

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 8-9 July 1991)

REPORT

**South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
Noumea, New Caledonia
July 1991**

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AGENDA ITEM 1 - OFFICIAL OPENING

1. The meeting was opened by Mr Atanraoi Baiteke, the Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, who welcomed delegates. Mr Baiteke, while noting with some regret that this meeting marked the departure of SPREP from the South Pacific Commission, indicated that the close links that have been developed between SPREP and SPC are likely to continue, with mutual benefit to both organisations. Mr Baiteke thanked the Government of France and the Territory of New Caledonia for hosting the Fourth Intergovernmental Meeting (IGM) at short notice and acknowledged, with gratitude, the financial contributions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the governments of France and Australia which had enabled the Secretariat to convene the IGM and the Meeting of the Parties to both the SPREP and APIA Conventions. The Secretary-General's speech is included in Annex I and the list of participants is provided in Annex II.
2. The Meeting Chairman, the Hon Tomasi Vakatora, Minister for Housing and Urban Development (Republic of Fiji), also thanked all those involved in organising and hosting this IGM.
3. The delegate of French Polynesia expressed deep regret that his territory had found it necessary to cancel its original offer to host this IGM in Tahiti.

AGENDA ITEM 2 - ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. The agenda was adopted and appears as Annex III to this report.

AGENDA ITEM 3 - ELECTION OF DRAFTING COMMITTEE

5. France was elected by concensus as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 4 - HOURS OF WORK

6. Hours of work were established.

AGENDA ITEM 5 - COUNTRY STATEMENTS

7. It was agreed that country statements would not be appended to the report but would be available on request to members, in the language in which they were delivered. The following issues were highlighted in the country presentations.
8. The significance of the Ministerial-level Meeting was highlighted, in that it represents the first meeting of Ministers for Environment since the historic 1982 Rarotonga Ministerial-level Meeting, which established SPREP.

9. There was strong support for the development of SPREP as an independent, vibrant and effective environmental organisation and for the recommendations of the Meeting of Officials at the Fourth Intergovernmental Meeting, including:

- the relocation of the SPREP Headquarters to Western Samoa;
- the establishment of a firm legal basis for an independent SPREP through the development of a treaty.

10. Delegates emphasised the increasing importance of environmental issues in the region and the need for prompt and effective action to address these issues. These issues included:

- climate change, particularly in relation to low-lying islands;
- the need to protect sensitive coastal and marine areas from the adverse effects of development;
- the need for the protection of biological diversity; and
- the emphasis of the importance of a strong Pacific voice in the lead up to UNCED, and SPREP's crucial role in efforts to ensure this was recognised.

Significant progress was noted by a number of countries in relation to these issues and the effective role of SPREP in the implementation and co-ordination of projects was also noted.

11. Strong statements of support for the work of SPREP were made by a number of countries and a number of specific commitments were outlined.

12. Accession to the SPREP Convention by the USA and the intention to accede to both the SPREP and Apia Conventions by Vanuatu was noted.

13. The need to link environmental management with economic and social development was also noted by a number of countries.

14. Collaborating organisations, the South Pacific Forum, UNEP and ESCAP, pledged their continuing support for SPREP as the main environment organisation in the region, welcomed SPREP's move towards independence, and looked forward to further collaboration on environmental matters. The UNEP representative stressed: the need for SPREP to maintain donor confidence through continued operational effectiveness; the importance for governments to pay their voluntary contributions as a signal to donors; the need to evaluate the ability of SPREP to absorb additional financial assistance; and the need to quickly fill the new SPREP posts with highly competent people, preferably from the region.

AGENDA ITEM 6 - DIRECTOR'S REPORT

15. The SPREP Director presented the Director's Annual Report highlighting the following areas:

- the coming into force of the SPREP and Apia Conventions;
- progress in implementing the work programme;
- progress in developing institutional arrangements within the Secretariat;
- the success of Secretariat fund-raising efforts;
- the increasing role of the Secretariat in presenting Pacific viewpoints to international conservation and environment fora.

16. The Ministerial-level Meeting considered and endorsed the Director's Annual Report.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - LEGAL

17. The Ministerial-level Meeting considered the legal aspects of the report of the Meeting of the Officials. Amendments to the recommendations were proposed by France and Western Samoa, as Chairman of the Legal Working Group. These were considered and the following was endorsed:

- (i) accept the kind offer by Western Samoa to host SPREP and express appreciation to the Government of Western Samoa.
- (ii) recommend to the South Pacific Conference the continuation of SPREP's links with the SPC and request the SPC to enter into arrangements to facilitate SPREP's autonomous operation during the interim period, until the establishment of a fully independent SPREP; and
- (iii) ask IGM members to indicate by 15 September 1991 whether they are able to enter into negotiations on a treaty in order for a time frame to be established for the commencement of such negotiations.

AGENDA ITEM 8 - FINANCE INCLUDING BUDGET FOR 1991-92

18. The meeting considered and endorsed the following finance recommendations of the Meeting of Officials:

- (i) approve the revised Budget for 1991;
- (ii) note the indicative budget for 1992;
- (iii) SPREP adopt the 1992 full contract language policy option (Option (ii) as outlined in paragraph 32 of the record of the IGM Officials' Meeting);

- (iv) review this option at the end of 1992, and, if it is found to be unsatisfactory, consider Option (i), as outlined in paragraph 32 of the record of the IGM Officials' Meeting, for 1993;
- (v) the Director proceed to develop a fully costed relocation plan and to implement this in a manner that causes the least possible disruption to the work programme and budget;
- (vi) a sum of US\$200,000 be provided in the 1992 indicative budget to cover the once only costs of relocation; and
- (vii) all countries promptly pay outstanding members' contributions for 1991 and pay 1992 contributions early in 1992;
- (viii) the IGM approve the guiding principles of SPREP financial management as contained in Annex IV of this report;
- (ix) the IGM approve the directives to the Director and Secretariat functions (Annex V of this report) with the addition of the following words after '... the establishment of positions':

'within the limit of positions authorised by the IGM',

and with the addition of an additional point (iii) before the heading 'Agreed':

'there is a limit of 33 positions for the project management function and project implementation function for the period up to the 1992 IGM';

- (x) in respect of the SPREP corporate plan and financial regulations, the IGM approve that this be co-ordinated intersessionally by the Secretariat and that these documents be submitted for approval to the next IGM;
- (xi) the IGM agree that there is a need for further consideration of the 1992 budget prior to approval;
- (xii) the IGM direct that the SPREP Secretariat conduct a comprehensive revision of the proposed 1992 budget and that this revision be circulated to governments and administrations in early September 1991 and further agree that this revision be considered by a special session of the IGM to be held at the time of the 15th CRGA to be convened for the special purpose of consideration and approval of this single item.

