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South Pacific Regional Environment Programme



REPORT OF THE
FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE

Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989

South Pacific Commission
Noumea, New Caledonia
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SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION

FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989)

REPORT

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FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE

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Introduction

1. Following a recommendation from the Second Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Action Plan, June - July 1988, the Twenty-eighth South Pacific Conference held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, October 1988, formally approved the establishment of a SPREP Steering Committee to replace and take over the functions of the former SPREP Coordinating Group. The first meeting of the SPREP Steering Committee was held in Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989 with the overall objective of developing terms of reference for the role and functions of the Steering Committee and providing guidance to SPREP on the implementation of its 1989 Work Programme. The following report gives a record of meeting deliberations, details of participation and the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee.

Agenda Item 1 - Opening of the Meeting.

2. The Secretary-General of the Forum Secretariat, Mr. Henry Naisali, in his capacity as the Chairman of the previous SPREP Coordinating Group, welcomed participants to this meeting and stated that he looked forward to the new directions that the Steering Committee would give to SPREP. He called upon representatives of the sub-regions and groups to act as ambassadors in ensuring that this innovative approach to guiding SPREP would result in effective co-operation and tangible results.

3. The Acting Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission (SPC), Mr. Jon Jonassen, in his opening address welcomed participants to this first SPREP Steering Committee Meeting and expressed the hope that the meeting would give specific directives for the future operations of both the Steering Committee itself and SPREP in general.

4. He outlined for participants what he considered as the appropriate role of the SPC in the future operation of SPREP regarding it, along with other members of the previous Co-ordinating Group, as an adviser to the Steering Committee and envisaging the SPC continuing to serve as the executing agency for SPREP until such time as the Programme is able to stand on its own and until the member governments decide it is in the best interests of the Programme to be independent of the SPC. He stated that the SPC welcomed the establishment of the Steering Committee which ensured closer involvement of member governments in the decision making process of SPREP.

5. The Acting Secretary-General, in referring to the draft budget prepared for the meeting's consideration, cautioned that unless there was a substantial increase in contributions to the Programme, some activities would have to be deferred or removed from the 1989 work plan. He called on participants to give special consideration to the matter of the 'voluntary' nature of country contributions which has been a source of frustration to SPREP since the commencement of the implementation phase of the Programme.

Agenda Item 2 - Election of Chairperson.

6. In the interests of ensuring continuity, it was agreed that the upcoming Chairperson of the 1990 Intergovernmental Meeting, the representative of the Federated States of Micronesia, Dr. Eliuel Pretrick, be elected as Chairperson. The representative of Australia/ New Zealand, Mr. John Gilbert was elected as Vice-Chairperson.

Agenda Item 3 - Adoption of the Meeting Agenda.

7. The agenda, as drafted by the Secretariat, was adopted and is attached as Annex 1.

Agenda Item 4 - The Role and Functions of the Committee.

8. The SPREP Co-ordinator, Mr. Iosefatu Reti, referred delegates to Working Paper 1 (WP.1) and particularly to the proposed terms of reference, as outlined in Appendix 1, for the role and function of this and future Steering Committees.

9. In answer to requests for clarification of the status of the Steering Committee, the SPREP Coordinator explained that the establishment of the Steering Committee had been approved by the 28th South Pacific Conference held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in 1988. He further stated that the Secretariat, in proposing terms of reference for the Steering Committee in WP.1 was seeking guidance from delegates in determining the Committee's precise role and mode of operation. Following deliberations at this first Steering Committee Meeting, the Secretariat intended to circulate the agreed terms of reference to member governments and invite their further comments which would then be referred back to the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting and subsequently to the Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM).

10. In relation to Term of Reference (TOR) 1, setting out the number of representatives to participate in the Steering Committee, the delegate of Australia/New Zealand suggested, in the interests of continuity and coordination, the possibility of including participation by the Chairperson in addition to the proposed five representatives of countries and territories.

11. In further discussion of the proposed Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee delegates agreed that the issue of continuity, through the possible involvement of the Chairperson as a sixth member of the Steering Committee where he/she was not one of the existing sub-regional representatives, could be a matter raised at the next Inter-governmental Meeting. At that time the benefit of the working experience of the operation of this current Steering Committee could be to hand.

