



"And so it is with a sense of humble pride, and quiet relief that I stand before you all on this very special occasion in the development of SPREP as a regional institution. My staff and I are humbled by the unanimous support for this Centre by government leaders of our region, our members, the government and people of Samoa and the donor community. For this public display of support can only lead to higher expectations on an already hard-working Secretariat. At the same time, we are proud of this recognition of the value of SPREP's work to our region." *Tamarii Tutangata, Director*



environment

July-September 2000
NEWSLETTER

SPREP's Big Move

Safeguarding the Pacific environment took a significant step forward with the opening of a Centre complex for SPREP near Samoa's capital Apia. Over five hundred guests enjoyed the ceremony for the US\$1.9 million dollar complex set on a 10 acre site at Vailima, just minutes from the former home of renowned Scottish author, Robert Louis Stevenson.

In opening the Centre, Samoa's Prime Minister, Hon. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi congratulated SPREP on its new premises and called for continued regional support for the organisation.

Australian High Commissioner H.E. Paul O'Callaghan who chaired the Headquarter's Task Force said the new facility reflected the commitment of SPREP's 26 member countries and territories. "Each of our countries faces an unprecedented complexity of global and regional environmental issues. Sometimes those challenges seem too daunting. I believe that the spirit which

ensured the new building could go ahead is also being reflected in an increasing momentum in the region for collective efforts to protect this world's fragile environment. This provides much reason for hope."

Much of the funding for the building was provided by the Australian and New Zealand governments, with further support from France, Papua New Guinea, the Government of the People's Republic of China, and the United States of America.

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photo F. Tauafali, SPREP.

Pacific Pollutants Put Into Print

At least 50 stockpiles of potentially lethal chemicals have been identified in 13 Pacific island countries by a SPREP report.

The stockpiles include oil in old power transformers, which can contain toxic chemicals known as polychlorinated biphenyls but commonly called PCBs, old pesticides and timber treatment wastes. The contaminated sites were caused by poor storage or disposal of hazardous materials.

If the hundreds of tons of obsolete chemicals are to be disposed of properly the bill for the cleanup could run anywhere from US 5–10 million dollars.

The 250 page *Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Pacific Island Countries* report gives the results of a two year survey carried out by a team of SPREP consultants, funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The report says that some of the stockpiles are the result of chemicals being taken out of

use or no longer required, while others were due to leftover supplies from activities such as crop development trials.

The findings suggest that many of the waste chemicals can only be safely disposed using high-tech treatment facilities which are not available in Pacific island countries. These wastes will have to be packed into special containers and shipped outside the region.

SPREP's Waste Management and Pollution Prevention Coordinator, Dr Bruce Graham says, "The survey showed there is a need for significant improvements in the management of hazardous materials in Pacific island countries".

Proper planning was needed from the time the materials landed in a foreign country, with more consideration given


The survey showed there is a need for significant improvements in the management of hazardous materials in Pacific island countries



photos by Bruce Graham, SPREP

to aligning purchasing with actual requirements. In the case of development projects, there should have been some provision for unwanted materials to be returned to the point of supply.

SPREP will be assisting countries to address these issues through its waste management and pollution prevention programmes. They will also be approaching possible donors, including AusAID, for assistance with the clean-up work.

The countries and territories surveyed were: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. 

One of the stockpiles in the Pacific islands identified by the report.

From the Director's Desk

SPREP heads for home

The past few weeks have seen a major transition take place at SPREP, as we bid farewell to our temporary headquarters at Vaitele and moved into new premises at Vailima on the eastern side of Apia.

After eight years of living in the hub of Samoa's burgeoning industrial area, there is now a true sense of place and permanence through what has been achieved. Indeed, looking back, SPREP has come a long way since the call went out in 1969 for a Pacific environment programme, during a World Conservation Union conference in New Caledonia.

Over the next decade international and regional agencies gave their support to the concept of SPREP, with the United Nations Environment Programme, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) all playing their part in planting and nurturing the seed of our growth.

SPC started the process in 1974, with the launching of a project on Nature Conservation, then appointing a re-

gional Ecological Adviser who was given a broad brief to survey all the ecosystems in the South Pacific.