19. The issue of payments for travel and per diem to the next SPREP IGM was discussed and three options were outlined:

- (i) member countries to pay all such expenses associated with the IGM;
- (ii) SPREP to pay such expenses for Pacific Island members associated with the IGM (present policy);
- (iii) a special fund be made available to assist small island members only in payment of such expenses associated with the IGM, with other members paying their own expenses.

It was noted by the Director of SPREP that the 1992 indicative budget did not include the costs associated with options (ii) and (iii).

It was agreed that a paper on this matter would be prepared by the Secretariat for consideration at the special session of the IGM held at the time of the 15th CRGA.

20. Various aspects of the move to Western Samoa were discussed. The Secretariat outlined the steps that are proposed to facilitate this move, including:

- (i) a visit in August 1991 to Apia by the Director and the Director of Programmes of the SPC to discuss arrangements with the Government of Western Samoa;
- (ii) new staff being recruited directly to Apia;
- (iii) the move occurring within the next six months with the major move occurring in the December-January period;
- (iv) a small SPREP office at SPC being kept open until July-August 1992.

21. In response to a question from Australia about SPREP's move to Apia, Western Samoa advised that it could guarantee that there would be housing available in Apia for SPREP staff, from the private sector or, if necessary, with the assistance of the Government of Western Samoa.

22. The need for financial and technical assistance associated with creating an independent Secretariat and the relocation to Western Samoa was outlined by the Secretariat. A clear need for assistance was identified in the areas of financial management and in planning logistical aspects associated with the move.

23. The UNDP representative noted the growing assistance from UNDP to SPREP over the past 18 months and made a generous offer of assistance in relation to the move to Western Samoa. This is likely to include assistance over the next 12-18 months to both put in place an effective financial system for SPREP and to assist with staff training in financial management.

24. Additional offers of assistance were made by Australia and France. Some other members indicated their willingness to pay their percentage share of any once-only costs associated with the move. The United States acknowledged SPREP's need for one-time assistance with the move and stated that although no commitment could be made, it would explore options to be helpful in this regard.

25. It was agreed that SPREP would prepare a detailed costing proposal for the relocation and discuss the funding of this with donors, including members and other appropriate countries.

AGENDA ITEM 9 - ACTION PLAN

26. Countries spoke in strong support of the SPREP Action Plan for the 1991-1995 period, noting, with approval, its flexibility and linkage to development issues. Special reference was made by Tuvalu to the potential threats posed by climate change and sea level rise to the low-lying islands. It was also observed that the implementation of the Action Plan should recognise priority sectors such as the establishment of a network of protected areas, rational waste management, lagoon and coral reef conservation, development of renewable energies and waste water treatment.

27. The Ministerial-level Meeting considered and approved the revised SPREP Action Plan for the period 1991-1995.

AGENDA ITEM 10 - REGIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR UNCED

28. The meeting noted the preparations being undertaken for South Pacific regional input to UNCED.

AGENDA ITEM 11 - DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND REGIONAL STATEMENT TO PREPCOM III

29. The Secretariat emphasised the importance of preparations for UNCED and that the Declaration and Regional Statement would form important documents as part of these preparations.

30. The Meeting then:

- (i) considered and endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development for the South Pacific contained in Annex VI, agreeing that the Declaration would use the term 'the precautionary principle';
- (ii) considered and endorsed the South Pacific Regional Statement to the Third Meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee contained in Annex VII.

In relation to the above, the US delegation expressed a strong preference for the term 'precautionary approach' in the Ministerial Declaration. The Kiribati delegation noted that it would have preferred a strengthening of the text of the regional statement to UNCED to reflect its concerns regarding sea level rise and the need for a stabilisation and reduction in CO₂ emissions.

31. The Meeting noted that representation at UNCED would be at Head of State level and that member countries of SPREP should desirably be represented at that level. It left open the question of spokespersons at UNCED. Countries agreed to keep the Secretariat informed of participation. The Director of Programme Integration for UNCED spoke to the meeting about the intended outcomes from the UNCED and the importance of work that will be done at the Preparatory Committee meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 12 - PROGRESS REPORT ON WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1991-92

32. The Ministerial-level Meeting noted the progress in the implementation of the Work Programme for 1991-92.

AGENDA ITEM 13 - STATEMENTS BY OBSERVERS

33. Statements were made to the Ministerial-level Meeting by the Association of South Pacific Environmental Institutions (ASPEI), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Government of Chile, International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

AGENDA ITEM 14 - DATE AND VENUE FOR THE FIFTH SPREP INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING

34. The Ministerial-level Meeting noted the offer by Western Samoa to host the Fifth SPREP IGM in September 1992.

AGENDA ITEM 15 - OTHER BUSINESS

35. In response to a request from Western Samoa, Australia provided details of progress with its Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project which is being implemented in eleven South Pacific Forum Countries. An outline of the World Meteorological Organisation study into atmospheric and impact aspects of climate change, which Australia has funded, was also provided.

**ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL,
SOUTH PACIFIC COMMISSION**

It is with great pleasure that I extend to you all a warm and heartfelt welcome to the South Pacific Commission. We are delighted to participate in this meeting which is honoured by your participation at the ministerial-level.

My pleasure in welcoming you is however tinged with a measure of sadness. As one of the founding organisations of SPREP, the South Pacific Commission has maintained a close, often intimate, involvement in SPREP affairs. The Commission has recruited the staff who have been instrumental in SPREP's evolution. We have also hosted its Secretariat for the past nine years and participated its evolution to the diverse and dynamic body it is today.

I now learn that one of the outcomes of SPREP's marathon officials meeting last week is to recommend to you, the ministerial body, that SPREP should move its Secretariat to Western Samoa. So, while I am aware that it is difficult for things to grow beneath a big tree - and as such I wish SPREP well should you choose to support the recommendation; as a foster parent, I and the South Pacific Commission, will be sad to see the programme and the staff of SPREP depart.

I am confident that the Government of Western Samoa will prove to be a hospitable and capable host. The Pacific, and SPREP in particular, is most fortunate in that the countries of our region share a genuine and generous interest in our regional issues.

As I alluded to earlier, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme has benefited from its association with the South Pacific Commission. I wish today to formally acknowledge that the corollary is also true - the SPC has benefited from its association with the active and highly professional SPREP programme. I am hopeful that following any move, the links we have developed both professionally and personally will remain. The SPC will continue to be interested in environment matters and will, where these intersect with our work programmes, look to SPREP for mutually satisfactory solutions that are in the best interests of the peoples of the Pacific.

