



Ninth
SPREP Meeting

**Report of the
Meeting of Officials**



25–27 November 1996
Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga

SPREP Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

SPREP Meeting (9th : 1996 : Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga)

Ninth SPREP Meeting : report of the Meeting of Officials,
Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, 25-27 November, 1996. - Apia,
Western Samoa : SPREP, 1997.

iv, 38p. ; 29 cm.

ISBN: 982-04-0166-6

1. Environmental policy - Oceania - Congresses.
2. Conservation of natural resources - Oceania - Congresses. 3.
Environmental protection - Oceania - Congresses. I. South Pacific
Regional Environment Programme. II. Title.

363.7099

Prepared for publication in February 1997 by the
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
PO Box 240
Apia, Western Samoa

Typeset in 11/14 Baskerville and printed on
Savannah Matt Art 90gsm (60% recycled)
by Commercial Printers Limited, Apia, Western Samoa

Edited and layout design by SPREP's Publication Unit

Editor's note:

The time frame for the SPREP Action Plan in this report appears as 1996-2000 and 1997-2000 on different occasions. This is due to the following: The revised draft of the SPREP Action Plan submitted by the Secretariat to the SPREP Meeting was for the interval 1996-2000. However, during the Meeting this interval was changed to 1997-2000 to keep the Action Plan in line with the biennial SPREP Meeting schedule now in place. Therefore, the quoted time frame in the report depended on when the reference was made - before or after the change was made.

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Original Text: English

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25-27 November 1996

February 1997

Apia, Western Samoa

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Meeting Report

Agenda Item 1:

Official Opening

1 The Officials' segment of the Ninth SPREP Meeting was convened in Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, from 25 to 27 November 1996. Representatives of the following countries and territories attended: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and Western Samoa. Representatives of the Forum Secretariat, the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) attended as Advisers. Observers from a range of regional, international and non-government organisations were also present. A list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

2 The representative of Australia, as outgoing Chairperson, called the meeting to order and introduced the Reverend Dr Kalapoli Paongo, who led the Meeting in prayer. The representative of Australia welcomed delegates, thanked the Government of Tonga and thanked the former SPREP Director, Dr Vili Fuavao for his valuable contribution. He also thanked the Secretariat for its work on the revised SPREP Action Plan and wished the Meeting well in its deliberations.

3 In officially opening the Meeting, the Hon. Fakafanua, Minister of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, welcomed delegates and emphasised the importance of the work of the Officials' Meeting. He wished the Meeting well in its deliberations which he noted would culminate in a series of recommendations for endorsement by the ensuing Ministerial Meeting to be held on 27 to 28 November 1996.

4 The Minister outlined the major environmental activities being undertaken by the people and Government of the Kingdom of Tonga. He outlined the interrelationship between Health, Education, Environmental Protection and Con-

servation as vital components in a development approach which takes into account sustainable development objectives. The Minister also outlined the major issues to be addressed including discussion of the draft "Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region (1996-2000)" stressing the importance of Biodiversity, Climate Change, Environmental Management, Waste Management and Environmental Education. He also highlighted the importance of linkages between environmental management and the economic reform agenda of the region. The Minister wished delegates well in their deliberations, stressing the importance to the region of balancing protection of the environment with economic development and hoped that delegates' stay in Tonga would enable them to experience some of Tonga's culture and hospitality. The Minister's speech is attached as Annex 2.

5 The representative of Vanuatu thanked the Minister for his opening address and expressed his interest in progress being made by Tonga towards balancing environment and development. He agreed with the importance placed by the Minister on deliberations that will occur on the Action Plan and looked forward to a successful Meeting.

6 The Acting Director of SPREP, Mr Don Stewart, thanked the Hon. Minister for his presence and for the real interest he has displayed in SPREP activities. He also thanked the Chair of the Eighth SPREP Meeting for advice and assistance to the Secretariat over the past twelve months and welcomed Member country delegates, advisers and observers.

7 The Acting Director referred to the importance of the Ninth SPREP Meeting as the lead-up to the first Ministerial Meeting convened since adoption of the current SPREP Action Plan in 1991 and the entry into force of the SPREP Agreement in 1995. He outlined the main issues to be addressed at the Ninth SPREP Meeting which included the revision of SPREP's Action Plan for 1996-2000; appointment of a new Director, the first for SPREP in its newly autonomous role; Members' contributions to the Primary Function Budget; and a Biennial Meeting cycle.

8 The Acting Director referred also to a number of other significant matters, namely the Annual Work Programme and Budget; proposals for addressing staffing issues; new accommodation for the Secretariat; streamlining of the Apia and SPREP Convention Meeting process; progress with implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action; proposals for regional support through the Global Environment Facility (GEF); a proposal to set up a regional branch of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) within SPREP; and review of the Ministerial Meeting Agenda. Special tribute was also paid by the Acting Director to the former Director of SPREP, Dr Vili Fuavao, for his very effective role in bringing the Secretariat to its present good position. The Acting Director's speech is attached as Annex 3.

Agenda Item 2:

Appointment of Chair

9 The representative of the Kingdom of Tonga, Mr Tu'a T. Tupou, was appointed as Chair, nominated by the representative of Western Samoa and seconded by the representative of France. The representative of Western Samoa thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga for hosting the Ninth SPREP Meeting. The Chair of the Ninth SPREP Meeting on behalf of the Meeting, thanked the outgoing Chair, Australia, for its guidance to the Secretariat in the period since the last Meeting.

Agenda Item 3:

Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

10. The Agenda was adopted and is attached as Annex 4. The working hours of the Meeting were agreed as proposed by the Secretariat and an open-ended **Meeting Report Drafting Subcommittee**, Chaired by the United States, was established to assist with preparation of the draft Meeting Report, the letter from the Chair of the Officials' Meeting to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting and the draft Ministerial Statement. This committee comprised the representatives of American Samoa, Australia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, France, Guam, New Zealand, Tonga, United States of America, Wallis and Futuna and Western Samoa.

11. The Meeting also agreed to reconvene the **Work Programme and Budget Subcommittee** and agreed that the Chair of this subcommittee be rotated alphabetically at future Meetings. The Work Programme and Budget Subcommittee, Chaired by the representative of France comprised representatives of Australia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, France, New Zealand, Tonga, United States of America, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

12. The Meeting agreed that a Joint Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties to the Apia and SPREP Conventions be convened, during the Officials' segment of the Ninth SPREP Meeting, in accordance with recommendations from the Working Group Meeting of Parties to the Conventions held in Western Samoa during July, 1996. It was also agreed that a Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action be convened during the Officials' Meeting.

Agenda Item 4:

Matters Arising from Eighth SPREP Meeting

13. The Secretariat reported on implementation of matters arising from the Eighth SPREP Meeting as outlined in the table attached to the Secretariat's working paper and under ensuing agenda items. The Meeting noted this report.

Agenda Item 5:

Presentation of Annual Report for 1995-96 and Acting Director's Overview

14. The Acting Director tabled the Annual Report of SPREP covering the period 1 June 1995 to 31 May 1996. He also presented an overview on institutional, policy, finance and work programme developments in SPREP during 1995-96 together with information on relationships with other governments, regional and international organisations. Several issues referred to by the Acting Director were reported upon in more depth under separate agenda items.

15. The Acting Director reported on the most significant features of the year for the Secretariat such as the entry into force of the *Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme* (the SPREP Agreement) in August, 1995, just over two years after it opened for signature. He stated that the SPREP Agreement serves as the cornerstone for the organisation and creates a legal framework for SPREP as an autonomous regional organisation.

16. The departure of SPREP's first Director, Dr Vili Fuavao, after more than six years as head of the organisation was a very significant feature. It brought to an end an era which saw the transition of SPREP from a small programme within the South Pacific Commission to its present autonomous status, a process in which Dr Fuavao was a principal driving force.

17. The Acting Director reported on the process which had evaluated implementation of the 1991-95 SPREP Action Plan and resulted in a draft revised 1996-2000 Action Plan to guide the region's approach to environmental issues into the Twenty-first century. The revised Action Plan was the subject of a separate agenda item.

18. Other institutional and policy matters which the Acting Director brought to the attention of the Meeting included the Review of Terms and Conditions of SPOCC Organisations, the outcome of which had been implemented in the Secretariat effective from 1 January 1996; progress with the new Headquarters proposal; developments relating to proposals for location of additional programmes within the Secretariat; and the likely impact on the Secretariat of the completion of six years' service by a number of senior staff during 1997.

19. Work Programme activities included *The Year of the Sea Turtle* campaign and planning for the ensuing *Pacific Year of the Coral Reef* campaign; community involvement in conservation efforts through the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme; institutional strengthening activities through the Capacity 21 Project; environmental assessment, including State of Environment reporting; environmental education; coastal management; legal activities; species conservation; population and environment linkages; pollution prevention and waste management; information

technology and awareness raising. In relation to Work Programme activities, the Acting Director referred to the recommendation in the draft Action Plan to streamline Programme Areas from the present nine to five, in order to establish more clearly priorities for national and regional action.