Consultations in 1975 between the SPC and UNEP led to the suggestion of organising a South Pacific Conference on the Human Environment. Also in 1975, the first conference on National Parks and Reserves in the South Pacific, held in New Zealand, provided a boost in political support for a regional approach to environmental matters. The following year saw the signing of the Apia Convention calling for the protection of the region's natural environment.

In Nauru the 1978 South Pacific Forum considered a proposal from Papua New Guinea and UNEP for a comprehensive environmental management programme for the Pacific. It was subsequently agreed that this should be a joint programme of the Forum Secretariat and SPC located at SPC's headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia.

A coordinating group for SPREP, made up of Forum Secretariat, SPC, ESCAP and UNEP was set up and chaired by the Forum Secretariat. Four years on, in 1982, an agreement for-

Mr Tutangata,
Director of
SPREP



malising SPREP came into being during the first Pacific ministerial-level Conference on the Human Environment held in the Cook Islands.

Following agreement by Members and an invitation in 1991 from the Samoan government, SPREP relocated its operations in 1992 to the Samoan capital of Apia, arriving only a few months after the visit by Cyclone Val.

In 1993, Members gathered in Apia and signed the SPREP Agreement. In two short years the agreement came into force when Niue became the 10th Member to ratify. This gave SPREP its legal status making it a fully autonomous regional intergovernmental organisation dealing specifically with the environment of the Pacific.

So as one can see, the road to finally having a place we can call "home" was the culmination of vision, hard work and generosity from governments, donors, and stakeholders both regionally and internationally.

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The old and the new accommodations for SPREP



photo F. Tausafali, SPREP

photo F. Tausafali, SPREP

Dangers to Pacific Islands Exposed at EXPO 2000

by Anona Ah Poe

The Pacific Ocean cannot exist in people's perception without the Pacific Islands. This is the notion exuded in the first days of EXPO 2000 where the Pacific Islands were part of a group presentation on the Impacts of Climate Change in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific and Asia.

Through the Munich Centre of the Carl Duisberg Gessellschaft (CDG) in Germany, the Pacific Islands were able to express and present their concerns on the global problem of Climate Change. EXPO visitors were treated to a day long presentation on 3 June, 2000 to an exhibition which used physical models and cultural activities from the four regions.

Ms Anona Ah Poe of Samoa, who is the Course Assistant to the Course on Statistics for Environment Policy at the CDG Munich Centre and Mr John Igitoi from Papua New Guinea coordinated the Pacific Islands part of the presentation with assistance from SPREP's Information and Publications Unit which provided information on the subject matter.

The group presentation on Climate Change focused on four problems of specific concern to each region. Africa focused on desertification, Asia (China) on air emissions, and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands on sea-level rise. The concerted effort of the group to put together the overall presentation was symbolic of the global nature of the climate change problem and implied the need for different countries and regions to work together towards a solution.

For the Pacific Islands presentation, Ms Ah Poe and Mr Igitoi built a sim-



Anona Ah Poe shares the Samoan Dance with African participants in front of onlookers.

ple physical model depicting the extreme vulnerability of the Pacific Islands in the vast ocean especially when put next to the big land masses of its neighboring islands such as Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and the continent of Australia. National flags and physical information about each island and its big neighbours were also part of the model.

Combined cultural activities from the four different regions added an element of unity to the Climate Change presentation. Samoan dance and song were part of the chain of cultural activities. The group sang the "World Medley" which was a combination of African, Arabic, Chinese, Jamaican and Samoan songs. Also performed together by the group were African Drums and Dance, and Samoan Siva (Dance).

For Pacific islanders, the islands are home. Living in the Pacific surrounded by the Pacific Ocean is a normal way of life. For people living in the big continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, those who saw the exhibition found it hard to believe that people could actually live on these small islands especially when seeing facts such as the area of the island nation of Tokelau with a total land mass of 10 square kilometres.

