems affecting the Pacific region.

The International Waters Project, the activities on invasive species, the development of a strategy on island biodiversity, the conservation of marine species, the creation and strengthening of capacities, a closer collaboration between Pacific territories and SPREP:

these are just a few examples of the programmes you will consider over the coming days and which represent major topics for the future of our region's environment.

New Caledonia, a French community of the Pacific, follows closely these programmes as well as the progress of the environmental debate. Together with France, signatory to the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Apia Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific and the Noumea Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, the Caledonian and regional authorities exercise responsibilities in the areas of environmental conservation and protection of marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Each province is responsible, within its jurisdiction, to develop and implement policies on environmental management as well as economic and rural development and planning. They are particularly committed to promoting the integration of environmental issues with social and economic activities.

Our authorities therefore resolutely support sustainable, responsible and balanced development.

Let me give you a few brief examples of the activities implemented in this context.

In January 2006, New Caledonia established an Environment Advisory Committee which, given our exceptional biodiversity and the regional dimension of the environmental debate, should play a major role in addressing those issues in New Caledonia while improving our actions at the regional level.

New Caledonia was also involved in the development of the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, an action plan of the French State aimed at stopping biodiversity loss nationwide by 2010.

As demonstrated during the SPREP meeting on "National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans" held last July in Suva, New Caledonia is particularly active in the area of nature conservation in general and biodiversity protection in particular, through the development of a specific "Biodiversity Conservation Plan" in line with the national strategy developed by France.

The content of this specific strategy (five priority objectives associated to several thematic activities), developed by New Caledonian communities responsible for environmental issues with the active participation of the State, is very similar to that of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans of the fourteen SPREP member countries who have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Furthermore, New Caledonia actively pursues the inscription of its coral reef, the second largest in the world after the Australian Great Barrier Reef, on the World Heritage List.

Finally, SPREP recently accepted New Caledonia's application to the PILN (*Pacific Invasive Learning Network*) initiative, thus allowing our community to participate, at the regional level, in a network aimed at sharing capacities, experiences and techniques for controlling invasive species.

All these initiatives make it possible for New Caledonia to consider economic and social development that is respectful of its environment and local populations.

While new industrial projects can have huge economic benefits, as seen in New Caledonia, particularly in the mining sector, they necessarily generate some form of pollution, if only visual.

We therefore need to strike the right balance between the need to promote these economic activities beneficial to the community and the need to preserve the natural environment in which they take place. For it is just as unpleasant to live wretchedly in a magnificent environment as it is to live magnificently in a wretched environment.

It is therefore crucial to limit the environmental annoyances and, more importantly, to make sure that they are not irreversible. Nickel mining in New Caledonia until 1975 has left permanent scars on our landscape. Our institutions have learnt from the experience and the rehabilitation of mining sites is now required by the New Caledonian Mining Development Framework. A “Charter of Good Mining Practices” has been introduced and operators must pledge to abide by it. Furthermore, we intend to rehabilitate sites wherever possible so as to prevent further degradation. But rehabilitation will not be complete in some sites. This is why the New Caledonian institutions have acted to ensure that this type of degradation to the natural environment does not happen again.

Faced with the challenge of development, New Caledonia seeks to improve its environmental governance while acquiring appropriate management tools.

Your work over the coming week, the exchanges of ideas between all SPREP Members and an open dialogue on our shared problems will undoubtedly contribute to New Caledonia's thinking and I hope that your participation in these meetings will contribute to the advancement of debates on significant issues for the future of our region and our common heritage.

I can assure you of New Caledonia's support to the efforts made by SPREP and its Members to better preserve the environment of our Pacific region and I encourage you to pursue your efforts and thinking.

I also have the pleasure of wishing you once again an excellent stay in New Caledonia and a successful Meeting. Finally, I hope that you will have the time to discover the Caledonian environment that we are all so proud of and that we will be happy to share with you during these days of dialogue and exchange.

Thank you.