12. Revised Terms of Reference are attached as Annex 3.

13. Clarification was sought on whether the representatives of the sub-groups were in fact, representing their own country or the combined sub-grouping. It was firmly established that at Steering Committee Meetings the representative of each sub-group was participating on behalf of all countries and territories in his/her sub-grouping. It was also pointed out that where a country was alphabetically due to participate, it could, in consultation with other members in the sub-group, renounce this participation in favour of another country. A precedent had already been set in this regard with respect to New Zealand representing the Australia/New Zealand group at the first meeting.

14. With reference to TOR 5, relating to the functions of the Steering Committee, considerable discussion ensued following a suggestion by the Secretary-General of the Forum Secretariat of the need to define the term 'guidance'. It was agreed that the term 'guidance and direction to the Secretariat' adequately reflected the role envisaged for the Steering Committee and the TOR was amended accordingly.

15. In response to clarification of the 'promotion' role envisaged for Steering Committee members, it was established that an ambassadorial approach by representatives in the course of their normal travel, would greatly assist the Secretariat's efforts in promoting SPREP.

16. As part of this 'promotion' activity, the SPREP Co-ordinator drew to delegates' attention the value that could be obtained by Steering Committee members attempting to encourage firm member government financial commitment to SPREP. Discussion followed relating to the difficulties associated with 'urging' the governments to fulfill their financial commitments. Alternative wording to this TOR was agreed in which Steering Committee representatives are encouraged to play an active role in 'reminding' the governments and administrations of their commitment towards achieving the goals of the SPREP Action Plan.

17. The meeting agreed that the Steering Committee did not need to review preparations for the Intergovernmental Meetings nor approve biennium reports of the Secretariat to the Forum and South Pacific Conference, as had been the practice with the past Coordinating Group.

18. It was stressed that the Steering Committee role be that of a Committee responsible for the oversight of the implementation of the SPREP Work Programme as approved by the Intergovernmental Meeting.

19. Considerable discussion ensued relating to the role to be played by 'observers' and 'advisers' to the Steering Committee Meeting and their role relative to that of 'sub-regional representatives'. Taking into account the small size of the Meeting, the participants thought that it would be unfortunate to lose the opportunity to benefit fully from the experience and expertise of advisers/observers who could be called upon by the Chairperson to contribute to discussion. However, it was also appreciated that opening the meeting automatically to all present, if care was not taken, would negate the principle of having sub-regional representation. The opportunity exists also for 'observers' to channel their views through their sub-regional representatives.

20. Following a request by the representative of ASPEI for travel funding to future Steering Committee meetings, delegates agreed that in recognition of the value of technical advice provided by that institution, such funding would be provided.

Agenda Item 5 - Decisions by the Twenty-eighth South Pacific Conference on Recommendations from the Second Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Work Programme 1989-90.

21. The SPREP Coordinator referred representatives to Working Paper 2 seeking their advice on possible follow-up action to be taken by the Secretariat on decisions by the Twenty-eighth South Pacific Conference emanating from recommendations of the Second Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Work Programme 1989-90.

22. The meeting welcomed the assistance given by the government of New Zealand in funding a legal expert to provide advice to member governments on measures to be taken to ratify and/or accede to the APIA and SPREP Conventions. Delegates endorsed the efforts by the Secretariat and New Zealand to jointly draw up, for this consultancy, draft Terms of Reference which would adequately reflect the specific requirements of the countries of the region.

Agenda Item 6 - Major Programme Activities Planned for 1989.

23. The Secretariat referred delegates to Working Paper 3 on the SPREP Regional Contingency Plan for Co-operation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the South Pacific Region and the related report on the Pacific Regional Workshop on Oil Spill Response held in Brisbane, Australia in 1988. Reference was made to the relationship of the draft Contingency Plan to provisions under the SPREP Convention.

24. Delegates directed the Secretariat to encourage SPREP member governments to develop, promote or update national pollution emergency contingency plans; to request governments to review the draft SPREP Regional Contingency Plan and provide the information necessary for its finalisation; to make all efforts in consultation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to establish procedures for major pollution emergency response assistance from governments having those capabilities; and to use the Intergovernmental Meeting as the forum for review and formal adoption of the Contingency Plan.