In acknowledging the sustained effort of the Territory of New Caledonia in hosting at short notice this important meeting, I am struck by some contrasts:

- While SPREP is perhaps to leave its parent, it is poised to flourish on its own;
- While French Polynesia were constrained in hosting this meeting the Territory of New Caledonia expeditiously stepped in to fill the gap;
- While the institutional management of South Pacific environment issues are at a major crossroad, commitment to the achieving full legal status of SPREP is qualified;
- While we have before us an agenda which will chart the progress and effectiveness of environmental management in the Pacific, nuclear testing - a concern to us all - continues unabated.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues and Friends,

These curious affairs notwithstanding, there is much we can initiate at this meeting. In the past we have seen the views scuttled of those committed to effective environmental management. You have the opportunity this week to firmly and deliberately establish a long-term commitment to the environment, to the Pacific, to our future. The SPC resources of interpretation, translation and secretarial support are at your disposal and I wish you a profitable meeting.

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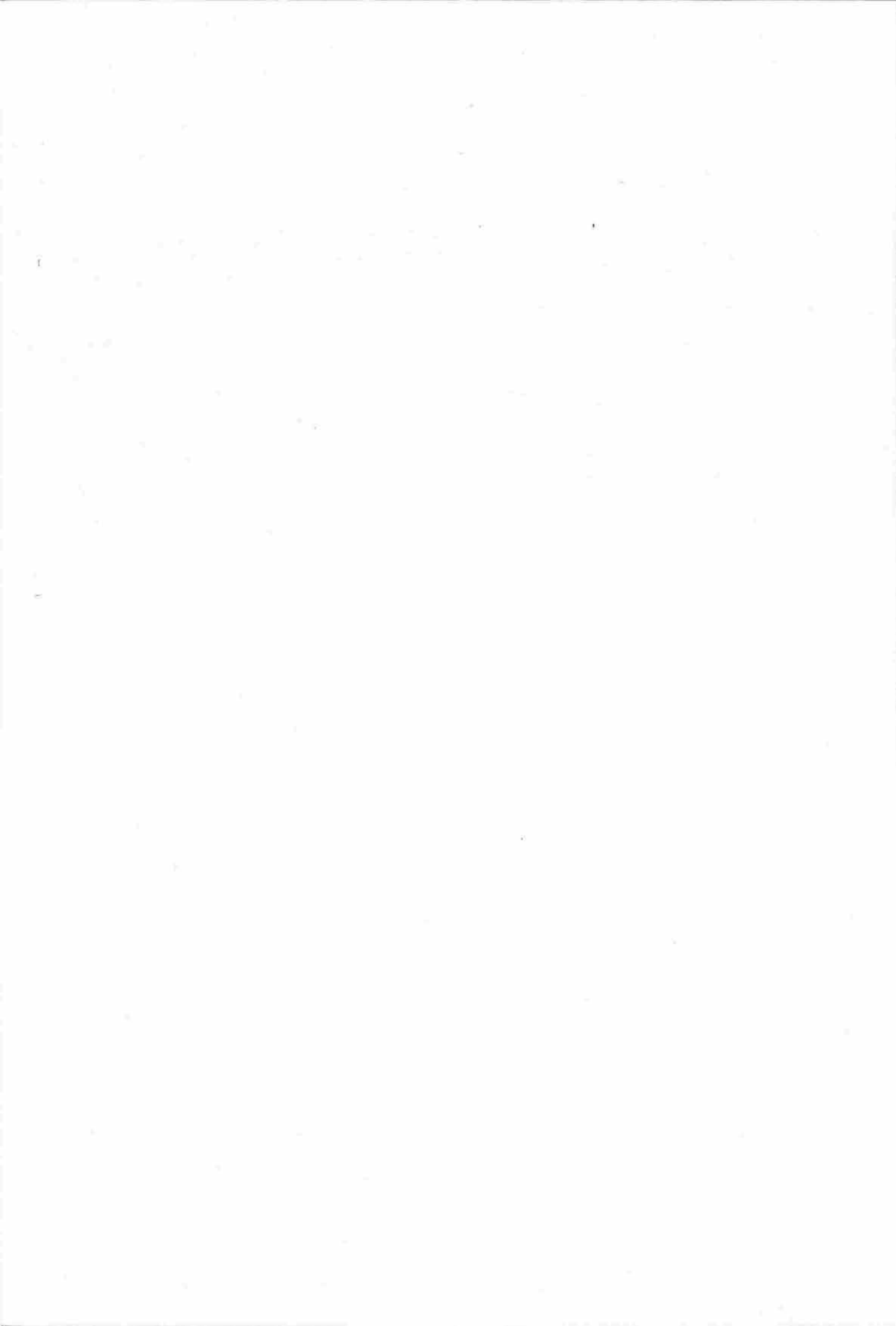
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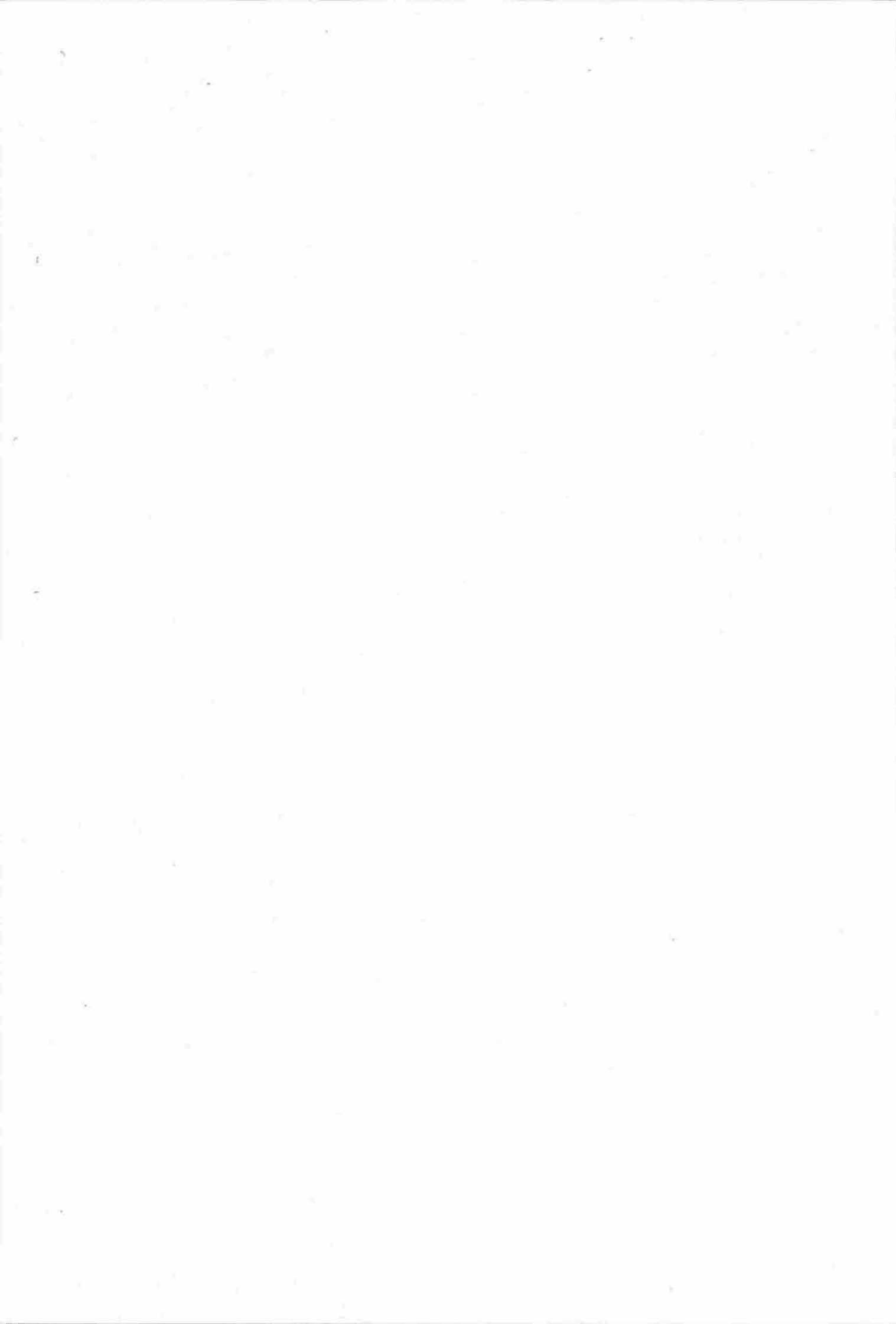
1. Official Opening
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Election of Drafting Committee
4. Hours of Work
5. Country Statements
6. Director's Annual Report
7. Legal
8. Finance including budget for 1991-92
9. Action Plan
10. Regional Preparations for UNCED
11. Draft Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Regional Statement to PrepCom III
12. Progress Report on Work Programme for 1991-92
13. Statements by Observers
14. Date and Venue for the Fifth SPREP Intergovernmental Meeting
15. Other Business