20. Cooperative activities with other governments and regional and international organisations continued to be pursued and had borne effective collaboration. Activities included collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to convene a South Pacific Workshop for Small Island Developing States on Sustainable Development in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Apia, April 1996; continued Adviser status to the Pacific/Philippines/Indonesia Constituency on the GEF Council, together with development of a regional strategy for GEF support and continued reporting to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD); a joint mission with the Forum Secretariat to Japan sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and links with Japan through Eco-Asia; continued collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization and suggested location within SPREP of a WMO Sub-regional Office for Asia and the South West Pacific; collaboration with the Australian and Canadian governments and UNESCO's **International Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** and the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Marine Protected Areas Programme on Pacific input to the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), as well as close cooperation with South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) to promote harmonisation of regional activities.

21. Reporting on SPREP's financial situation during the past year, the Acting Director stated that late payment and non-payment of member contributions to SPREP continued to hamper effective implementation of the Secretariat's work, forcing it to confront cash-flow problems. He called upon the Work Programme and Budget Subcommittee to discuss this issue and referred the Meeting to a consultant's report commissioned by the Secretariat on *Primary Budget Financing Issues* which would be discussed under a later agenda item.

22. The Acting Director stated that the Secretariat continued efforts to diversify its funding

sources and thanked the traditional donors for their substantial and continuing assistance. These included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), New Zealand Official Development Assistance (NZODA), GEF, United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), WMO, Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance (CFTC), IUCN, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), European Union (EU), Canada, France and the USA. The Secretariat had entered into the following funding arrangements for SPREP activities in 1995-96:

AusAID	USD	1,200,000
NZODA	NZD	750,000
Japan	USD	36,500
Taiwan/Republic of China	USD	88,000
Denmark	USD	88,000
University of California's National Laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico, USA	USD	667,000

23. The Secretariat also initiated contacts with the European Union, the Asian Development Bank, Canada, the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNEP, FAO, WMO, IMO, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and UNESCO, and developed strategies for approaching donors directly and through SPREP's observer status at the Post-Forum Dialogue. The Acting Director stated that SPREP is indebted once more to all donors which continue to display their confidence by contributing almost 90 per cent of the total annual funding.

24. The Acting Director outlined staff movements during the year and paid tribute to all SPREP staff for their professionalism and teamwork.

25. The representative of the Cook Islands referred specifically to the wish, concurred by the Meeting, for the Secretariat to continue the flexible and adaptable approach which characterised the regional nature of SPREP's work and which allows effective country input as well as practical field and hands-on training activities. The Meeting noted the

report and congratulated the Secretariat on the quality of the report.

Agenda Item 6:

Policy

Agenda Item 6.1: Frequency of SPREP Meetings

26. At the Sixth SPREP Meeting, the possibility was first raised of convening the SPREP Meeting at two-yearly intervals rather than annually. This was further discussed at the Seventh SPREP Meeting and again at the Eighth where it was noted that most institutional and policy issues relating to SPREP's establishment as an autonomous organisation had been resolved, making it appropriate to revert to biennial meetings as was the case prior to 1990. At that time the Meeting noted the obvious financial benefits for Members and time benefits for Work Programme implementation.

27. The Eighth SPREP Meeting (8SM) agreed that, in recognition of the need for financial rigour, there was still a need to work towards a biennial meeting schedule. The 8SM agreed also that the Secretariat should continue to provide Work Programme and Budget reports to Member countries on an annual basis and agreed that an earlier proposal for a three-person Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee which could meet in non-meeting years, be reflected upon and reconsidered at the Ninth SPREP Meeting (9SM). The potential need for a degree of flexibility in the year 2000, given the possibility of a new Director taking up post in that year, was also recognised by the 8SM.

28. In the interim period between the 8SM and the 9SM, the Secretariat reflected on the issue and received input from Member governments. The Secretariat submitted a revised schedule for biennial meetings which aimed to synchronise the various tasks which require meeting of SPREP Members on a two-yearly basis, facilitate cost savings and, at the same time, maintain and even increase accountability to SPREP Members.

29. The representative of Western Samoa discussed the implications of the new timetable for the appointment of the Director. This would not always coincide with a Ministerial Meeting. The

Meeting agreed that the SPREP Agreement provided for appointment of the Director at a SPREP Meeting whether or not Ministers were present.

30. The Meeting endorsed the proposal for biennial SPREP Meetings and synchronisation of associated meetings and reviews in accordance with the table in Annex 5 and agreed that the Rules of Procedure for Appointment of Director be revised to reflect synchronisation of the Director's term of office with the biennial SPREP Meeting schedule.

Agenda Item 6.2: Location of Programmes

Agenda Item 6.2.1: South Pacific Forestry Development Programme

31. During the Eighth SPREP Meeting, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported that the Heads of Forestry in their 1995 meeting had unanimously agreed that the South Pacific Forestry Development Programme (SPFDP) be relocated to SPREP at the end of its existing phase. Accordingly, in preparation for the Ninth SPREP Meeting, the Secretariat circulated working papers providing additional information and seeking a decision on the proposal and conditions under which such a relocation could be made. However, in the interim period there were further developments regarding the search for a regional home for the SPFDP. The decision to locate the SPFDP within SPREP was reversed by the Heads of Forestry Meeting in Port Vila, October 1996 in favour of location within SPC.

32. In light of these changed circumstances, the Secretariat stated that given the SPC's commitment to the SPFDP, it would be in the best interests of the region for SPREP to continue to collaborate with the SPFDP on areas of mutual benefit. Accordingly, the Secretariat sought the Meeting's agreement to withdraw its original paper and the Meeting agreed to its withdrawal.

Agenda Item 6.2.2: WMO Sub-regional Office for Asia and the South West Pacific

33. During 1995, the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization corresponded with SPREP, proposing the establishment of a sub-regional office for Asia and the South-West Pacific. This proposal followed a decision of the Twelfth

World Meteorological Congress to investigate the practicalities of such a venture, in order to better serve the growing number of WMO member countries in the Pacific region. The proposal for an office in Western Samoa, physically located within SPREP, recognised the close working relationship already established between WMO and SPREP through work on Climate Change.

34. Additional information was provided during the 9SM outlining further developments with this proposal. The proposal stated that the WMO sub-regional office would operate as an integral part of the WMO Secretariat and that its focus would be on technical cooperation activities. Initially, one national professional officer and a secretary would be recruited by WMO which would bear their costs together with operational running costs. Costs to SPREP would be minimal and the benefit of increased collaboration between the two organisations and to the region, were considerable.

35. Following input from the representative of New Zealand, the Meeting agreed that the Secretariat should continue its negotiations with WMO, provided that the implications for such a proposal are "budget neutral" for the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 6.3: SPREP Action Plan

36. Following guidance provided by the 8SM and the Action Plan Working Group convened in Western Samoa, from 1 to 2 July 1996, a draft Action Plan was circulated for comment to member governments, regional organisations and non-government organisations. Comments received by the Secretariat prior to mid-September 1996 were incorporated into a revised *Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region (1997-2000)* which was submitted to the Meeting for endorsement. The time frame for the Action Plan had been changed from 1996-2000 to 1997-2000 to keep it in line with the biennial SPREP Meeting schedule. Additional comments received after the development of the revised Action Plan were tabled for information of the Meeting and for their deliberation on how best these additional comments could be incorporated into the draft Action Plan.

37. The delegate of the United States of America thanked the Secretariat for work on the Action Plan which he stated provided a good framework. He

urged the Meeting to ensure, in working with this Action Plan that performance measures and objectives be refined. The representatives of New Zealand and Australia thanked the Secretariat for its work on revision of the Action Plan, the latter stressing the importance of interpreting the Action Plan to take account of the comments by Fiji that the Plan needs to account for the fact that different people are at different stages requiring different processes. The representative of Niue requested information on provision, within the Action Plan, of long-term training assistance for Member country personnel to which the Secretariat responded that lack of financial resources precluded such assistance at this stage, but that assistance was possible for Member country institutional strengthening under the New Zealand-funded SPREP Country Assistance scheme. The representative of Tuvalu noted the importance of ensuring a degree of overlap between activities under the 1991-1995 Action Plan with those under the new Action Plan.

38. The representative of New Zealand called upon the Secretariat to include in future SPREP Meetings, provision for member countries to report on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan, drawing on the performance indicators. The representatives of Australia, Fiji and Tuvalu also supported the proposal and requested the Meeting to take into account that some countries lack resources for reporting. Australia suggested the reports be brief and non-prescriptive. The representative of Niue suggested that these reports could be linked in with SPREP's assistance under its current State of Environment (SOE) Reporting Project. The Meeting agreed to amend the Action Plan by adding a reference to progress reports.