Overall, the presentation was an appeal to the world that the Pacific Islands, no matter how small, are home to some of the most diverse cultures in the world, home to 7.1 million people, home to over 800 languages, and home to a rich reserve of biodiversity. All these aspects are worth preserving and all the unique features of the Pacific Islands are directly threatened by Sea Level Rise and Climate Change.




Anona Ah Poe (right) and John Igitoi, with their creation depicting the Pacific islands.



Manning the Samoan stand at the EXPO 2000 grounds.



The SPREP Display at the Carl Duisberg Gessellschaft stand in EXPO 2000.

Another important message delivered was that, the Pacific Islands through programmes such as SPREP's Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme (PICCAP) enables the Pacific Islands to help themselves. However, because of their small sizes, finite resources and the global nature of the Climate Change problem, the help from other countries of the world is needed in order to preserve the Pacific islands' unique cultures, biodiversity and people. 



Dr Dieter Stentzel (Director of the Carl Duisberg Gessellschaft) samples Pacific Kava.

Home at last

Honourable Prime Minister, we of the SPREP Secretariat, are deeply grateful to be honoured by your address which was both inspiring and sobering – inspiring in the vision, confidence and challenges that you have conferred on the Secretariat while at the same time leaving us somewhat sober in the increased expectations of the Secretariat staff that these new facilities would inevitably engender amongst our donors and members. I am certain also that everyone present would now appreciate better the significance of this occasion through your address.

If I may be so bold Prime Minister: I feel through your presence, the presence of your friends the other Government Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum; and I hear through your address the echo of the voices of those same Leaders. For it was the collective support of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum that made this SPREP Centre possible.



montage designed by F. Tauafifi, SPREP.

It was on my second working day as Director of the SPREP Secretariat in January 1997 that I made my first courtesy call on the former Prime Minister of Samoa, the late Honourable Tofilau Eti Alesana. I distinctly remember on that occasion that Honourable Tofilau singled out the issue of the construction of new offices for the SPREP Secretariat as a priority issue on which he and the Government of Samoa, together with us in the SPREP Secretariat, needed to work together in earnest in order to see the actual construction proceed. Hon. Tofilau also re-

ferred to this magnificent 10 acre site which the Government of Samoa had already assigned to accommodate the SPREP Secretariat.

True to his word, in September of that same year, 1997, at the annual session of government leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum held in Rarotonga, Hon. Tofilau took the lead in securing the unanimous support of Forum Leaders towards securing the necessary funds for the SPREP Centre. The leaders maintained that support in promoting

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The late Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Tofilau Eti Alesana singled out the SPREP Centre as a priority issue in 1997.

Australian High Commissioner, H.E. Paul O'Callaghan, Chair of the SPREP Centre Task Force spoke at the official opening on August 2 about some of the challenges faced in bringing the project to fruition. The following is the text of his address.

Welcome to our region's new "Home of the Environment" on this magnificent site at Vailima. It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Task Force, which raised the funding for the project. In doing so I am reminded of three things.

First, the saying, "from little things, big things grow". In 1992, SPREP had less than 10 staff, now it has over 70.

Secondly, the generosity of the Government of Samoa in providing this excellent 10 acre site, which was committed back in 1993. Since then the Government of Samoa has facilitated SPREP's operations at Vaitele, and has made significant contributions to the new project site. Just as important has been the Government of Samoa's unstinting efforts in helping to progress this project. Without that support we would not be celebrating here today.

The third point that comes to mind is that old saying "there is more to this than meets the eye". This is certainly true for this project. As we celebrate this opening, it is worth reflecting that what you now see is the culmination of nearly eight years of work.

The concept of the building goes back to 1993, but serious work to achieve it began in late 1996. That was when SPREP member governments appointed a Task Force to try to identify a viable project design and in the process break through the then lack of funding support for the project.

In addition for the Government of Samoa and the SPREP Director, other members of the Task Force, consisted of those SPREP members with diplomatic representatives in Apia, including Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America.

We started with an original design costing over SAT\$30million. That was



Rear view of the SPREP Centre complex

never going to be built, and we realised that a more modest design was vital to funding.

Over the following two years we managed to achieve a design which met the operational needs of SPREP and at the same time was regarded by the major donors as acceptable.