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The following principles of financial management provide a basis for: developing budgets; identifying resource requirements; and reporting on income and expenditure.

- (i) that in identifying the personnel and financial resources required by the Secretariat the functions of the Secretariat (as detailed in the draft Action Plan) should be considered under headings of:
 - primary functions (core functions including servicing the IGM, seeking funds, co-ordinating activities, and providing information to members);
 - project management functions (management of donor funded projects on behalf of members and donors);
 - project implementation functions (implementation of donor funded projects on behalf of members and donors excluding the project management function).
- (ii) that the most cost effective solutions should be identified which are consistent with the 1990 IGM decisions;
- (iii) that in identifying resources necessary to enhance SPREP's capacity a strong focus should be maintained on delivery of services to Pacific island members to address their environmental concerns;
- (iv) that to the maximum extent possible the costs of both project implementation and the full costs of project management should be met from project funds from donors;
- (v) that the basic functions of the Secretariat should be achieved by a lean and efficient Secretariat funded as far as possible from members' contributions and any interest revenues, so that the members clearly retain full control of SPREP's priorities and operations and a secure financial basis exists to maintain continuity of operations of the organisation;
- (vi) that the budget should provide for a small operating surplus derived from funds received for both project management and the primary functions of the Secretariat;
- (vii) that a conservative view should be taken of the likely income available;
- (viii) that the budget should be structured to make it possible to review the budgetary implication of any change in function of the Secretariat in later years;
- (ix) that a secure foundation should be provided for the first full year of operation as an autonomous organisation.
- (x) that the Secretariat collate data on costs in a form which allows for its presentation under both the functions listed in subparagraphs (i) above, and under the Action Plan Programme headings.



DIRECTIVES TO DIRECTOR OF SPREP AND SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS

Directed the Director of SPREP to:

- . establish a comprehensive, independent, financial management system including the development of financial regulations;
- . establish separate bank accounts as soon as feasible;
- . proceed with the immediate recruitment of a Finance Manager utilising UNDP support;
- . acquire an office vehicle and other operating assets as funding permits;
- . prepare a draft Corporate Plan to be considered and noted by the 1992 IGM. The Plan to address among other things, SPREP's mission, management philosophy, principles and objectives, organisational structure and implementation strategies.

Approved:

- . The establishment of up to 7 positions in 1991 and 1992 to carry out the primary functions of the Secretariat to be funded from either member contributions or from donor funds specifically allocated to this function;
- . The Director accepting the responsibility for managing and implementing additional projects including the establishment of positions to carry out the project management functions and the project implementation functions of the Secretariat provided that:
 - (i) funds are available from donors for all costs including salary, ancillary costs including housing, office accommodation, travel, secretarial support and all other costs;
 - (ii) acceptance of this responsibility does not adversely impact on the capacity of the Secretariat to carry out and manage the Work Programme approved by the Intergovernmental Meeting.

Agreed:

That the IGM retains sole authority to approve an increase in the staff capacity of the Secretariat devoted to the primary functions of the Secretariat.

That a comprehensive review of SPREP personnel matters be conducted based, in part, on the experience of other regional organisations, and that the existing SPC personnel terms and conditions be maintained until new terms and conditions are agreed.

That the 1992 IGM review progress in implementing these recommendations to ensure that (a) sound personnel procedures have been established; (b) the Primary Functions of the Secretariat are adequately supported by members contributions; and (c) that the Secretariat has sufficient guidance from the IGM.

Before the time when the SPREP relocates in Western Samoa, that the SPC and SPREP co-operate to maintain at least the current level of SPC translation/interpretation services to SPREP.

That the current guidelines for determining the members' contributions be retained (Annex IV to WP3).

That financial regulations and guidelines for the administration of SPREP be prepared by the Secretariat for checking by appropriate audit authorities and for adoption by the Finance Implementation Group which will exercise the authority of the IGM in this technical matter.