39. The Meeting adopted the revised Action Plan for 1997-2000.

Agenda Item 6.4: Review of Agenda for Ministerial Meeting

40. The Meeting was invited to review the provisional agenda for the Ministerial Meeting to be held immediately following the Officials' Meeting. Attention was also drawn to the proposal by the Secretariat that the Chair of the Officials' Meeting submit to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting a letter covering all items on the Ministerial

Meeting agenda, together with any other business which the Officials wished to draw to the attention of the Ministers.

41. The Meeting endorsed the Agenda for the Ministerial Meeting and called upon the Drafting Sub-committee to prepare a letter from the Chair of the Officials' Meeting to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting, noting the importance, as raised by the representative of Western Samoa, of the fact that the Ministers only meet every four years. It was also agreed that the Drafting Sub-committee draw up a draft Ministerial Statement. The Ministerial Meeting agenda is attached as Annex 6, the Ministerial Statement, Annex 7 and the letter from the Chair of the Officials' Meeting to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting is attached as Annex 8.

Agenda Item 6.5: Appointment of Director

42. In accordance with Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure for Appointment of Director, the 8SM appointed a Selection Advisory Committee to oversee the recruitment process for a new Director of SPREP. Recruitment procedures involved notification of the position by Circular to SPREP National Focal Points and advertisement in a wide range of national newspapers, regional periodicals as well as via the Internet. Nominations were open to nationals of SPREP Member Governments which had ratified the SPREP Agreement. The closing date for applications was 14 June 1996.

43. The Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) comprising Australia (Chair), Fiji, France, New Zealand, Tonga and Tuvalu, first met in Suva, 23 August 1996 to draw up a short-list based on consideration of the applicants with endorsement of their own country. An alphabetical short-list was drawn up containing four nominees: Cook Islands, New Zealand, Tuvalu and Western Samoa. The short-list was circulated to Member Governments. The SAC met again on 23 November 1996 in Tonga to interview short-listed candidates and make recommendations to the 9SM. The short-list had by this time been reduced to nominees of two countries, Cook Islands and New Zealand, due to withdrawal by the nominees of Tuvalu and Western Samoa.

44. The Chair of the SAC explained to the closed Plenary Session the procedure for the

interview process and, in particular, highlighted discussion on qualities needed to deal with the challenges facing SPREP. He stated that after the interview and discussion a consensus was achieved in favour of recommending Mr Tamarii Pierre Tutangata be submitted as the recommendation of the SAC.

45. The Meeting discussed whether appointment of the Director needed to be made by the Ministers or whether the Officials' Meeting could endorse and submit their recommendation. Delegates concluded that, as the Ministers would want to be involved in such a decision, the Officials' Meeting endorsed the SAC recommendation and report and submitted it for further endorsement by the Ministers.

Agenda Item 6.6: Selection Process for Director of SPREP

46. During the course of the selection process for the Director of SPREP, the Selection Advisory Committee became aware that clear guidance is not provided in the existing *Rules of Procedure for Appointment of Director*, especially Rule 6: Selection Advisory Committee Functions and Rule 7: Selection Criteria. Advice was therefore sought from the Meeting to ensure that clearer guidelines are provided for future Selection Advisory Committees.

47. Substantial discussion was undertaken of the points raised in the Secretariat's working paper. Delegates recognised that there are a number of issues, especially in relation to rational nomination, which need to be addressed. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to develop a more elaborate paper outlining options and to submit this paper to the 10SM.

Agenda Item 6.7: Staffing Policy - Extensions of Appointment and Primary Function Funding

48. The Secretariat recommended measures to assist the Secretariat to maintain institutional memory and management experience during 1997-98 and to progressively transfer funding for Heads of Division to the Primary Function.

49. The Meeting was advised that the new Director, on taking up post would be faced almost immediately with having to recruit replacements for

several senior staff following the completion of their current terms. The result would mean that nearly all of SPREP's present management experience and its institutional memory would be gone by the end of 1997. As well, it was pointed out that with the Divisional structure now satisfactorily in place for two years, the Secretariat believed the time was appropriate to begin moving funding for Heads of Division to the Primary Function in place of existing Project Officer positions currently funded from the Primary Function budget.

50. Considerable discussion ensued relating to this matter. Delegates accepted that it would be helpful for the new Director to have some flexibility in relation to the two Heads of Division whose six-year terms would come to an end in February and April, respectively. Delegates were concerned, however not to set a precedent. It was further pointed out that any extensions should not create similar problems in the future, and that when possible, it is desirable that future recruitment of Heads of Division be staggered. It was proposed that an extension of 3 to 6 months be considered for these positions. However, delegates agreed that rather than be prescriptive, the new Director be given a reasonable degree of discretion in adjusting the timetable for new appointments taking account of the sense of the meeting.

51. The Meeting:

- **approved** the transfer of salaries and other costs for the Head of the Environmental Management and Planning Division and the Head of the Environmental Education, Information and Coordination Division to the Primary Function budget when current extra budgetary funding runs out;
- **agreed** to the two and a half Project Officer positions currently funded from the Primary Function budget being funded in future from extra-budgetary sources;
- **approved** the transfer of salaries and other costs for the Head of the Conservation of Natural Resources Division to the Primary Function budget following the end of his project funding during 1998; and
- **agreed** that the terms of the Head of Environmental Management and Planning and the Head of Environmental Education, Information and

Coordination could be extended at the discretion of the new Director, but should aim at not exceeding a period of six months.

Agenda Item 6.8: Apia and SPREP Conventions

52. The Meeting adjourned temporarily and reconvened as a Joint Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Apia and SPREP Conventions to consider recommendations of the Joint Meeting of the Working Groups on the Apia and SPREP Conventions held in Western Samoa, July 1996.

53. The Joint Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Apia and SPREP Conventions agreed that:

- future Ordinary Meetings of the Parties to the Conventions be convened as part of the biennial SPREP Meetings;
- in line with the above, the Fourth Ordinary Meeting of the Parties be deferred from 1997 to 1998 and the relevant Rules of Procedure be amended accordingly;
- travel and per diem costs for participants to Meetings of the Parties to the Apia and SPREP Conventions be brought into line with those practices pertaining to the SPREP Meeting; and
- a recommendation be put to the Ministerial Meeting to convene a Joint Plenipotentiary Meeting of the Apia and SPREP Conventions during their Meeting in order to approve amendments to both Conventions to recognise SPREP as the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 7:

Reports

Agenda Item 7.1: Institutional

Agenda Item 7.1.1: Agreement Establishing SPREP - Status Report

54. The Meeting noted the status of signatures and ratifications/accessions to the Agreement Establishing SPREP ("the SPREP Agreement"), which opened for signature on 16 June 1993 and entered into force on 30 August 1995, following receipt by the Depositary on 31 July 1995, of notification of the tenth ratification. It was noted that to date 14 countries have ratified/acceded to the Agreement.

55. The Meeting urged those eligible members who had not yet signed and/or ratified the SPREP Agreement, to do so.

Agenda Item 7.1.2: New Headquarters

56. The Master Plan for the new SPREP Headquarters was approved by the 6SM. The 7SM authorised the Secretariat to invite seven short-listed companies to participate in a design competition, entries for which were assessed by an invited panel in June 1995. The panel's recommendation of the design competition winner, Gazzard Sheldon Architects Pty Ltd, was approved by the 8SM and the architects were requested to commence the process of detailed documentation and design.

57. The Secretariat informed the Meeting of the current situation concerning the proposal for a new Headquarters building for SPREP and invited Mr Bruce Bowden of Gazzard Sheldon Architects to address the Meeting on progress with detailed design work.

58. Delegates sought additional information and clarification of maintenance and running costs. The representative of New Zealand entered a personal reservation over the scope and scale of the proposal.

59. The Meeting thanked the Architect for his presentation and noted progress with the design process.

60. The representative of Western Samoa raised the issue of funding for the new Headquarters. He suggested the establishment of a task force made up of the SPREP Director, members of the Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee, as well as members with representation in Western Samoa.

61. The representative of Australia supported the proposal for a task force based in Apia and stated that there was a need for the Headquarters proposal to be scaled down in order to make it more feasible. The representative of New Zealand stated that there was a need to develop a realistic framework for funding.

62. In relation to environment assessment the representative of Western Samoa, supported by the representative of American Samoa, requested a preliminary EIA be prepared for the proposed

SPREP Headquarters. The Acting Director assured delegates that EIA will be part of the Headquarters proposal.

63. The Meeting agreed to establish a task force to advance a modified Headquarters proposal. The work of the task force would include issues of functionality, funding prospects and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposal. The task force is to comprise the SPREP Director, Chair of the Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee, as well as members with representation in Western Samoa. The Meeting also registered its appreciation to Western Samoa for making the land available to SPREP. The Secretariat, on behalf of staff, thanked the Meeting for its agreement to develop a task force which would facilitate efforts to provide improved working conditions for the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 7.2: Work Programme Reports

Agenda Item 7.2.1: Conservation of Natural Resources Division

64. The Secretariat tabled its report on activities within the Conservation of Natural Resources (CNR) Division noting that fourteen Conservation Area (CA) projects have now been established in eleven participating countries of the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP). Three potential CA sites have been identified in two other countries. This means that all eligible countries except one, have been covered by the Programme.