Annex 5: Adopted Officials' Meeting Agenda

Agenda Item 1: Official Opening

Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

Agenda Item 4: Action Taken on Matters Arising from the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting

Agenda Item 5: Performance Review/Overview of Developments in 2005

5.1 Presentation of the Annual Report for 2005 and the Director's Overview of Progress since the Sixteenth SPREP Meeting

5.2 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the 2005 Work Programme and Budget

5.2.1 *PMER - Island Ecosystems Programme*

5.2.2 *PMER - Pacific Futures Programme*

5.2.3 *PMER - Executive Management and Corporate Support*

5.3 Financial Reports

5.3.1 *Report on Members' Contributions*

5.3.2 *Audited Annual Accounts for 2005*

Agenda Item 6: Staff Remuneration – Triennial Reviews

6.1 Triennial CROP Remuneration Review on Professional Staff

6.2 Triennial Remuneration Review on Support Staff

Agenda Item 7: Regional Conventions

7.1 Report on the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea (SPREP) Convention

7.2 Report on the Joint Conference of the Parties of the Noumea and Apia Conventions

7.3 Report on the Conference of the Parties of the Waigani Convention

Agenda Item 8: 2007 Work Programme and Budget

- 8.1 Island Ecosystems Programme Issues
 - 8.1.1(a) Final Status Report on the International Waters Project*
 - 8.1.1(b) Report of the IWP Multipartite Review Meeting*
 - 8.1.2 Invasive Species: Developments and Update*
 - 8.1.3 Island Biodiversity: Update on Regional Progress*
 - 8.1.4 Strategic Priorities for Biodiversity Conservation: Regional Framework for Marine Protected Areas*
 - 8.1.5 Regional Arrangements for the Conservation of Marine Species of Special Interests and the Regional Marine Species Programme Framework 2003-2007*
- 8.2 Pacific Futures Programme Issues
 - 8.2.1 Regional Strategy on Shipping-Related Introduced Marine Pests*
 - 8.2.2 Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation Measures in Pacific Island Countries*
 - 8.2.3 Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Project*
 - 8.2.4 Regional Strategy for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol in the Pacific Region*
 - 8.2.5 Activities in relation to financing for regional environmental projects from the Global Environment Facility*
- 8.3 Regional Collaboration: Greater Engagement of Territories in SPREP Activities
- 8.4 Country Profiles as a Means for Members' National Reporting under SPREP Action Plan (2005 – 2009)
- 8.5 Consideration and Approval of the Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2007 and Indicative Budgets for 2008 and 2009

Agenda Item 9: Institutional Matters

- 9.1 Status of Ratifications of the Agreement Establishing SPREP
- 9.2 Performance Management and Development for Post of Director – A Paper by Australia
- 9.3 Report by the Director on Staff Appointments Beyond Six Years
- 9.4 Appointment of Auditors

Agenda Item 10: Regional Cooperation

- 10.1 Report of the CROP Heads Meeting
- 10.2 Regional Institutional Framework

Agenda Item 11: Items Proposed by Members**Agenda Item 12: Statements by Observers****Agenda Item 13: Other Business****Agenda Item 14: Date and Venue of Eighteenth SPREP Meeting****Agenda Item 15: Adoption of Report****Agenda Item 16: Closure of the Meeting**



Above: Environment Ministers and Senior Officials from SPREP Member Countries and Territories present at the Meeting on 15 September 2006.

Ci-dessus : Les ministres de l'environnement et représentants officiels des pays et territoires membres du PROE présents à la Conférence le 15 septembre 2006.

Below: Officials present at the Opening day of the week-long 17th SPREP Meeting.

Ci-dessous : Les représentants officiels présents à l'ouverture de la 17^e Conférence du PROE.

Photos: SPC/CPS.



Outcomes of the Environment Ministers' Meeting

15 September 2006
Noumea, New Caledonia



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Statement of the 2006 SPREP Environment Ministers' Meeting

Ministers of Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna and senior officials of American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, France, Guam, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and the United States of America, meeting in Noumea, New Caledonia on 15 September 2006, on the occasion of the Seventeenth SPREP Meeting:

Extended their condolences to the people of Tonga on the passing of His Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV;

Welcomed the report made on behalf of the Minister of Finance of the Solomon Islands, Chair of the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, which emphasized the need to mainstream environmental issues into national economic planning; and proposed that the environment be included in discussions at the annual meeting of Forum Leaders;

Expressed their strong commitment to promoting the environment of the Pacific region and undertook to pursue environmental issues as a priority at national level;

Reaffirmed that pollution and waste management, biodiversity protection, and climate change are the priority areas for SPREP to address in the region;

Noted the successful conclusion of SPREP projects on renewable energy, climate change adaptation, ozone depleting substances, and international waters; commended the positive impact of these projects on the region; and looked forward to the continuation of these efforts through new project initiatives on renewable energy, climate change adaptation, invasive species, waste management, and coral reef protection;