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

We, the Ministers and representatives of the 27 members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), meeting in Noumea from 8 to 9 July 1991;

Recalling the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment, and reaffirming our continuing commitment to its principles; in particular, that international protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a cooperative spirit by all countries, big or small, on an equal footing;

Reaffirming the principles espoused in the 1982 Rarotonga Declaration on the Human Environment in the South Pacific;

Stressing the particular importance to our region of UNGA Resolution 43/53 which recognised climate change as a common concern of humankind, UNGA Resolution 44/206 on the particular vulnerability of small island states to the possible adverse effects of sea level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low-lying coastal areas;

Recalling the 1989 Majuro Declaration on Climate Change, the 1989 Male Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise and the 1990 Declaration of the Second World Climate Conference;

Having regard to UNGA Resolution 44/228 concerning the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and stressing the importance of South Pacific participation in this Conference;

Recalling the communique of the Twenty-first South Pacific Forum (1990) in which regional heads of government recognised that sustainable development is the key to the protection of the region's resources for future generations;

Welcoming the statements from the Twenty-first South Pacific Forum and Thirtieth South Pacific Conference on the need for strengthening cooperation in the region, including through the region's institutional arrangements, to address environmental concerns through enhanced capacity for SPREP;

Recalling also the 1990 ESCAP Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific; and noting the 1991 Declaration of the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific;

Emphasising the uniqueness of the South Pacific region, its small land masses dispersed over the largest marine area in the world; its high degree of ecosystem and species diversity and vulnerability to natural disasters; the high degree of economic and cultural dependence on the natural environment; its diversity of cultures and languages, traditional practices and customs which are integral to the close and special relationship of Pacific peoples with their environment;

Recognising that actions taken in one country or region should not adversely affect the environment of other countries or regions;

Deeply concerned about the vulnerability of the South Pacific to serious environmental threats, including climate change and sea level rise, threats to marine living resources, and pollution which might result from nuclear testing, and importing, transporting, storing or destroying toxic and hazardous wastes or weapons, and, in particular, such threats generated from outside the region;

Stressing the urgency of reaching international agreement on measures to address these threats;

Emphasizing the common concerns among countries of the region and those of small island States in other regions;

Welcoming enhancement of the capacity and autonomy of SPREP;

Recalling the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty);

Welcoming the entry into force in 1990 of the 1976 Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) and the 1986 Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (SPREP Convention) and related protocols, which between them form the framework for a comprehensive legal regime to protect the regional environment;

Noting with satisfaction the entry into force in 1991 of the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific (1989 Wellington Convention) which reflects strong concerns about this unsustainable fishing practice;

Recognising the valuable assistance that many governments and international organisations, in particular UNEP through its Regional Seas Programme, have given to the protection of the South Pacific environment;

Committed to ensuring the continuation of the harmony which characterises Pacific island peoples' relationship with their environment;

1. Declare our commitment to work individually and collectively, including through SPREP, to achieve sustainable development in the South Pacific region, in particular by making every effort to:

- meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- promote equity in participation in ecologically sustainable development
- minimise any adverse environmental impacts of economic development through integrating environmental considerations with economic and sectoral planning and policies
- formulate resource use and development planning policies based on the precautionary principle;

2. Adopt, as an integral part of this declaration, the *1991-1995 Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region* and undertake to work individually and collectively for its full implementation, in particular by:

- promoting ecologically sustainable resource use practices
- conserving biological diversity of the region and protecting critical ecosystems
- ensuring the ecologically sustainable use and conservation of terrestrial, freshwater and marine resources
- preventing, controlling and managing pollution and wastes
- assessing the environmental impact of development projects
- co-operation in international efforts to find solutions to pressing global environmental problems;

3. Recognise the importance of socio-economic factors in national and regional resource management activities and shall therefore endeavour to:

- adopt population policies and promote consumption patterns which foster sustainable development
- integrate health and nutrition considerations into development planning by taking steps to alleviate the impact of environmental degradation on community health and nutrition
- ensure the retention and use of traditional knowledge and practices which foster sustainable development
- increase, through education and training and information dissemination, the overall awareness and understanding of the environment and cultural heritage, to promote positive community attitudes towards the environment
- facilitate the transfer of affordable and appropriate technology, along with the associated development of human resources, skills and training, research and information sharing
- ensure effective application of funding from within national budgets and international sources to the protection of the environment and the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the region
- explore opportunities for private sector contributions to implementing ecologically sustainable development in the region;

4. Affirm the right of individuals and non-government organisations (NGOs) to be informed about environmental issues relevant to them, to have access to information, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of decisions likely to affect their environment;

5. Declare our commitment to work together, including through SPREP, to develop further, as needed, the legal framework for protecting the regional environment, to facilitate the implementation of relevant regional conventions, and further enhance regional and national capacities for sustainable development;
6. Call on the international community to:
 - respect the right of the people of the South Pacific, as custodians of our fragile environment, to protect our region for present and future generations
 - adopt additional measures to protect the environment, particularly in the areas of climate change, sustainable fishing practices and technologies, conservation of biological diversity and protection of marine areas from pollution from all sources
 - support activities in the region to understand the global climate system
 - co-operate in and assist regional and national efforts to implement sustainable development in the South Pacific
 - recognise SPREP as the regional organisation responsible for environmental co-ordination, protection and management for the South Pacific;
7. Call on the UNCED Preparatory Committee to take full account of the concerns expressed in the *South Pacific Regional Statement to the Third Meeting of the UNCED Preparatory Committee*.

**SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL STATEMENT
TO THE THIRD MEETING OF THE UNCED PREPARATORY COMMITTEE**

The members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) welcome the opportunity provided by the UNCED and the work of the Preparatory Committee to contribute to global understanding and achievement of ecologically sustainable development.

As part of their contribution, and pursuant to Paragraph 13 of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/228, the SPREP members have undertaken regional preparations for UNCED, including a regional intergovernmental meeting at Ministerial level and the preparation of a regional report, to develop their views and perspectives on the issues on the Prepcom agenda.

The unique environment and cultural resources of the Pacific island countries have been noted at earlier meetings of the Preparatory Committee. This Statement elaborates on our earlier contributions to Prepcom and will be further elaborated in our individual National Reports, and in a Regional Report to be presented to the fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

This Statement provides the SPREP Regional perspective on what are, for us, the key issues under consideration.

As a region we can be characterised as islands and groups of islands sharing a common thread of evolutionary and human history. Many of us occupy some of the smallest habitable land masses on earth. As islands we share a unique vulnerability to natural and human-induced perturbations of both the local and global environments. We are also bound by our dependence on the physical characteristics and biological resources of the sea and the land and by our common reliance on local, and mostly vulnerable, supplies of freshwater.

As islands, mostly isolated from each other, by hundreds if not thousands of kilometres, our people have developed unique cultures and attitudes of self reliance. Our diversity as a region is a source of strength, but like all islands we are vulnerable to environmental changes which can have catastrophic effects. The recent human history of the South Pacific contains examples of entire islands rendered uninhabitable by human environmental destruction. Unsustainable development threatens not only the livelihoods of island people but also the islands themselves and the cultures they nourish.