65. The 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle as the Pacific Islands' first region-wide conservation campaign proved highly successful in raising awareness of the need to conserve sea turtles in the region. The Secretariat reported that in a review of the outcomes of the campaign, governments agreed that further urgent action aimed at ensuring long-term survival of turtle resources was required.

66. Further, the Secretariat reported that a Regional Wetlands Action Plan had been endorsed by a large number of Pacific Island governments and a Planning Meeting for the 1997 Pacific Year of the Coral Reef campaign convened in preparation for this major undertaking.

67. The representative of New Zealand welcomed the ground breaking work being done to

conserve biological diversity in the region and looked forward to commencement of work in relation to invasive species in the region. He also raised the question of future funding. The representative of the United States noted that the number of Conventions requiring advice by the Secretariat may be overwhelming.

68. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of income generating activities for the sustainability of CAs. Regarding external funding, a paper on funding options was in preparation. It is expected that this paper will identify suitable options for funding biodiversity conservation in the future.

69. The Meeting thanked the Secretariat for its excellent work on implementation of activities under the Conservation of Natural Resources Division and complimented the Secretariat on the quality of its report.

Agenda Item 7.2.2: Environmental Education, Information and Coordination Division

70. The Secretariat tabled its report on activities within the Environmental Education, Information and Coordination (EEIC) Division noting that the Division has thirteen staff in three separate sectors. The Environmental Policy/Strategy Coordination/Institutional Strengthening sector involves Capacity 21, legal activities and institutional strengthening activities such as volunteer assistance and the SPREP country attachment scheme. The Secretariat drew the Meeting's attention to potential institutional/environmental management assistance under the theme of "Job Creation and Sustainable Livelihoods" within the forthcoming Sixth Programme Cycle of UNDP assistance to the region.

71. The Environmental Education sector of the Division which undertakes a large number of activities in curriculum development, teacher training, media training and environmental awareness raising is currently under-resourced, both in terms of funds and personnel. The Secretariat advised that during 1997 it proposed to increase fund-raising efforts for a three-year programme for Environmental Education and Awareness raising and reported that immediate measures to increase manpower in this sector involved attachment to the Division for a 12-month period, of an Envi-

ronmental Education Officer from Palau under SPREP's Country Attachment Scheme.

72. The Secretariat advised of the acceleration of activities being undertaken within the Information and Computer Technology sector to ensure that the Secretariat keeps abreast with rapid technological advances. The Secretariat advised that this sector of the Division undertakes a broad range of information dissemination, clearing-house and publication production activities and assists its Member countries with communication of environmental information and data access through such processes as e-mail and web-page development.

73. In response to a question from the representative of the United States, the Secretariat briefly outlined its current work on Internet access and assured Member countries that it is cognizant of the need to continue to disseminate information through a variety of media, in recognition of the fact that countries are at different stages of technological development thus requiring differences in process.

74. In response to a question from the representative of New Zealand relating to EEIC Division funding and integration with other Work Programme areas, the Secretariat advised that, as well as increased fund-raising efforts, it was addressing both of these issues internally. In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of this Division which provides support to other Divisions, the Secretariat was ensuring that each other Work Programme area included an element within its budget to cover education, computer technology and information dissemination.

75. The Meeting noted the report and thanked the Secretariat for its excellent work on implementation of activities under the Environmental Education, Information and Coordination Division and complimented the Secretariat on the quality of its report.

Agenda Item 7.2.3: Environmental Management and Planning Division

76. The Secretariat tabled its report on activities within the Environmental Management and Planning (EMP) Division noting the Division addressed four key areas of climate change,

environmental assessment, population, and sustainable development and waste management. The emphasis of climate change activities has been placed on improving understanding of the science of climate change through the Sea Level Rise Monitoring Project and vulnerability assessments. Support has been provided to assist countries in negotiations to strengthen commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and that, with the support of the GEF, assistance will be provided to countries to meet their national communications obligations under this Convention.

77. Environmental assessment activities are providing a combination of technical assistance as well as capacity building in the areas of EIA and State of Environment reporting. The UNFPA/SPREP project to integrate population and environment at national and regional levels will complete its current phase this year and the Secretariat is working on the ongoing integration of population and environment with SPREP activities. Sustainable development policy has focused on coordinating the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action, including support to the region's Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, regional input to the Commission on Sustainable Development and participation in the work of the GEF Council.

78. Waste management activities have focused on demonstration projects to promote waste minimisation, on chemicals management and the start-up of the Waigani Convention. It was noted that considerable time was required to undertake the necessary consultation for effective waste management and minimisation.

79. The representatives of New Zealand, Cook Islands and Fiji raised the need for the synthesis of EIA experience in the region and for this to be disseminated widely. The representative of Fiji also suggested that SPREP develop capacity in reviewing EIAs undertaken in the region.

80. The Meeting noted the report and thanked the Secretariat for its excellent work on implementation of activities under the Environmental Management and Planning Division and

complimented the Secretariat on the quality of its report.

81. The representative of Tuvalu thanked the Secretariat for the Reports on each of the Divisions and expressed appreciation to Mr Don Stewart, Acting Director, for his very effective role in directing the Secretariat during the interim period. Thanks was also given to development partners and new donors for their continuing support to environmental protection of the region. These views were supported by several delegations.

Agenda Item 7.3: Advisory Committee on Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action

82. The Advisory Committee, was established by the 1994 Forum to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in this region under the joint Secretariat of SPREP and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre. A Special Session of the UN General Assembly is being convened in June 1997 to review overall progress achieved in implementing Agenda 21 and the commitments made at UNCED in Rio de Janeiro and to discuss appropriate strategies for implementation in coming years. Accordingly, the Secretariat presented information related to Pacific input to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly and called upon the Meeting to discuss and endorse the steps outlined to develop a regional submission to the Special Session.

83. The Meeting adjourned and reconvened as the Advisory Committee on Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, under the Chair of the representative of Tuvalu, Mr Enele Sopoaga, who thanked the outgoing Chair, Mr Tuingariki Short, representative of the Cook Islands for his work as the Committee Chair since the last Advisory Committee Meeting.

84. The representative of the Forum Secretariat provided an update of preparations for the Special Session based on recent discussion by the Forum Secretary-General with senior United Nations officials. He highlighted the need for any regional submission to draw substance from national submissions. The Forum Secretariat will work with SPREP to ensure all regional agencies are engaged in this work and that the results are effectively communicated within the UN system and the

region. The Forum Secretariat advised that relevant outcomes from the Special Session can be raised at the Forum and with the Forum Dialogue partners. He highlighted the importance of Forum members establishing their objectives for involvement in the Special Session. He said that there also would be advantages for Forum members to focus on implementation strategies as soon as the likely outcomes of the Special Session begin to crystallise.

85. The representative of Tonga raised the need for particular attention to be paid to lack of human and financial resources in preparing for the Special Session. The representative of New Zealand noted the good performance of the Pacific in the Commission on Sustainable Development Fourth Session (CSD4), in particular the Statement by the representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Forum members and the regional report. The Meeting endorsed the recommendation in the Secretariat's working paper which contained the next steps to be taken in developing input to the Special Session and requested the Secretariat to circulate a paper to SPREP members outlining the process and revised dates for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly.

Agenda Item 7.4: Implementation of the Pacific Strategy for the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

86. The Secretariat tabled its paper on progress to implement the Pacific Strategy for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and preparation of a Strategic Action Program for International Waters in the Pacific. The Secretariat noted that support from the GEF Project Development Facility of USD 285,000 is being provided to SPREP through UNDP for the work of the regional task force, the preparation of reviews, consultations at the national and regional levels and to draft the Strategic Action Programme. Member countries were requested to consider carefully their priorities for coastal and marine management. It was noted that the GEF is particularly interested in identifying what is of global benefit and what the GEF can be expected to support. This can only be done by examining the complete range of coastal and marine inter-relationships at national and regional levels. Further, the Secretariat requested Member countries to note the importance of national consultations and

identify appropriate dates for these consultations in February/March 1997.

87. The Meeting noted progress to prepare a Strategic Action Program for International Waters in the Pacific.

Agenda Item 8:

Items Proposed by Member Countries

88. The representative of New Zealand informed the Meeting that New Zealand had recently approved a Strategy which aims to address environmental management issues it sees as priorities for its collaboration with partner countries and organisations. The Strategy identifies five key areas and these are: Capacity Building, Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Change, Waste Management and Reduction of Ozone Depleting substances. Consultation with partner governments and organisations is expected to begin in early 1997.

Agenda Item 9:

Finance

Agenda Item 9.1: Status of Members' Contributions

Agenda Item 9.1.1: Report on Members' Contributions

89. In accordance with Financial Regulation 13, the Secretariat reported to the Meeting on receipt of Member contributions. The Secretariat tabled an additional paper updating the Meeting on the status of Member contributions as at 25 November 1996. The Secretariat expressed concern at outstanding contributions and urged Members to promptly remit their contributions, noting that SPREP's Primary Function commitments were dependent on this source of funding.