Acknowledged with appreciation the Australian Government's support for the POPs in PICs project;

Welcomed the high level of commitment by all countries putting in place a licensing system to control ozone depleting substances in accordance with the Montreal Protocol; and noted that this is required for the release of funds to support the regional strategy to implement the Montreal Protocol in the Pacific;

Noted the need to have better access to environmental information and comprehensive monitoring systems as a basis for sound decision-making for sustainable development;

Urged the development of coherent approaches to national implementation of inter-related multilateral environment agreements, for example, through mechanisms such as National Capacity Self-Assessments and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan implementation;

Reaffirmed their commitment to conserve the region's biodiversity, applauded the efforts of SPREP Members, in particular the great commitments being made by countries participating in the Micronesian Challenge (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Guam, and Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands), as well as Kiribati, Fiji and the three French Territories to conserve their terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems; and encouraged other countries and territories to undertake similar initiatives to meet global, regional, and national conservation targets in support of sustainable development;

Welcomed the development and adoption of the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and strongly emphasized the importance of its early implementation;

Noted the entry into effect of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region, and encouraged Pacific Island Countries that have not yet done so to sign the Memorandum in the near future;

Noted the declaration on Deep-Sea Bottom Trawling to Protect Biodiversity in the High Seas that was developed by FFA and SPC and endorsed by the Forum Fisheries Ministers, for consideration by the Pacific Island Forum Leaders in October 2006;

Agreed to the development of a programme of work including a resourcing strategy for the implementation of a regional framework to support the establishment of marine protected areas;

Endorsed a regional strategy on shipping-related marine pests in recognition of the significance of this emerging issue to the region;

Congratulated SPREP Members on the entry into force for all SPREP States and Territories of the Agreement Establishing SPREP following the deposit of Vanuatu's Instrument of Ratification;

Supported the decision by the Parties to the Apia Convention to suspend the operation of the Apia Convention until further notice;

Supported the decision by the Parties to the Noumea Convention to progress amendments to the Noumea Convention;

Applauded the Conference of Plenipotentiaries to the Noumea Convention in adopting three Protocols to the Noumea Convention and in signing those that required signing; in addition, urged those Members that have not yet done so to accept, sign, and ratify the Protocols as soon as practicable;

Supported the decision of the Parties to the Waigani Convention to adopt a work programme, core budget, and a Business Plan for the Pacific Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions, and called for donor financial and in-kind support to assist with the implementation of the work programme and Business Plan;

Urged Members and the Secretariat to continue to pursue all appropriate avenues to establish sustainable financing to implement environmental priorities in the region;

Noted the importance of accessing support under the GEF4 including funding under the Resource Allocation Framework to implement projects on biodiversity and climate change;

Requested the Pacific Regional Authorizing Officer and CROP to ensure that the EDF 10 Regional Indicative Programme supports environmental work at the national and regional level;

Committed itself collectively and individually to paying current contributions to SPREP and arrears in full by the end of 2006;

Commended the efforts undertaken to increase integration of territory Members into the work of the SPREP programmes and urged all Members including territories to work together to address environmental issues;

Welcomed the adoption of a new country profile template and looked forward to SPREP Members sharing information on national actions contributing to achieving the outcomes of the 2005 – 2009 Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the Pacific Islands Region;

Urged CROP agencies to better coordinate their environment-related activities to support the region in the most efficient and effective way;

Conveyed its gratitude to the Government and people of New Caledonia for their warm hospitality and effective organization ensuring a very successful 17th SPREP Meeting;

Warmly thanked the Honourable Didier Leroux for his effective guidance as Chair of the Ministerial meeting;

Thanked the Director-General and staff of the Secretariat for the Pacific Community for the use of their facilities and venue.

The Chairman
SPREP Environment Ministers Meeting
Noumea
New Caledonia

Dear Sir

Summary of Major Issues Addressed by the 17th SPREP Meeting of Officials

Introduction

It is my honour to present to you for consideration and endorsement the matters of significance addressed by the SPREP Meeting of Officials that met at Noumea New Caledonia from 11 to 14 September 2006. A full report is also available should your meeting desire to examine in more detail the matters it addressed.

The Meeting was chaired by New Caledonia with French Polynesia as Vice-Chair and Chair of the drafting committee.

Secretariat's Reports and Work Programme and Financial Performance for 2005

The Meeting received and heard in detail reports from the Director and staff of SPREP on the Secretariats' work programme and financial performance for the 2005 year of operation.