These considerations naturally draw us together to seek international action on global environment issues which threaten countries in our region. Climate Change, potential sea level rise and climatic disruption are issues of grave concern to the region. Similarly, our reliance on the biological resources of our region is threatened by the patterns of large scale exploitation of marine and terrestrial living resources. Concern to conserve our wealth of species and ecosystems underlies our interest in negotiations towards a global convention on the protection of Biological Diversity.

Our drive towards economic self-reliance is central to social and economic development of the region. However, many countries are already dependent on development assistance and we recognise that achieving our goal of a sustainable Pacific will require the ongoing assistance of the international community.

The following sections present our views and needs, focusing on international actions required.

1. OCEANS

1.1 The Pacific is the world's largest ocean, covering one-third of the planet's surface. The health of the marine environment and its resources are integral to the very existence of Pacific communities.

1.2 To this end, it is essential to:

- 1.2.1 recognise and respect the absolute dependence of Pacific Island countries on the ocean for their very existence;
- 1.2.2 cease unsustainable fishing practices, particularly driftnet fishing;
- 1.2.3 prohibit the dumping of toxic, hazardous and nuclear substances in the Pacific;
- 1.2.4 prevent, reduce and control pollution which might result from nuclear testing, and from importing, transporting and storing or destroying toxic and hazardous wastes and weapons
- 1.2.5 implement and endorse existing conventions covering marine pollution, international shipping and fisheries conservation and management;
- 1.2.6 recognise the environmental and social impacts of industrial scale fisheries and destructive fisheries practices on local coastal communities and fisheries activities;
- 1.2.7 use management systems based on ecosystems, rather than single species approaches;
- 1.2.8 assist Pacific island countries to prevent, minimise and control land-based sources of marine pollution;
- 1.2.9 recognise the role of the ocean as a carbon sink;
- 1.2.10 support efforts at international and regional levels towards management of high seas fisheries.

1.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage ocean issues through:

- 1.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;
- 1.3.2 the development of National Environmental Management Strategies in SPREP members;
- 1.3.3 marine pollution monitoring and control (SPREP-POL) and oil pollution contingency planning at national and regional levels;
- 1.3.4 coastal management planning projects (marine park development and resource inventories) and the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities;
- 1.3.5 completing ratification of, and implementing the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific (SPREP Convention) and related protocols.

2. LAND RESOURCES

2.1 The South Pacific is a region of thousands of islands, representing less than 0.4 percent of the world's land resources, spread over one tenth of the world's surface. For most South Pacific societies, land resources are the basis for the majority of subsistence and commercial production. High population growth rates and the displacement of traditional land management systems by introduced agriculture, mining and forestry development have placed serious stress on land resources and communities which depend on them. Such trends are particularly serious on smaller islands, especially atolls, with limited land areas, poor soils and limited mineral and other resources. Because land based activities also directly affect coastal and marine ecosystems, the promotion of environmentally sustainable land use practices must be seen as integral to sustainable coastal and marine resource development.

2.2 It is essential to:

- 2.2.1 recognise the integral relationship between land, freshwater and marine resources in the Pacific region;
- 2.2.2 take into account the impacts of land development and resource extraction projects on other resource users and environments;
- 2.2.3 recognise the value and role of forests as carbon sinks and in ameliorating the impacts of climate change;
- 2.2.4 promote sustainable agricultural and forestry practices. Existing programmes should be changed to ensure they are environmentally sound;
- 2.2.5 recognise and respect the rights of traditional land owners and users;
- 2.2.6 adhere to and further develop codes of conduct for transnational corporations operating in the region;
- 2.2.7 recognise the impact of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in industrialised countries;
- 2.2.8 ensure the proper management of mining so as to minimise the environmental impacts and maximise the local social and economic benefits;
- 2.2.9 recognise the critical contribution of subsistence agriculture to the real incomes and quality of life of many South Pacific communities, and its role in providing a basis for self reliance;
- 2.2.10 recognise the need for development projects, including tourism and industry, to be undertaken in a manner considering proper environmental controls.

2.3 SPREP member countries are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage land resources through:

- 2.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;
- 2.3.2 the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities;

3. FRESHWATER

3.1 Water is critical to ecologically sustainable development, and freshwater resources are a major source of subsistence and cash incomes for many communities. Moreover some small islands have no surface water and extremely limited and fragile groundwater resources which, along with rainwater, are critical to sustainable settlement. Many are totally dependent on local resources with no options for importing water. These water resources are vulnerable to pollution, overuse and salinisation due to increasing population, modern development and urbanisation and changes in climatic patterns due to global climate change.

3.2 It is essential to:

- 3.2.1 recognise the constraints placed on development by limited freshwater resources and the vulnerability of such resources to contamination;
- 3.2.2 supply appropriate technology for reticulation and conservation of fresh water;
- 3.2.3 assist in development and conservation of the resource, including groundwater and surface water;
- 3.2.4 take account of South Pacific concerns in the design and maintenance of international water programmes;

3.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to manage and protect freshwater resources through:

- 3.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;
- 3.3.2 the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities;
- 3.3.3 pollution prevention and management programmes.

4. BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

4.1 The Pacific region is one of the world's centres of biological diversity. The western Pacific has the highest marine diversity in the world. Up to 3000 different species may be found on a single reef. The many thousands of islands are surrounded by a rich complex of coastal ecosystems including mangroves, seagrass beds and estuarine lagoons. The evolution of island biogeography has led to a high endemism in terrestrial species, particularly on larger islands which can also have high biological diversity. Although some of the smaller islands have extremely low diversity and little or no endemism, they nevertheless have a high rate of species endangerment. Islands, in addition, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of introduced species. The maintenance of the region's biological diversity is critically important to ecologically sustainable development throughout the region and the world.