The next stage was to seek the support from the United States, Papua New Guinea, France and the Peoples Republic of China from the main headquarters project. In addition we were successful in garnering support from Japan and the European Union for additional structures.

I wish to record my particular thanks in completing this project to the Honourable Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi for his backing throughout. I also thank those who did the early planning, including the architects, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Aiono Mose Su'a and the Director of SPREP, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, who consistently provided helpful advice in seeking to overcome the various obstacles we faced. I would also note the most valuable role by former New Zealand High Commissioner, Mr Peter

Hamilton, who would have loved to be with us today.

In addition to providing a professional Centre for SPREP staff to operate, I believe that the process through which the Task Force went over the last four years demonstrated a strong collective will across the region to support the work of SPREP i.e. sound environmental management and sustainable development.

Each of our countries faces an unprecedented complexity of global and regional environment issues. Sometimes those challenges seem too daunting. I believe that the collaboration which ensured this new building would go ahead is also being reflected in an increasing momentum in our region for collective efforts to protect this fragile world's environment. This provides much reason for hope about the contribution our countries can make to the global environment in the future.

We wish the staff of SPREP good fortune in their new home. Soifua. 

the Centre not only through their subsequent discussions with their Dialogue Partners of that year but also through the same Dialogue process a year later in Pohnpei. In this process, I also acknowledge the willing and effective support of the Secretary General and staff of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, Fiji.

In relaying this, Prime Minister and Honourable Ministers, I am mindful of the fact that this SPREP Centre also enjoyed your total support before the SPREP Secretariat relocated to Samoa from Noumea in 1992. I am also mindful of the fact that it was through your collective convictions that the Government of Samoa's support for this Centre was extended to enable the various services to be upgraded to this site. In this context, I would like to recognise the on-going enthusiastic support and encouragement that the SPREP Secretariat continues to receive from the Hon Tuala Sale Tagaloa, Minister for Lands, Surveys and Environment and his Department.

There are many others whose contributions in Samoa and support I would like to acknowledge with sincere appreciation. They include:

- our other donors to the Centre – the Governments of Australia, China, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the

United States of America;


- the total membership of SPREP for their support and guidance through the process of materialising this Centre;
- the SPREP Headquarters Task Force chaired by the High Commissioner of Australia with Samoa's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand High Commissioner, the Charge d'Affaire of the United States as members along with the SPREP Secretariat;
- the Samoan Government's Coordinating Committee chaired by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Mr Aiono Mose Su'a, with representatives of the Electric Power Corporation, Samoa Telecommunications, Public Works Department, Water Authority and Department of Lands, Surveys and Environment as members;
- our construction company CARE Construction, a local company who won the contract against bids by overseas and other local companies and CARE's directors Messrs: Colin McCarthy, Ewan Denis, Andrew Ah Liki and Ross Peters;
- CARE's subcontractors;
- Bruce Bowden of Bowden Design Associates in association with Group GSA Architects of Sydney, Australia the architectural design team;
- Bill Gordon and Nixon Toremana from Tinai Gordon

and Associates who supervised the construction process on behalf of the architects;

- Dr Vili Fuavao, my predecessor in my current post who set the ball rolling;
- Our new neighbours – the landowners and their tenants, who have had to put up with our builders, road contractors etc. over the last 12 months; and finally
- To my staff who have had the patience and commitment to continue to perform over and above reasonable expectations in our current premises.

I think that it is also worth recalling here that the European Commission has approved the necessary finances for an Information Resource Centre to be built as part of this SPREP Centre. I am hopeful also that within the next four weeks another announcement will be made that will see the construction of an Education and Training Centre also as part of the SPREP Centre.

And so it is with a sense of humble pride and quiet relief that I stand before you all on this very special occasion in the development of SPREP as a regional institution. For this public display of support can only lead to higher expectations on an already hard-working Secretariat. At the same time, we are proud of this recognition of the value of SPREP's work to our region.

This is the end of a long journey and the beginning of a new one. I am conscious that the realisation of this Centre is cause for quiet celebration since this Centre provides a more conducive atmosphere for consistent, intense performance for us as regional servants. A real celebration will only be meaningful when our members and the people of our region recognise that there are significant inroads being made toward solving the many environmental problems through our joint efforts. So let our celebration be a quiet but still, a meaningful one. 