The Meeting was able to engage in a very detailed examination of all aspects of the work and operation of the Secretariat and its staff and provided comments to guide the Secretariat in its work.

The Meeting was satisfied with the work and financial performance of the Secretariat and commended it for this.

On financial matters, the Meeting heard from the Secretariat on the unsatisfactory situation with the non-payment of membership contributions to the extent of USD405,753 or 43% of total annual contributions, and agreed to commit itself collectively and individually to paying current contributions and arrears in full by the end of 2006.

Professional and Support Staff Remuneration

The Meeting was satisfied with the proposals by the Secretariat on salary adjustments, recommended by the independent consultant and CROP Chief Executives, to professional and support staff as a result the 2006 triennial remuneration review. The Meeting approved the recommended salary increases on the basis that these would be financed by the Secretariat from ongoing productivity and efficiency gains and cost-saving measures and not through any increases in membership contributions or compromising programme delivery to Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs).

Report on Outcomes of the Ordinary Meetings of the Parties to the Apia, Noumea and Waigani Conventions and the Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the Noumea Convention to adopt and sign an Amended and New Protocols

NOUMEA CONVENTION

The Parties to the above Conventions met in Noumea between 7 and 10 September to consider their agenda. The Parties to the Apia Convention agreed to suspend the operations of the Apia Convention until further notice because all its Parties are also Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity which encompasses the subject matter of the Apia Convention and is the primary instrument for executing that subject matter.

The Noumea Convention Parties agreed at its Ordinary Meeting to further examine proposals for amending the body of the Convention with a view to taking a decision at its next session. It also adopted a budget for the next triennium.

CONFERENCE OF PLENIPOTENTIARIES

At its Conference of Plenipotentiaries, the Parties were able to formally adopt an amended Protocol on dumping as well as two new Protocols on oil pollution and pollution by hazardous and noxious substances. The new Protocols were also opened for signature and three Parties were able to sign. These new Protocols continue to be open this week for signature by authorized Parties and for another 12 months at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva.

WAIGANI CONVENTION

The Parties to the Waigani Convention adopted a work programme and core budget for the biennium 2007/2008. It also endorsed a business plan for the SPREP/Basel Joint Pacific Regional Centre (PRC) for the same biennium. The Parties also selected five members to a Steering Committee to oversee the operations of the PRC. One member would be nominated by Australia, New Zealand, and Parties from the Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian sub-groups.

2007 Work Programme and Budget Issues

PIREP

The Meeting noted the closure of the GEF-funded project on renewable energy and expressed satisfaction with its successful outcome. The meeting was particularly pleased to hear that the GEF Chief Executive had now approved a Phase II to this project to further benefit the region.

CBDAMPIC

The Meeting also noted the closure of the Canada-funded climate adaptation pilot project together with its successful results. Like the regional renewable energy project, the Meeting was very pleased to note that the Secretariat was in an advanced stage of developing a follow up project with the GEF.

IWP

The Meeting also noted imminent closure of the GEF/UNDP-funded International Waters Project and commented on the successful aspects of the project, its challenges and particularly sustaining project activities beyond its closure in December 2006.

ODS

The Meeting also received a report from the Secretariat on the final stage of the UNEP-funded project on ozone depleting substances. In particular the Meeting noted the concerns of the Secretariat that further funding to complete the project would not be released by UNEP until participating countries complete prerequisite activities.

DEEP-SEA BOTTOM TRAWLING

In supporting the Secretariat's development of a regional framework on the establishment and management of marine protected areas, the Meeting also recommended that your Meeting agree that the Declaration on Deep-Sea Bottom Trawling to Protect Biodiversity in the High Seas, that was developed by FFA and SPC and endorsed by the Forum Fisheries Ministers, should be forwarded for consideration by the Pacific Forum Leaders in October. The text of the declaration is attached.

MARINE INVASIVE STRATEGY

In relation to shipping-related marine pests the Meeting endorsed a regional strategy proposed by the Secretariat.

GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF TERRITORIES

On the matter of greater involvement of Member territories in the work of SPREP and cooperation with each other and Members, the Meeting noted with considerable satisfaction increasing Secretariat and regional activities that involve territories; and heard from the territories reports of their own activities and challenges as well as offers of assistance to other SPREP members.