25. It was noted that the draft Regional Contingency Plan was currently being circulated to member countries for their comments. The Secretariat was requested to summarise these views and report them back to the next Steering Committee Meeting. This reporting process would also serve to remind governments that had not already done so, to draw up their own contingency plans.

26. The Secretariat introduced Working Paper 4 on the Regional Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the SPREP Convention Area (SPREP POL). It was pointed out that this SPREP/UNEP project was an amalgamation of a number of project proposals previously submitted by governments and institutions to, and approved by, the Intergovernmental Meeting in 1988. The SPREP POL programme was further developed at a meeting held in Sydney, January 1989 and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has indicated that financial support is available contingent upon a financial commitment by SPREP on behalf of its member governments. It was further stated that as SPREP's voluntary country contributions were used to cover core programme costs, extra-budgetary sources of funding were being sought for this project.

27. The meeting was requested to approve in principle the implementation of SPREP POL but delegates agreed that further discussion under Agenda Item 7 (SPREP Financial Report for 1988) was required relating to financial implications of the project.

28. The Secretariat referred delegates to Working Paper 5 relating to the SPREP Intergovernmental Meeting on the Implications of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise in the Pacific Region. This intergovernmental meeting, organised by UNEP, ASPEI and SPREP, is being hosted by the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in Majuro July 1989 and will review the results of initial studies and develop a work plan and budget for follow-up action. A volume of case studies and reviews is currently being edited for printing in time for the meeting in Majuro.

29. The delegate from Australia/New Zealand reported on the UNEP/World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) International Programme on Climate Change (IPCC). Information on the three working groups on Science, Impacts (both physical and social) and Response, set up under the IPCC was provided to the meeting. It was emphasised that SPREP can play a valuable role as a contact for the collection and review of information for the IPCC.

30. Delegates, in noting the importance of the Majuro meeting and its relevance to Pacific Islands, also saw the need for SPREP to act as a 'clearinghouse'. In this role SPREP could assist in ensuring that the most scientifically-sound and relevant of the plethora of material currently circulating world-wide, was disseminated and that there was a coordinated approach to sea-level rise/climate change studies within the region.

31. As part of its coordination role, the SPREP Secretariat was requested to produce a paper for the meeting in Majuro providing an overview of work underway within the region on sea level rise/climate change. The paper would suggest the type of coordinating role that SPREP could play in this issue in the future. This would also emphasise the policy-response related advice that SPREP would be in a good position to disseminate to the countries.

32. The Secretariat referred delegates to Working Paper 6 on the Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas to be hosted by the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu in September 1989.

33. Delegates noted the importance of this Conference in assisting countries and territories in the region to work towards sustainable development and a better understanding of the region's conservation objectives, problems and needs. The Secretariat's fund-raising initiatives were noted and the suggestion made that the Secretariat investigate the instigation of a registration fee for non member government participants.

34. The Secretariat referred delegates to Working Paper 8 on the SPREP Regional Training Course in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be held in Suva, June 1989. Delegates regarded this as a most timely and important initiative and endorsed the Secretariat's efforts in raising the additional funds required for this training course.

Agenda Item 7 - SPREP Financial Report for 1988.

35. The Secretariat referred delegates to Working Paper 7 on SPREP Income and Expenditure Statements for 1988 and Proposed Budget for 1989 outlining the unpredictable nature of 'voluntary' country contributions and the projected shortfall of approximately US\$ 224 000 to US\$ 234 000 in the 1989 budget.

36. At the request of the meeting, the Secretariat produced a revised budget in which this projected shortfall was reduced to US\$ 141 000. The Secretariat considered this a more realistic and manageable amount of money to be raised.

37. Delegates reviewed the budget in detail, and discussed the need for establishing priorities among projects, in case there is a shortfall of funds. The current anticipated shortfall of US\$ 141 000 was noted by the Committee and it was appreciated that the Secretariat was endeavouring to cover the deficit. It was agreed that sub-regional representatives should, in the course of their normal duties, canvass their countries for a firmer and more timely contribution to SPREP. It was further agreed that the subject of establishing more secure funding for the programme should be a matter for discussion at future Steering Committee Meetings.