4.2 It is essential to:

- 4.2.1 recognise the fundamental importance of their biological resources to the peoples of the South Pacific;
- 4.2.2 conclude a comprehensive biological diversity convention, taking into account the unique characteristics and needs of the Pacific region;
- 4.2.3 provide funding and technical assistance to Pacific island countries to meet provisions under existing international agreements (eg CITES);
- 4.2.4 assist Pacific island countries to identify and assess their biological resources;
- 4.2.5 recognise that the maintenance of biological diversity is important not only in undisturbed terrestrial and marine ecosystems, but also in agricultural and urban areas;
- 4.2.6 assist the region to develop agricultural, forestry and fishing practices which encourage the maintenance of the region's biological diversity;

4.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage these issues by:

- 4.3.1 the development of an Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the South Pacific;
- 4.3.2 implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan in accordance with the Action Strategy above;
- 4.3.3 completing ratification of, and implementing, the Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) and the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific (SPREP Convention) which are now in force;
- 4.3.4 regional programmes for the conservation of marine turtles, avifauna and marine mammals;
- 4.3.5 implementing an umbrella biological diversity programme to provide the means to implement the Action Strategy.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE

5.1 The islands of the South Pacific are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and potential sea level rise, a problem to which the region's contribution has been negligible. This vulnerability is a result of the following characteristics:

- 5.1.1 low-lying islands and atolls;
- 5.1.2 concentration of populations, development and infrastructure on the coastal zones of larger, higher islands;
- 5.1.3 historic and current high risk to extreme natural events (e.g. cyclones, droughts, other climatic variations, earthquakes and tectonic movements);
- 5.1.4 dependence on limited areas of arable soil for agriculture production;
- 5.1.5 dependence on coastal marine resources;
- 5.1.6 limited potable surface and groundwater resources.

5.2 SPREP members call for immediate action to reduce significantly greenhouse gas emissions and to conclude urgently an effective Convention on Climate Change.

5.3 It is essential to:

- 5.3.1 ensure that Pacific island countries do not bear disproportionate costs associated with global climate change;
- 5.3.2 provide funding and technical assistance for the implementation of measures that will enable island countries of the Pacific Region to cope with sea-level rise and changes in climate patterns which will have detrimental effects on agriculture, water quality, health, marine and terrestrial living resources;
- 5.3.3 provide financial assistance to enable Pacific island countries to participate in international discussions on climate change and response options;
- 5.3.4 assist with monitoring climate change and sea-level rise;
- 5.3.5 promote activities related to better scientific understanding of the issues, including the Tropical Ocean and Global Atmosphere - Coupled Ocean Atmosphere Response Experiment (TOGA-COARE) of the World Climate Research Programme;
- 5.3.6 promote appropriate energy efficient technologies;
- 5.3.7 provide assistance in designing rational response strategies to address environmental, social and economic impacts;

5.4 SPREP members are prepared to make a contribution to international efforts to limit the effects of climate change by:

- 5.4.1 controlling emissions of greenhouse gases;
- 5.4.2 managing their national resource base on a sustainable basis;
- 5.4.3 cooperating in international efforts to monitor climate change in the Pacific; and,
- 5.4.4 implementing development strategies and policies which take into consideration climate change factors.

6. WASTES, TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

6.1 The physiographic characteristics of Pacific Islands, the oceanic nature of their location, and dependence on a marine and limited terrestrial resource base, including limited availability of freshwater, makes them highly vulnerable to contamination by toxic and hazardous wastes and chemicals, and radioactive materials. The history of waste disposal in the region has led to a growing appreciation of the dangers this poses to the Pacific environment and its communities. SPREP members reject the perception that the region should continue to be used as a dumping ground for such materials. This position is reinforced by the acknowledged past and current impacts on the health and welfare of our island peoples resulting from such action by countries and corporations from outside the region.

6.2 It is essential to:

- 6.2.1 prevent, reduce and control pollution which might result from nuclear testing and from importing, transporting, storing and disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes and weapons and implement the relevant international conventions;
- 6.2.2 cooperate in the implementation of the prior consent procedure for the export of toxic chemical substances to the region as provided for in the London Guidelines;
- 6.2.3 provide technical, legal and administrative resources for the adoption of clean production technologies, the prevention of pollution and management of wastes;
- 6.2.4 generate and disseminate information on the sources, levels, amounts, kinds, trends and effects of pollution and waste within the Pacific Region; and,
- 6.2.5 strengthen the capabilities of national and regional institutions to carry out pollution monitoring and research and to formulate and apply pollution prevention, control and abatement measures;
- 6.2.6 address the consequences of past activities which have generated toxic and hazardous waste products that have damaged the health and livelihood of island peoples.

6.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage these issues through the following measures:

- 6.3.1 developing and implementing appropriate legislative and administrative measures for the prevention, control and monitoring of pollution and management of wastes at national and regional levels;
- 6.3.2 cooperating on a regional basis for the prevention, control and monitoring of pollution and hazardous wastes; in particular to ensure that the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (the SPREP Convention), including its Protocols on dumping and pollution emergencies, are ratified and implemented by respective members;
- 6.3.3 minimising the amount of waste produced as a consequence of increased industrialisation by members of the region, and maximising recycling of such wastes; and,
- 6.3.4 cooperating in international efforts to generate and disseminate information on the sources, levels, amounts, kind, trends and effects of pollution and waste within the region.

7. CROSS SECTORAL ISSUES

7.1 Financial Resources

Most countries in the region are highly dependent on development assistance. While achieving a high level of economic independence and growth is the objective of all countries, the achievement of ecologically sustainable development will require both new types of international funding and adjustment of national development policies. This assistance and these policies must be based on a clearly defined set of individual island needs.

SPREP members seek from the international community a recognition that all development assistance, whether new or ongoing, should be directed towards ecologically sustainable forms of development. Development assistance should also provide for the protection and restoration of sensitive or threatened environments. This could be achieved in part by donor governments applying environmental guidelines to assistance projects which are consistent with their own national environmental guidelines.

The region also urges greater coordination between donors and implementing agencies in seeking to meet priority regional needs.

One specific funding requirement which needs to be addressed by UNCED is the provision of technical assistance to developing countries of the region, on request, to enable them to accede to and implement existing international environment agreements.

The South Pacific region through SPREP is actively seeking to identify and coordinate new and additional financial resources for the implementation of ecologically sustainable development.

7.2 Transfer of Technology

The Pacific island countries are not well endowed with the technical infrastructure necessary to promote and achieve the effective transfer of new or novel technologies. Even in established technologies, many countries lack the necessary capabilities to provide on going maintenance and repair. In many cases, the major requirement for technology in the South Pacific is in the area of management and technical expertise relevant to the ecologically sustainable development of natural resources. Other specific areas of need for environmentally sound technologies include combating pollution, coastal engineering, freshwater reticulation and quality control and energy production.

The Pacific island countries require international assistance in building local capacity to assess, apply, adapt, absorb and maintain environmentally sound and appropriate technologies.

The Pacific island countries would also welcome increased technical cooperation with developed countries as well as with developing countries, particularly in the fields of traditional technologies and on their experiences in adapting and adopting new forms of environmentally sound technology.

The SPREP members are actively engaged in the development of local education and training institutions which can form the basis of increased international efforts in the field of technology transfer.