90. Financial matters were given to the Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee which met on 25 and 26 November for in-depth discussion.

91. Regarding Working Paper 9.1.1, the Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee noted with satisfaction Wallis and Futuna's announcement of

settlement in full of all its outstanding contributions. The United States delegate also provided some useful clarifications on recent payments made by the American Government. In a wider context, the Sub-committee expressed its concern at the significant amount of contributions outstanding and how this handicaps the satisfactory operation of SPREP. The Sub-committee requested the countries in arrears to move as quickly as possible to clear their commitments to the organisation.

92. In this context, the United States delegate pointed out that the annual contribution of the United States should be 105,000 dollars, as opposed to the figure of 109,255 dollars shown in the statements. The Secretariat recalled that the contribution amounts had been decided by the Meeting, but to simplify matters it would ask the Meeting to set the contribution of the United States as from this time at 105,000 dollars. New Zealand stated that it would in future pay the difference of 4,255 dollars as part of its core contributions. The Sub-committee noted this generous gesture on the part of New Zealand, and expressed its warm gratitude to New Zealand.

93. The representative of Nauru requested the Meeting to reclassify Nauru as a small island state. This was supported by the United States of America. The Secretariat noted that Nauru was classified as a small island state by most SPOCC members and pointed out the financial implications for other Members. At the suggestion of France the Meeting agreed that a formal submission would be required from Nauru for such reclassification.

Agenda Item 9.1.2: Primary Budget Financing Issues

94. Since 1991, the issue of SPREP's Primary Function financing, the status and designation of Members' contributions and the non-receipt of contributions at the levels set out in the "Guidelines for Determination of Members' Contributions" have been SPREP Meeting agenda items, and the subject of comments and concern on the part of Members, the Secretariat and the Finance and Budget Sub-committee. In order to provide an objective view of these matters, the Secretariat tabled a paper prepared by Pacific International Consulting Network Limited.

95. The Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee reported that regarding Working Paper 9.1.2 the Secretariat had drawn the attention of delegates to the report prepared by "Pacific International Consulting Network Ltd", and more particularly to the report's recommendations. According to the consultants, the difficult financial situation facing SPREP could be seen as arising from the ambiguity surrounding the nature of members' contributions, referred to in the documents as "voluntary". Given that this term had in practice acquired the sense of "optional" in some quarters, there was now a need, in the consultants' view, to consider the drafting of a more prescriptive resolution. This idea was rejected in the absence of a consensus. In fact, the Secretariat had announced the occurrence of a substantial improvement in the arrears situation immediately prior to the Meeting. The Secretariat therefore proposed to leave the situation as at present. The Sub-committee decided to follow this course, without excluding the future eventuality of either a change in the term "voluntary" (for example by replacing it with "vital", as suggested by Australia), or the elimination of any such term (this being the suggestion of the Secretariat). The committee noted that core contributions were not optional but were considered vital for the functioning of the SPREP Secretariat.

Agenda Item 9.2: 1995 Cash Flow

96. The 5SM directed the Secretariat to present to each SPREP Meeting a report summarising cash flow for SPREP finances.

97. The Sub-committee expressed its concern at the practice of not recording the administration costs relating to projects until after their implementation, and at the deficits generated as a result. The delegates had spent a considerable amount of time on this issue, and it was recommended that the Secretariat find a solution to this problem as quickly as possible.

Agenda Item 9.3: Audited Annual Accounts for 1995

98. The Secretariat tabled the report of the Audited Annual Accounts for 1995 and Financial Statements. In accordance with the decision of the 8SM, the Auditors were invited to attend the 9SM to present their report.

99. After hearing the auditors' report the Sub-committee approved the accounts for the past budget year.

Agenda Item 9.4: Appointment of Auditors

100. In accordance with Financial Regulation 31, the Secretariat sought the Meeting's approval on the appointment of auditors for 1997.

101. The New Zealand delegate expressed the view that in future the auditors should, from time to time, be appointed on the basis of an international call for tenders. A consensus was reached on the use of this procedure, which would need to be implemented as quickly as possible.

Agenda Item 10:

Work Programme and Budget

- Work Programme Review for 1995
- Revised Budget for 1996
- Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 1997
- Indicative Work Programme and Budgets for 1998 and 1999

102. Regarding agenda item 10, the budget format was seen by Australia as not particularly suitable for clearly identifying the state of progress on projects, in the way that donors are legitimately entitled to expect. The Secretariat indicated that this format, which is linked to the Action plan, could easily be improved by computerisation. American Samoa also requested clarification on project funding criteria. It was recalled that the allocation of funds is linked to the Action Plan. At the request of the Sub-committee, the Secretariat distributed a document on the budget year in progress. The Sub-committee noted this document. Australia also expressed its concern at the lack of secured funding for 1997 projects.

103. The Sub-committee congratulated the Secretariat on its efforts in preparing the high quality documents required for these discussions. It also expressed its gratitude for the detailed explanations provided by the members of the Secretariat to the delegations.

104. The Sub-committee recommended that the documents presented under item 10 of the agenda be adopted by the Meeting.

Agenda Item 11:

Statements by Observers

105. The following Observers from international and regional organisations made statements: the World Conservation Union (IUCN); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Forum Secretariat; International Wetlands Bureau; TRAFFIC Oceania; The Nature Conservancy (TNC); the National Centre for Development Studies (NCDS), Australia; University of the South Pacific (USP); Greenpeace Pacific; and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A summary of statements is attached as Annex 9.

Agenda Item 12:

Other Business

106. The representative of American Samoa expressed concern that there was some confusion over American Samoa's status in SPREP. He requested the Meeting to advise American Samoa of its status. The representative of Guam, requested the Meeting to provide similar guidance concerning Guam's participation.

107. The Chair read from the Rules of Procedure and declared that American Samoa and Guam are entitled to participate. The Secretariat outlined the

practice, adopted at the 8SM, whereby those countries and their territories that have not ratified the SPREP Agreement could participate.

108. There was no other business.

Agenda Item 13:

Date and Venue for Tenth SPREP Meeting

109. The Meeting agreed that the Tenth SPREP Meeting be hosted by the Secretariat and be convened in Apia, Western Samoa, 1998.

Agenda Item 14:

Adoption of Report

110. The Meeting adopted the Report of its proceedings, approved the letter from the Chair of the Officials' Meeting to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting containing recommendations for Ministerial endorsement and approved the draft Ministerial Statement also for Ministerial endorsement.

Agenda Item 15:

Close

111. The Meeting closed with appreciation to the Secretariat and thanks to the delegates for their deliberations, together with thanks to the host government.

Annexes

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**Annex 2: Opening Address by Honourable Fakafanua
Minister of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources
Government of the Kingdom of Tonga**

Chairman of the Eighth SPREP Meeting,
Your Excellency the Australian High Commissioner
to Tonga (Mr Mullin),
Distinguished Representatives of the SPREP
Member Countries and Participating Organisations,
Observers,
Reverend Dr Kalapoli Paongo,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Tonga, I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you all a warm welcome to our kingdom. It is both a personal privilege and an honour to be with you to open the Senior Officials session of this Ninth South Pacific Regional Environment Programme Meeting as I have the opportunity to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends.

I am aware that many of you have travelled long distances in order to be here and given that you have gone this far, I urge you all to find time out of your rather busy schedules to gain a real experience of our country.

As you may probably be aware, Tonga has a combined land area of 747 square kilometres spreading over 360,000 square kilometres of ocean. Out of a total island count of 172, about 36 islands are inhabited but these are predominantly small coral and volcanic islands. Available soils are mainly fertile clay soils of volcanic origin but these have failed in recent times to produce better yields as a result of intensive shifting and commercial agriculture.

Vegetation-wise, most primary tree cover has been removed through "slash and burn" cultivation, and more recently through commercial agriculture and most of what is left is made up of exotic species. Our fisheries resources were once abundant but increasing population and commercial fisheries development have imposed noticeable impacts. Our groundwater resource has responded to our needs for a long time but increasing demand is having its effect to the point where salt water intrusion is a reality in some places especially in the Ha'apai group.

Our once beautiful sandy beaches especially in the islands of Tongatapu and Vava'u are degraded, mainly because we must mine sand aggregates for construction. Pollution, although not in the scale experienced in the more developed countries of the region, is nevertheless a reality as a result of commercial agriculture and other forms of development. Other sensitive and important ecosystems are affected and the extent of these impacts is most likely to increase in the future.

Other forms of environmental degradation are also present but time would not allow me to deal with these in any details. I am sure that if these environmental realities are not addressed now their consequences for Tonga in the future will be monumental.

I might have appeared similar in tone and substance to the "doomsday" environmentalists of the 1970s but note that my intention here is not to take matters to that extreme. Rather, it is my belief that it is important to admit that these environmental situations are real and therefore there is a definite need for mitigation measures.