38. Considerable discussion ensued relating to the potential funding of SPREP POL. It was agreed that every effort should be made to raise the required funding in order to secure the UNEP contribution which was contingent upon a financial commitment by SPREP on behalf of its member governments, this amount being approximately US\$ 60 000 in 1989. The meeting agreed that the Secretariat should advise UNEP of the fund-raising efforts it was making in this regard. It was stated however, in the interests of a balanced environmental programme, that this allocation of SPREP funds should not jeopardise other project areas.

39. After considerable discussion, the Committee approved the income and expenditure statements for 1988 and proposed budget for 1989.

Other matters.

40. The representative of ESCAP raised the need to discuss the relationship of SPREP to the former members of the Coordinating Group (namely UNEP, ESCAP, Forum Secretariat and SPC).

41. The Acting Secretary-General of the SPC reiterated his earlier statement that the SPC's role was that of an executing agency for SPREP. He stated that the SPC regarded SPREP as a programme within the SPC whilst appreciating its difference from other programmes in relation to the advice and guidance it received from the members of the former Coordinating Group and the newly created Steering Committee.

42. The United States observer noted the concern of his government about the withdrawal by UNEP from the SPREP Coordinating Group at the last Intergovernmental Meeting, and expressed the view that SPREP continue to be affiliated with UNEP's Regional Seas Programme. SPREP was initiated as part of the Regional Seas Programme, and, in the U.S. view, the continued involvement of UNEP is essential to the achievement of SPREP's objectives. The United States expressed the hope that the Steering Committee would recommend that the next South Pacific Conference clarify the relationship of SPREP and UNEP, and communicate the desire of the governments of the region that SPREP continue to be a joint programme and a part of the Regional Seas Programme.

43. The delegate of Australia/New Zealand expressed sympathy with the United States' view, also noting the importance of the SPC and hoped SPREP would be able to benefit fully from the experience and expertise of UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.

44. Further discussion ensued regarding the status of SPREP in relation to members of the former Coordinating Group. The SPREP Co-ordinator, on behalf of the SPC, stated that the SPC had already written to UNEP advising that it still considers SPREP a joint programme with UNEP, ESCAP and the Forum Secretariat.

45. The meeting agreed that a letter, under the signature of the Chairperson of the Steering Committee, be sent to UNEP expressing the desire of the governments of the region to work in close partnership with UNEP and that SPREP would continue to operate as a component of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

Agenda Item 8 - Date and Venue for Next Meeting.

46. was agreed that the next Steering Committee Meeting be held in Vanuatu in September 1989 to coincide with the Fourth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Agenda Item 9 - Adoption of Meeting Report.

47. Meeting adopted the report.

Agenda Item 10 - Closing of Meeting.

48. The meeting was closed amid expressions of thanks to delegates; the Chairperson; the SPC, as host, and the SPREP Secretariat for the valuable and constructive work undertaken by this, the first of SPREP's Steering Committee Meetings.

ANNEX 1

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989)**

A G E N D A

1. Opening of the Meeting
2. Election of Chairperson
3. Adoption of the Meeting Agenda
4. The Role and Functions of the Committee
5. Decisions by the Twenty-eighth South Pacific Conference on Recommendations from the Second Intergovernmental Meeting on the SPREP Work Programme 1989-90.
6. Major Programme Activities Planned for 1989
7. SPREP Financial Report for 1988
8. Date and Venue for Next Meeting
9. Adoption of Meeting Report
10. Closing of the Meeting

ANNEX 2

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989)

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ANNEX 3

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

**FIRST MEETING OF THE SPREP STEERING COMMITTEE
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 29-31 March 1989)**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The SPREP Steering Committee shall consist of representatives of five Countries and Territories participating in the SPREP Action Plan.
2. The members of the Steering Committee will be normally selected in alphabetical order from, and represent, each of the sub-regions and groups as follows:
 - (i) Melanesia (including Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu)
 - (ii) Micronesia (including FSM, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau)
 - (iii) Polynesia (including American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Pitcairn Is., Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, Western Samoa).
 - (iv) Australia and New Zealand.
 - (v) France, UK and U.S.A.
3. The Countries and Territories in a sub-region or group may agree by consensus to depart from the normal alphabetical order for selection and representation, and, if so, shall inform the Secretariat in advance of the next Steering Committee Meeting.