COUNTRY PROFILES

The Meeting also adopted a template proposed by the Secretariat in response to a direction from a previous SPREP Meeting to assist SPREP Members record and share information on national actions contributing to achieving the outcomes of the 2005–2009 Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the Pacific islands Region.

2007 WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

The Meeting then adopted the Secretariat's proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2007 together with the scale of assessed contributions.

Status of Ratification: Agreement Establishing SPREP

The Meeting also noted with acclamation notice from Samoa, the Depositary of the Agreement Establishing SPREP, that as of March this year the Agreement was finally in force for all SPREP States and Territories with the deposit of Vanuatu's Instrument of Ratification.

Regional Institutional Framework

The Meeting, in a preliminary examination of the report by a Pacific Plan Action Committee review team on a regional institutional framework, heard views from a range of Members on the report.

Finally the Meeting was pleased to hear statements of support and collaborative activities from observer partner agencies.

I would, with the support of my colleagues and Secretariat, stand ready to provide further clarification if required.

Sincerely

Cameron Diver
Chairman
17th SPREP Meeting (Officials)



Seventeenth SPREP Meeting
Environment Ministers' Meeting
15 September 2006
Noumea, New Caledonia

Agenda

Agenda Item	Thursday 14 September 2006
1	Official Opening
	Friday 15 September 2006
2	Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair
3	Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures
4	Opening Statements and Address by the Chair of the Forum Economic Minister meeting
5	Director's Overview
6	<p><u>Matters for Discussion and Decision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Financial Matters ❖ Remuneration for professional and support staff ❖ Reports of the Conferences of the Parties to the Apia, Noumea and Waigani Conventions ❖ Report of Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the adoption of Protocols ❖ Work Programme Issues ❖ Greater Engagement of Territories in SPREP Programme Activities ❖ Country Profiles as a means of National Reporting under the SPREP Action Plan ❖ Status of Ratifications/Accessions to the Agreement Establishing SPREP ❖ Process for Reappointing Director after serving their first terms
7	<p>Theme Issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ "Progressing the Biodiversity Agenda in the Pacific: Integrating and Implementing the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans"
8	Other Business
9	Date and Venue of Next Ministerial Meeting
10	Adoption of Ministerial Statement
11	Close

Acronyms Used and Their Explanation

Acronym	Explanation
ABS	Access to genetic resources and Benefit Sharing
ACAIR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACP	Africa Caribbean and Pacific
AES	Agreement Establishing SPREP
AFD	[French Development Agency]
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDAMPIC	Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation Measures in Pacific Island Countries
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRISP	Coral Reef Initiative for the South Pacific
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage (Austr.)
EDF10	European Development Fund (10th round)
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FFC	Forum Fisheries Committee
FOC	Forum Officials Committee
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GCOS	Global Climate Observing System
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GloBallast	Global Ballast Water Management Programme
IBPOW	Island Biodiversity Programme of Work
ICRAN	International Coral Reef Action Network
IFRECOR	[French Initiative for Coral Reefs]
IHE	Institute of Hydraulic Engineering (Delft, NL)
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IMP	Introduced Marine Pests
IUCN	The World Conservation Union (previously: International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources)
IWP	International Waters Project
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NAP	National Action Plan
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment (for Global Environmental Management)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (USA)
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OBIS	Ocean Biogeographic Information System
OCT	Overseas Countries and Territories (EU)
ODS	Ozone-depleting substances

PACC	Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PacINET	Conference of the Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society
PACISOC	Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society
PBIF	Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum
PDF-B	Project Development Facility - phase B
PEIN	Pacific Environmental Information Network
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PI-GCOS	Pacific Islands - Global Climate Observing System
PIGGAREP	Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project
PILN	Pacific Invasives Learning Network
PIREP	Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Project
PMER	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report
PNG	Papua New Guinea
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutant
PRC	Pacific Regional Centre (for Training and Technology Transfer for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions)
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework (GEF)
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission - Solomon Islands
RE	Renewable Energy
RIF	Regional Institutional Framework
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
RMSPF	Regional Marine Species Programme Framework
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SGP	Small Grants Program
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOE	State of Environment
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Pacific Regional Environment Programme; or: Secretariat of the ...; [no longer South Pacific]
SRIMP-PAC	Shipping-Related Introduced Marine Pests in the Pacific Islands
SWMP	Solid Waste Management Plan
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNF	United Nations Foundation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNU	United Nations University
USA	United States of America
USCRTF	United States Coral Reef Task Force
WP	Working Paper
WSSD	World Summit for Sustainable Development