7.3 Institutions and Legal Issues

The legal and institutional framework for the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the Pacific island countries largely exists in the current multilateral and regional conventions and organisations. In particular the framework for environmental protection at the regional level exists in the form of the SPREP and Apia Conventions and in the SPREP Secretariat. SPREP members see regional cooperation as crucial for addressing environmental concerns in the South Pacific and have accordingly taken steps to enhance the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and give it appropriate status.

The likelihood of successful ecologically sustainable development would be significantly enhanced by improved coordination among UN agencies and NGOs dealing with the coastal and marine environment. This should include improved working relationships among UNEP, UNESCO, the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC), IMO, FAO, IAEA, and the UN Law of the Sea Secretariat. This coordination should be reflected on a regional level and include regional Pacific organisations.

7.4 Energy

Because of the absence of proven fossil fuel reserves in all Pacific island countries, except Papua New Guinea, increasing dependency on imported fossil fuel is seen as a major constraint to ecologically sustainable development. The region's dispersed population and the long distances between major population centres make efficient energy production and distribution a fundamental problem for the region. The development of renewable energy alternatives and energy conservation is therefore a priority.

The link between existing forms of energy production, current world consumption levels and the onset of climate change is not lost on the countries of the South Pacific.

Our greatest need is for economically sustainable, clean, renewable, moderate scale energy production technology to initially complement, and eventually replace, existing sources of energy.

We recognise that a coordinated global effort to develop and disseminate the appropriate technology is an urgent need, not just for the Pacific, but for all developing countries. Combined with a new approach to energy planning, demand management and pricing, the issue of new energy technologies is one of the most fundamental issues of ecologically sustainable development.

7.5 Population and Environmental Degradation

The Pacific island countries have a culturally diverse and highly dispersed population. Population problems are generally highly localised and often associated with urbanisation and growth in established centres. In some countries the local population is supplemented with large numbers of tourists, placing additional pressure on local infrastructure and the environment. Population density and population growth rates in some countries of the region are as high as those anywhere in the world. Other countries are suffering from a different problem: substantial loss of population through emigration to metropolitan centres creating severe human resource shortages.

The Pacific island countries look to the international community to continue to provide guidance and programmes in the area of population planning.

For their own part the SPREP members have adopted, as part of the SPREP Action Plan 1991-95, a commitment to providing information and access to international population programs for those Pacific countries which are suffering the adverse effects of population pressure.

7.6 Traditional Practices

Many traditional Pacific island resource management practices were relatively sustainable. They were based on renewable inputs, the maintenance of biological diversity, were non-polluting and did not require imported energy inputs. Despite widespread monetisation of Pacific island economies, these systems still provide the bulk of the real income of most rural, and a significant proportion of urban, communities. In short, there exist alongside one another, communities of almost entirely monetised and those which still enjoy a high degree of subsistence affluence obtained from traditional resource management systems.

The international community, and in particular the developed countries and transnational corporations which have dealings with the region, need to recognise that these two cultures, a western style economy and a traditional society, exist side by side, and in dynamic tension, in the Pacific island countries.

Sensitivity is required to ensure that developments imposed or fostered from outside the region meet the needs take account of South Pacific cultures.

Developments which are compatible with traditional practice and knowledge are, in the Pacific, more likely to be sustainable than those which take a narrow economic, albeit environmentally sensitive, approach.

7.7 Poverty

The link between poverty and the environment is being addressed here for the first time at a regional level. Poverty is an emerging issue in a number of Pacific island countries but needs to be understood and addressed against the background of traditional lifestyles and economic change. While conventional economic and social indicators demonstrate that a significant percentage of Pacific island populations are at poverty level, the true picture is clouded by the fact that a high proportion of people still live subsistence lifestyles. For many of our people it is the health and general social indicators of poverty which tell the real story, not the purely economic indicators. As has already been stated many communities still enjoy a high degree of subsistence affluence obtained from traditional resource management systems.

Indeed, it appears that urbanisation and the shift to a monetary economy are part of the problem. Threats to viable subsistence lifestyles, such as the rapid depletion of natural resources through over-exploitation, are apparent in many countries. This is contributing to the emergence of poverty in our region. International action to address the linkage between poverty and environmental degradation must address the impact of unsustainable economic development on traditional, subsistence cultures.

The issue of equity, both within and between generations, is central to the environment and development debate for SPREP members. Any set of general principles on ecologically sustainable development must contain an expression of this concept.

7.8 Environmental Health

Small isolated communities are particularly vulnerable to the rapid spread of infection and to the adverse effects of local environmental degradation. In the Pacific island countries, environmental health problems are strongly linked to the supply and quality of freshwater and to the introduction of toxins into the general environment. High incidences of nutritional disorders and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases, due to the deterioration of traditional wildfood and agricultural systems is also seen as a major environmental health issue.

SPREP members stress that the international community has an obligation to developing countries of the region in relation to the control of hazardous substances. It must ensure that those who would propose to introduce or produce in the region substances potentially damaging to human health, provide to the people and governments of the region sufficient information on those activities so that informed decisions can be made. Further, proponents of potentially hazardous activities must accept an obligation to eliminate any potentially negative effects on the people of the region and accept liability for unforeseen negative effects which might occur.

SPREP members emphasise that the region is neither a dumping nor testing ground for toxic and hazardous substances nor for outmoded technologies which generate such substances.

SPREP members also emphasise that the international community must support development which promotes traditional food system management and maintenance and minimises the import and promotion of nutritionally inferior foods, the increased consumption of which appears to be the main causal factor in nutrition related poor health.

7.9 Education and Public Awareness

The need for education on environmental issues in order to raise public awareness and motivation is common to all Pacific island countries. Education also has an important role in building upon the skills of indigenous people in the area of environmental and natural resource management. All countries of the region have a need for more education about environmental issues, both at a grassroots level and through the formal education system. The training of technicians, scientists and decision-makers to enable them to deal with the issues of ecologically sustainable development is also an important educational requirement.

The 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan emphasises the importance of, and need for, access to environmental information for all groups, in particular women and youth. This will enhance the management of resources and environment within the region.

Pacific island countries need the support of the international community, particularly in these areas of education and public awareness.

It is also essential that the international community is made aware of the unique perspectives and problems of the Pacific island countries. This is seen as an integral part of the process towards achieving sustainable development for the people of the South Pacific.

LIST OF MEETING DOCUMENTATION**INFORMATION PAPER**

1. Preparations for UNCED - Principles and actions with respect to the oceans suggested by the United States for endorsement by UNCED

WORKING PAPERS

- WP.1** 1991-1995 revised Action Plan for managing the environment of the South Pacific region
- WP.2** SPREP work programme progress report
- WP.3** Recommendations for the Meeting of the Officials
- WP.4** Director's annual report 1990/1991
- WP.5** Payments for travel and per diem to the annual SPREP IGM