In recognition of this environmental reality, our government is committed to environmental protection and sound environmental policies abound. A national park has been declared and currently there is a project on development of a management plan for the park. Further, draft environmental impact assessment legislation and regulations are available and these are currently under review.

Definitive policy has also been set in terms of management of Fanga'uta lagoon and a project aimed at developing a management framework for the lagoon as well as institutional strengthening is expected to be implemented soon. A biodiversity conservation project is currently implemented in Ha'apai and it is aimed at wise use of available living resources as well as improvement of quality of life in the communities of Ha'apai. Other initiatives by the government directed at effecting mitigation measures are also in place especially in

areas such as pollution prevention and waste management, integrated coastal area management, environmental education and climate change, to name a few.

Although I have so far restricted myself to the situation here in Tonga, it is also my understanding that similar environmental problems are also evident in other parts of the region and regional governments together with SPREP and various aid agencies are taking measures to address these. These initiatives are applauded and it is hoped that this will continue in the future.

Therefore, on a regional basis, environmental problems are real and are direct consequences of the development process. We cannot afford to disregard development as we all need employment, better health services, education and other niceties that go with it. Similarly, we cannot do away with environmental conservation as environmental resources are vital components of the development process. The best alternative open to us is to adopt a development approach which takes both perspectives into account; this will put us in a situation where we are more certain to respond favourably to the needs of present and future generations of the region. May I urge you all to keep this in mind during the course of this meeting and thereafter.

I am aware that one of the main tasks of this meeting is to discuss an Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region for the period 1996 to the Year 2000. The Action Plan has as its main goal the promotion of national capacity for protection and improvement of the environment of the region for the benefit of Pacific island people now and in the future. To achieve this goal, concrete actions have also been specified in various programme areas such as biodiversity conservation, climate change and environmental education. Implementation of these actions will

require concerted efforts of the SPREP Member countries, Secretariat, donor community and participating institutions.

It is also my understanding that during the course of the Ministerial Session which will be convened later in the week, there will be deliberation on the Linkages between the Action Plan and a Regional Economic Declaration which was formalised in the Majuro Forum Meeting earlier this year. This discussion will fine-tune the Action Plan to better respond to the need for economic development in the region and therefore move closer to achieving sustainable development in the South Pacific. However, successful conclusion of this will depend on the efforts that you will devote in this Senior Officials session to discussion of the Draft Action Plan.

I do not envisage the task before you to be easy, however, let me draw your attention to the "mission" for SPREP Members and the Secretariat as specified in Article 2 of the Agreement Establishing SPREP which calls for promotion of cooperation in the South Pacific region for protection and improvement of its environment for the benefits of present and future generations. This is the sentiment required in order to complete the task at hand and eventually achievement of sustainable development in the region and therefore, I would urge you all to concur accordingly.

With that ladies and gentlemen. I have much pleasure in declaring open this Senior Officials session of the Ninth SPREP Meeting and I wish you all the best in your deliberations.

'Ofa atu
Hon. Fakafanua

Annex 3: Address by Acting Director Mr Don Stewart

Hon. Fakafanua, Minister of Lands, Survey and
Natural Resources of The Kingdom of Tonga,
Mr Chairman,
Reverend Dr Kalapoli Paongo,
Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic
Corps,
Distinguished Representatives of SPREP Member
Countries,
Distinguished Advisers,
Distinguished Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to be able to address you this morning at the opening of the Ninth SPREP Meeting. At this point I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his presence and the real interest he has displayed in our activities, the current Chairman for his advice and assistance to the secretariat during the year, all SPREP Member country delegates and all advisers and observers, for being here with us this week. Welcome to every one of you from the SPREP Secretariat and thank you for coming.

All SPREP Meetings are important to us, but this one is particularly so as it leads into the first ministerial-level session convened by SPREP Members since adoption of the current action plan in 1991 and the entry into force of the SPREP Agreement four years later.

As we gather in Nuku'alofa this week to review what has been achieved over the past five years, we may note that at the time of the last Ministerial Meeting SPREP was a relatively small programme within the South Pacific Commission. While we may have come a long way in the fairly short time since then, there is still much to do as you will see from the revised action plan now before you. And while the attainment of autonomy for SPREP last year on entry into force of the SPREP Agreement may be cause for satisfaction - and even congratulations - the process has not been entirely without its problems, some of which are still with us. The Secretariat looks forward to real progress in the resolution of these matters during this week so that, with a fresh action plan to guide us, we can get on

with the job on your behalf free of unnecessary distractions.

In the Acting Director's overview, and in the annual report, both of which are in your meeting papers, I have covered at some length events which have transpired in and affected SPREP and its work since the last SPREP Meeting so I will spare you a reiteration now. However, with your indulgence, Mr Chairman, I would like to take up a few minutes of this Meeting's time at the outset to outline what I believe are the main issues to be dealt with in the next two days.

First, of course, the Action Plan. This is the main reason why your ministers are here. Your chief task is to ensure that you send them a document that reflects fully the regions' environmental priorities which need to be addressed by Members and the Secretariat from now until the year 2000. The draft before you is the result of much work and consultations over many months and now is your last chance to improve on it. This Meeting will be remembered for how well - or otherwise - it accomplishes this duty.

The Meeting will also be remembered for appointing a director of SPREP autonomously for the first time. All previous SPREP director appointments were made by the Secretary General of the South Pacific Commission so this will be an important and historic event in the evolution of the organisation.

Almost exactly five years ago, the SPREP Inter-governmental Meeting, as it was then known, convened in Special Session - coincidentally here in Nuku'alofa - to determine the infant organisation's first budget since separation from the SPC. That Special Session - held just up the road from where we are now sitting - also agreed upon the level of members' annual contributions to the primary function budget. During this Meeting you will consider recommendations to address the contributions problems which have arisen since then. It would be fitting, and it is my fervent hope, that further discussions this week - once more in

Nuku'alofa - will bring to an end the problems which have dogged the Secretariat's finances for the past five years. Please do your best.

Last year you agreed in principle to the SPREP Meeting reverting to a two-yearly event, as it was during the 1980s. This year the Secretariat is making proposals to achieve this with immediate effect, meaning - if you agree - that the tenth meeting will be in 1998. Please give this serious consideration. I might mention that biennial meetings will save you a considerable amount of money every second year and will also enable the Secretariat to concentrate more effectively on implementation of the action plan without the major distractions and disruptions that convening annual meetings cause us now.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, those are the major issues as the Secretariat sees them. There are, though, a number of other matters before you as well which are of significance to you and the Secretariat otherwise, of course, they would not be on the agenda. They include:

- The annual work programme and budget
- Proposals for addressing staffing issues, particularly at the heads of division level
- Proposals for much-needed new accommodation for your Secretariat
- Proposals for streamlining the convening of meetings of the parties to the Apia and SPREP Conventions
- Reviewing progress with implementation of the outcomes of the Barbados Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and setting in motion a process

leading to Pacific participation in next year's Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly which will review how far we have come in the five years since Rio

- Progress with proposals for a major, regional project under the Global Environment Facility
- Giving us your decision on a proposal to set up a regional branch of the World Meteorological Organization within SPREP
- Reviewing the proposed agenda for the Ministerial Meeting later this week

I wish you well in your deliberation on these important matters, the more so because our time is very short and there is much for you to do. So perhaps I should stop here, but before I do so, I would like to pay a special tribute to the person who is most responsible for the good shape your Secretariat is in today. Dr Vili Fuavao will join us tomorrow in his new position of Sub-regional Representative of FAO and I, and I am sure all of you as well, look forward to greeting Vili at a SPREP Meeting again.

If I may address the Hon. Minister, finally, please pass our very best wishes to your Secretary for Lands, Survey and Natural Resources, Mr Sione Tongilava, for a speedy and full recovery. We miss his presence here this week. Thank you. And please also convey our thanks to his majesty's government for the flawless arrangements and impressive venue provided for us.