4. The members of the Steering Committee will serve for the period between regular Intergovernmental Meetings which are held every two years. No State or Territory may be a member for two consecutive periods, unless otherwise decided by the Intergovernmental Meetings.

5. The functions of the Steering Committee shall be:

- (a) To provide guidance and direction to the Secretariat on all matters relevant to the implementation of the Action Plan between Intergovernmental Meetings and make adjustments in the programme and budget whenever necessary, within the framework of the decisions made by these meetings;
- (b) To promote the active participation and funding of the SPREP Action Plan and to assist the Secretariat in reminding the governments and administrations of their commitment towards achieving this. Steering Committee members will be asked to comment on the sub-regional progress towards achieving the programme at each Steering Committee Meeting.
- (c) To review and approve annual Work plans of the Secretariat including their financial implications.
- (d) To consider and approve project proposals (including their financial implications) submitted by the Secretariat in the interim period between the regular Intergovernmental Meetings.
- (e) To make recommendations to the regular Intergovernmental Meetings on all programme, financial and institutional matters related to the Action Plan;
- (f) To approve the dates and venue for the next Intergovernmental Meeting;
- (g) To carry out such other tasks as may be determined by the regular Intergovernmental Meetings.

6. In carrying out its functions, the decisions, approvals and recommendations of the Steering Committee will be taken on a consensus basis and in accordance with the decisions of the previous Intergovernmental Meetings on the SPREP Action Plan and meetings of the South Pacific Conference.

7. To actively and effectively carry out its functions, the Steering Committee shall meet at least once a year or as required. The Steering Committee will set the dates and venue for the next meeting at the conclusion of each meeting. Should it be deemed necessary to change the date and venue, the provisions in 10 (c) apply.

8. The meeting of the Steering Committee will be convened by the Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, organised and serviced by the Secretariat.

9. At the First Meeting of the Steering Committee following an Intergovernmental Meeting, the Committee shall elect a Chairperson and Vice-chairperson from among its members, who will serve at all Steering Committee Meetings until the next Intergovernmental Meeting. The Vice-chairperson will assume the duties of chairperson when the latter is unable to attend a meeting.

10. The duties of the Chairperson of the Steering Committee shall be;

- (a) To ensure effective liaison between the Chairperson and the Secretariat in the period between Steering Committee Meetings;
- (b) To make decisions in response to urgent or unforeseen circumstances within the context of Steering Committee functions, in consultation with the Secretariat and Steering Committee members as considered appropriate.
- (c) To decide, in consultation with the Secretariat and the other members of the Steering Committee as appropriate, any changes regarding the venue and dates of the Steering Committee and of the Intergovernmental Meetings;

- (d) To determine, in consultation with the Secretariat, the draft agenda and the list of documents for these meetings;
 - (e) To report on Steering Committee activities to the Intergovernmental Meeting;
 - (f) To carry out such other tasks as may be determined by the Steering Committee or the regular Intergovernmental Meetings.
11. The working languages of the meetings of the Steering Committee will be English and French.
12. The reports of the Steering Committee will be prepared by the Secretariat and will be made available to member Countries and Territories and to the Intergovernmental Meetings in the English and French languages.
13. All Countries and Territories participating in the Action Plan, and which are not members of the Steering Committee will be informed about the intent to organise the meetings of the Steering Committee and will be invited to attend these meetings as observers.
14. The organisations (ie. ESCAP, Forum Secretariat, SPC, UNEP) which have been traditional supporters of the Action Plan will be invited as advisors/observers to the meetings of the Steering Committee. Other organisations could also be invited by decision of the Steering Committee, taking into account the following criteria:
- attendance at the Intergovernmental Meetings;
 - active participation in support of the Action Plan.
15. Representatives of ASPEI and where necessary, representatives of other Research and Training institutions within the South Pacific region, may also be invited by the Chairperson in consultation with the Secretariat as scientific advisors to meetings of the Steering Committee.
16. The Committee may from time to time decide to meet in executive session.
17. Under its coordination budget, the Programme shall meet the cost of attendance at Committee Meetings by representatives from the Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia sub-regions. Full or partial support to other participants will not normally be the responsibility of the Programme. However, the Steering Committee may consider applications for such support on a "case-by-case basis" in consultation with the Secretariat.