Malo 'Aupito

Annex 4: Agenda

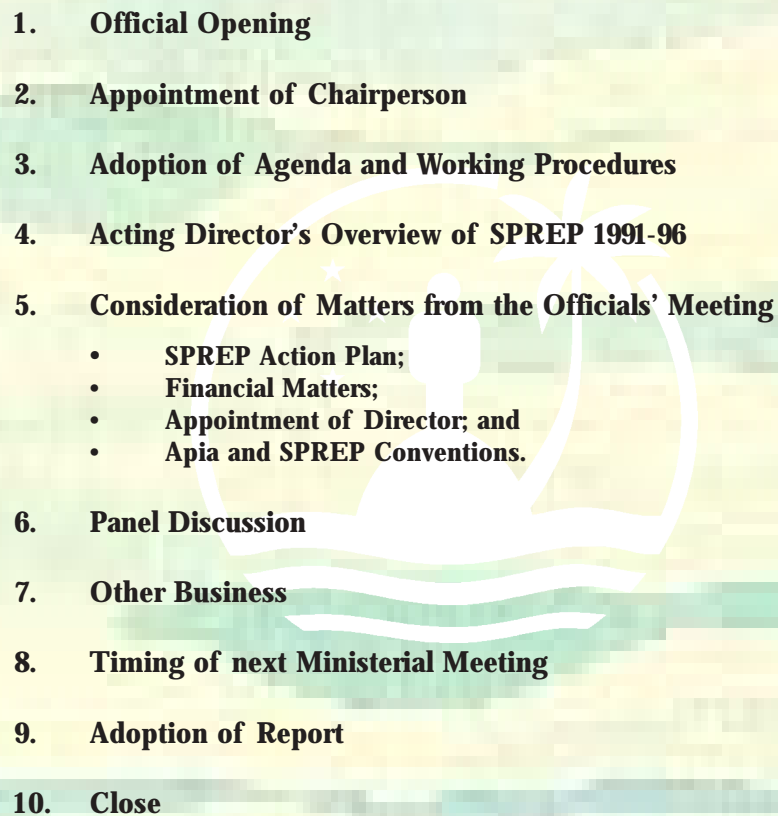
1. **Official Opening**
2. **Appointment of Chairperson**
3. **Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures**
4. **Matters Arising from Eighth SPREP Meeting**
5. **Presentation of Annual Report for 1995-96 and Acting Director's Overview**
6. **Policy**
 - 6.1 Frequency of SPREP Meetings
 - 6.2 Location of Programmes
 - 6.2.1 South Pacific Forestry Development Programme
 - 6.2.2 WMO Sub-Regional Office for Asia and the South West Pacific
 - 6.3 SPREP Action Plan
 - 6.4 Review of Agenda for Ministerial Meeting
 - 6.5 Appointment of Director
 - 6.6 Selection Process for Director of SPREP
 - 6.7 Staffing Policy - Extensions of Appointment and Primary Function Funding
 - 6.8 Apia and SPREP Conventions
7. **Reports**
 - 7.1 Institutional
 - 7.1.1 Agreement Establishing SPREP - Status Report
 - 7.1.2 New Headquarters
 - 7.2 Work Programme Reports
 - 7.2.1 Conservation of Natural Resources Division
 - Coastal Management and Planning
 - South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme
 - Natural Resource Conservation
 - 7.2.2 Environmental Education, Information and Coordination Division
 - Environmental Policy/Strategy Coordination/Institutional Strengthening
 - Environmental Education
 - Environmental Information and Computer Technology
 - 7.2.3 Environmental Management and Planning Division
 - Climate Change
 - Environmental Assessment
 - Population and Sustainable Development
 - Waste Management, Pollution Prevention and Emergencies
 - 7.3 Advisory Committee on Implementation of Barbados Programme of Action
 - 7.4 Implementation of the Pacific Strategy for the Global Environment Facility (GEF)
8. **Items Proposed by Member Countries**

9. **Finance**
 - 9.1 Status of Members' Contributions
 - 9.1.1 Report on Members' Contributions
 - 9.1.2 Primary Budget Financing Issues
 - 9.2 1995 Cash Flow
 - 9.3 Audited Annual Accounts for 1995
 - 9.4 Appointment of Auditors
10. **Work Programme and Budget**
 - Work Programme Review for 1995
 - Revised Budget for 1996
 - Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 1997
 - Indicative Work Programmes and Budgets for 1998 and 1999
11. **Statements by Observers**
12. **Other Business**
13. **Date and Venue for Tenth SPREP Meeting**
14. **Adoption of Report**
15. **Close**

**Annex 5: Synchronisation of Secretariat Activities in line with
Biennial Meeting Schedule**

Year	SPREP Meeting	Action Plan Review	Corporate Plan Review	Appointment of Director Meeting	Ministerial Level	Apia/SPREP Conventions	Work Programme /Budget Meeting
1996	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1997							Yes
1998	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
1999							Yes
2000	Yes	Yes		renew?	Yes	Yes	Yes
2001							Yes
2002	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
2003							Yes
2004	Yes	Yes		??	Yes	Yes	Yes
2005							Yes
2006	Yes		Yes	renew?		Yes	Yes

Annex 6: Ministerial Meeting Agenda

- 
- 1. Official Opening**
 - 2. Appointment of Chairperson**
 - 3. Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures**
 - 4. Acting Director's Overview of SPREP 1991-96**
 - 5. Consideration of Matters from the Officials' Meeting**
 - **SPREP Action Plan;**
 - **Financial Matters;**
 - **Appointment of Director; and**
 - **Apia and SPREP Conventions.**
 - 6. Panel Discussion**
 - 7. Other Business**
 - 8. Timing of next Ministerial Meeting**
 - 9. Adoption of Report**
 - 10. Close**

Annex 7: Ministers' Statement on Environment and Development

Ministers of the Ninth SPREP Meeting approved and supported a new four year Action Plan which will guide the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) up to the year 2000. The Ninth SPREP Meeting was held in Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, 27-28 November 1996.

The goal of the 1997-2000 Action Plan is to build national capacity in environmental and resource management so that SPREP Members will be able to protect and improve the environment of the region for the benefit of Pacific island people now, and into the future.

The Action Plan represents a new and strategic approach to protecting the Pacific environment, as an integral part of the region's development, and recognises that this is essential due to the increasing number and severity of environmental threats.

The key elements of the plan deal with:

- conservation of biological diversity
- climate change and integrated coastal management
- waste management
- environmental management, planning and institutional strengthening
- environmental education, information and training.

Ministers called for a report to be presented by the Secretariat at the next Ministerial Meeting on the outputs achieved in each of the key elements of the Action Plan.

The Ninth SPREP Meeting came in the wake of the 27th South Pacific Forum at which Leaders agreed on a range of measures to achieve more rapid progress on economic reform and development, and sustainable management of natural resources.

Sustainable development is of particular concern in the South Pacific, where many island countries and territories have fragile environments and small land areas, and rely on their natural resources or ability to attract tourists for a significant part of their national income.

Moreover island countries and territories, especially the small island states, have particular difficulties in building national capacity for environmental protection. Although the final responsibility for environmental policy rests with national governments, international programmes and the cooperation activities of the donor countries, should continue to take account of the special environmental vulnerability needs of smaller island countries.

Ministers pointed out that sustainable development in the region can only be possible if economic development and environmental policies are mutually supportive. There is now a clear international consensus that sustainable development is a process in which the environment and development are treated as one.

Ministers at the Ninth SPREP Meeting called upon their colleagues attending the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting to consider, in their discussions, the environmental implications of economic policy decisions, and to take fully into account environmental information that may assist in clarifying the range of sustainable development options.

Similarly, Ministers agreed that the economic and other costs and benefits of environmental initiatives should be considered before new commitments were agreed by governments.

Ministers declared 1997 to be the Year of the Coral Reef in the South Pacific and initiated further work by SPREP to promote the conservation of the region's sea turtle populations following on from the 1995 Year of the Sea Turtle campaign.

Ministers recognised the importance to the region of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in June 1997 which will renew the international agenda for sustainable development and consider its further implementation.

Ministers agreed to contribute effectively to this process by developing a regional submission from Pacific Island countries and territories containing concrete proposals for action.

**Annex 8: Letter from the Chair of the Officials' Meeting
to the Chair of the Ministerial Meeting**



South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

28 November, 1996

The Chair
Ministerial Meeting
Ninth SPREP Meeting
Nuku'alofa
Kingdom of Tonga

**Ninth SPREP Meeting – Issues for
Ministerial Endorsement**

Dear Sir,

Officials of SPREP Member countries and territories met in Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga from 25 to 27 November 1996 to consider matters relating to institutional arrangements, policy, finance and work programme implementation of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

The Report of the Ninth SPREP Officials' Meeting is attached for the information of Ministers. Officials particularly wished to bring the following issues to your attention, respectfully seeking your endorsement:

**SPREP Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region
(1997–2000)**

Following an extensive period of consultation with Member Governments, Regional Organisations and Non-Government Organisations a revised draft of SPREP's Action Plan 1991–1995, approved at the first SPREP Ministerial Meeting held in 1991, was deliberated upon by the Officials. The Officials requested that this revised draft be submitted for Ministerial consideration and approval.

Financial Matters

The Officials' Meeting called upon a Work Programme and Budget Sub-committee to provide guidance on a number of financial and work programme issues. The Sub-committee, chaired by the Representative of France, tabled its report which was endorsed by the Officials' Meeting. Officials noted that the core contributions from members are vital for the effective running of the Secretariat. They called for a new annual budget reporting format to reflect the structure of the Action Plan 1997–2000. Ministers are requested to note the importance of financial and technical support from Members for the work of the Secretariat and for the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

Appointment of Director

The first Director of SPREP, Dr Vili Fuavao, left the organisation during May 1996 following almost six years in which he directed SPREP from its former position as a Programme within the South Pacific Commission to its attainment of fully autonomous status with the entry into force of the *Agreement Establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)*—the SPREP Agreement, 30 August, 1995.

A Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) was appointed by the Eighth SPREP Meeting to guide the recruitment for the selection of a new Director of SPREP. The SAC recommendation to offer the Director's position to Mr Tamarii Pierre Tutangata, was endorsed by the Officials' Meeting which requested that this recommendation be brought before you for Ministerial endorsement.

Biennial Meetings

Officials endorsed a proposal to hold SPREP Meetings every two years rather than annually. Significant savings will result. In consequence, it was decided that Action Plans should henceforth be of four year's duration, rather than five, and that the appointment of Director be for a period of four years initially, renewable for a further and final two year period. It is further proposed within this framework that Ministers meet every four years. Ministers are invited to note this decision.

Apia and SPREP Conventions

Officials from countries which are Party to the *Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific* (the Apia Convention) and the *Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region* (the SPREP Convention, also known as the Noumea Convention) also met within the Ninth SPREP Officials' Meeting in a Joint Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to consider amendment to the Rules of Procedure and to consider procedures relating to amendment to the Conventions by a Joint Plenipotentiary Meeting to be convened within this Ministerial Meeting.

Under the Rules of Procedure of the Apia and SPREP Conventions, a Plenipotentiary Meeting of the Parties is required to make any amendment. Following entry into force of the SPREP Agreement, Secretariat duties for both Conventions now transfer from the South Pacific Commission to SPREP in its newly autonomous role. The Officials respectfully request the Ministerial Meeting to convene a Joint Plenipotentiary Meeting of the Apia and SPREP Conventions in order to approve amendments to both Conventions.

On behalf of the Ninth SPREP Officials' Meeting, I respectfully request you to bring to the attention of the Ministers, the above matters for their formal endorsement.

Yours sincerely,

Tu'a T. Tupou
Chair
Ninth SPREP Officials' Meeting

Annex 9: Statements by Observers

Observers' statements, outlining environmental activities and collaboration with SPREP, were presented as follows:

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) had its first ever regional meeting of members in Sydney, Australia in June 1996 and this reiterated IUCN's continuing support for SPREP. IUCN's First World Conservation Congress in Montreal, Canada in October 1996 included a Pacific round table, resolutions in support of World Heritage in Oceania and community-based conservation exemplified by SPBCP and elected to the IUCN Council Gaikovina Kula (PNG), Diane Tarte (Australia) and Wren Green (NZ).

UNDP is happy to continue its support to the Pacific Island countries through its regional programmes executed by SPREP. Of particular importance are the GEF-related initiatives in the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP), the Capacity 21 Programme and its proposed Phase II, the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme (PICCAP), and in the newly approved Strategic Action Plan on Proposed International Waters. UNDP also commends SPREP and its staff on the close partnership with its office in Apia, as they jointly engage in the management of these regional programmes to address the specific needs of participating Pacific Island countries. UNDP also congratulates SPREP's new Director for his appointment and assures him of its continued support and best wishes for the future.

The Deputy Secretary-General (Policy and Administration) of the **Forum Secretariat** summarised the outcomes of the recent South Pacific Forum in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands. He highlighted the need to manage fisheries and forestry resources sustainably and the importance of attracting quality investment for sustainable economic development. The importance of bringing national policies in line with Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC) investment principles was voiced, as was the importance of regional

trade representation in Asia and strengthening APEC/Forum links.

He said the Forum Secretariat was being restructured to remove most programme elements (except in the areas of trade and economic policy) and strengthen its policy and coordination capacity. In this respect, the Forum Secretariat would be in a better position to work with other agencies, including SPREP, in developing initiatives for consideration by Forum leaders, and in pursuing the region's goals in international fora.

The mission of **Wetlands International Bureau** is to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity for future generations through research, information exchange and conservation activities worldwide. In the Pacific region, Wetlands International has directed most effort to Papua New Guinea (wetland management and sustainable harvest of crocodiles) and the Federated States of Micronesia (mangrove conservation and development of eco-tourism in mangroves). Wetlands International has an ongoing commitment to explain to Pacific Island countries the benefits and obligations of joining the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) and to assist where appropriate in preparing accession documentation. Implementation of the Regional Wetlands Activities Plan will be a priority activity for 1997. Wetlands International extends encouragement to SPREP and looks forward to cooperating with SPREP on regional wetland activities.

TRAFFIC Oceania (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce), a joint programme of WWF and IUCN, has evolved to become the world's largest wildlife trade monitoring programme. Initially in the Oceania region, TRAFFIC was focused on traditional wildlife trades (reptiles, orchids and mammals) however, TRAFFIC has recently been concentrating on the tropical timber trade and marine fisheries and has completed a report into the global trade of sharks and shark products. TRAFFIC also remains active in other natural

resource management issues in the Pacific region including Southern Bluefin Tuna, beche de mer, giant clam and the export of coral. One of TRAFFIC's most important mandates is to assist governments in the region with the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and TRAFFIC is willing to assist Pacific Island governments in an advisory capacity with matters relating to CITES. TRAFFIC Oceania is currently revising its three year strategy and would appreciate learning from SPREP what their environmental and natural resource priorities are in order to explore areas where TRAFFIC can collaborate with SPREP.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a USA based international conservation organisation and has as its mission the preservation and protection of the great wealth of the Earth's biological diversity. Since 1990, TNC's Asia Pacific Program has been undertaking conservation programmes in the biodiversity rich South Pacific countries of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea as well as in Indonesia. TNC's experiences have brought home to them the immensity of the conservation challenge in the region as we face escalating loss of forests, fisheries, reefs and coastal environments. This unsustainable pattern of resource exploitation is slowly but surely undermining the future of generations of Pacific Islanders, many of whom already can no longer experience the values of the natural heritage enjoyed by their parents. Some progress, but not nearly enough, has been made to stem this tide since the last SPREP Ministerial Meeting in 1991. Since that time several promising community based biodiversity conservation projects have been established. In almost all cases the essential element of success has been the willingness of all those involved; landowners, communities, funding agencies, government agencies and NGOs, to forge partnerships and cooperate in achieving the conservation goal. The SPREP/SPBCP programme has acted as a catalyst in this process, often helping to bridge the gap between NGOs and governments. TNC trusts that SPREP's new management team will embrace this vital role and encourage an expanded relationship with the region's NGOs. TNC urges all the regional governments and NGOs to look for ways to work together in partnership to foster a stronger and more effective conservation

ethic in their countries. Finally, TNC has worked in partnership with SPREP in numerous ways since 1990 and would like to take this opportunity to pledge its continued support for SPREP and its efforts to secure an environmentally sound future for the people of the South Pacific.

The Environmental Management and Development Graduate Studies Program at the **National Centre for Development Studies (NCDS)**, ANU expressed its desire to continue to develop its relationship with SPREP through the training of environmental officers throughout the South Pacific nations within degree programmes in environmental management, and through short courses taught in-country or in Australia. This year NCDS is helping the Environmental Management and Planning Division of SPREP to develop training materials to assist South Pacific countries mobilise financial resources for environmental investment. The Environmental Management and Development Program and the Pacific Islands Program at NCDS hope that the future will bring more opportunities for them to work cooperatively with SPREP.

The delegate of the **University of the South Pacific (USP)** thanked SPREP for the invitation to attend the Meeting. USP hoped that during the period of the next Action Plan, greater cooperation would be achieved between USP and SPREP. USP and SPREP have worked closely in the past in areas such as EIA, Climate Change and Environmental training. A post graduate diploma training course in environment management is being developed and funds are being sought. USP looks forward to maintaining its working relationship with SPREP.

Greenpeace Pacific welcomes the work of SPREP, but believes it should be taking a strong advocacy role in relation to important international environmental initiatives. In particular SPREP and Member countries should be taking a leading role in articulating Indigenous Peoples rights under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Greenpeace believes SPREP should be taking a more critical role in relation to climate change and notes with concern initiatives by Australia to diminish their responsibilities to reduce greenhouse gas emission. Greenpeace welcomes the SPREP workshop on hazardous waste and urges all governments to ratify

the Waigani Convention and urges the United States to ratify the Basel Convention. Greenpeace strongly urges SPREP to take an advocacy role in relation to Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC) and the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade and Environment Committee and notes with concern New Zealand's proposal for complementarity between environmental treaties and the WTO.

The delegate of the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** referred to the historical relationship UNEP has had with SPREP. He stated that reduction of some government contributions to the UN had affected certain planned activities between UNEP and SPREP this year. He sought comments and advice from other delegates on a paper already circulated

at the Meeting outlining some planned activities for joint cooperation between the Asia and Pacific regions. The delegate thus outlined a number of projects and activities UNEP had supported either directly with PICs or through SPREP.

Ms Edna Tait of **UNESCO** sent apologies to the Meeting for not attending due to other commitments. In a written statement, she stated that UNESCO particularly looks forward to collaborating in the Pacific Environmental Information Network project, and in the area of coastal and small island management where the UNESCO Coastal Regions and Small Islands project will link with activities under the GEF Strategic Action Program for the Pacific in the International Waters focal area.