SPREP's new home



photo F. Tauafafai, SPREP.

Grant Boosts Education in the Pacific Islands

In Tarawa, Kiribati the Local Council has introduced a by-law that controls the lagoon bone-fish catch. It was a traditional practice to wait for the spawning aggregation that occurred over a 4-day period at full moon. With increasing commercial pressure a substantial proportion of the spawning aggregation was being captured which has now resulted in a much reduced fish stock.

However, by integrating traditional knowledge and practices into the Council by-law, management of the fishery has been improved and the relevance of the traditional knowledge is expected to encourage the by-law.

Preserving traditional knowledge in relation to the environment is one of the major reasons why four Pacific islands have received US\$188,000 dollars for environmental education and traditional management.

The funding from the United States Government sponsored East Asia and Pacific Environmental Initiative (EAPEI), has been earmarked for strengthening traditional environmen-


tal management using natural resources found in the Pacific region. The funds are administered through SPREP's Capacity Building for Environmental Management Project (CBEMP).

Manager for CBEMP, Mr Craig Wilson, says EAPEI's support will also allow the islands of Niue, Palau, Samoa and Tonga to further develop educational resource material, promote income generating activities, and provide training workshops for government decision-makers and non-government organisations.

He said it was important to recognise the value of traditional practices.

“What we have here are best practices based on hundreds of years of experience and first hand knowledge that have withstood the test of time. There are some traditional practices that can be integrated with modern management methods to develop practical and relevant management methods for the Pacific”.

CBEMP is keen to build capacity in Pacific island countries to better manage their natural resources. Part of the strategy is to highlight the value of beneficial traditional practices in the region, then assist Pacific island countries integrate best features of these practises into current natural resource management systems.

At the community level, activities will be strengthened through the involvement of Peace Corps Volunteers, who will provide environmental management training in the village or district they are stationed. 

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The timing could not have been better. SPREP has continued to expand both in the volume of work being undertaken and in staff numbers from 10 to the current 70.

The government and people of Samoa have given SPREP 10 acres for the six main buildings that will provide the bulk of our services. They have also upgraded the access road, provided electricity, water and telecommunications to the site.

Construction for the project that began last year has been relatively smooth.


All this could not have been done without the generous assistance and goodwill of a number of governments who went the extra mile to bring this whole regional environment concept to fruition.

With a price tag of over US\$1.9m dollars, we found ourselves in a slightly precarious situation as tenders for construction came in above the estimates and available funds. Thankfully this was overcome as a result of the Australian and New Zealand governments stepping in to meet the shortfall. The contribution of these two governments amounts to three quarters of the total building funds.

The balance of the financing has been made up by SPREP member governments, France, Papua New Guinea, and the United States. The People's Republic of China also generously contributed.

The Government of Japan has indicated that it will approve funding for an Education and Training centre that will house training rooms, a computer laboratory and various other training related facilities.

We are now moving to the second phase for development of the SPREP Centre as a result of generous assistance from the European Union. Due for completion during 2001 is the the Information Resource Centre. In this time of computer driven global communications, our upgraded facilities will provide more effective avenues for SPREP to spread the environment message, especially within our region.

The new SPREP Centre on the slopes of Apia's hills, just above the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum at Vailima will provide us with the opportunity to provide even better services for our member countries, stakeholders, but most of all the people of the Pacific islands. The Centre will be a source of pride to SPREP members and the region as a whole. 

Diving Off the Deep End

Big is probably the word for a project involving three intergovernmental organisations, six million Pacific islanders, 14 countries and territories, and 38 million square kilometres of Pacific Ocean.

These bottom line figures are what have been stacked up for the five-year Pacific Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for International Waters funded by the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). SPREP's project manager for SAP, Andrew Wright, says the broad ranging project that began in July 2000 focuses on developing initiatives linked to conserving and managing the region's billion dollar tuna resource through to targeting threats to habitats and resources extending to the headwaters of coastal watersheds.

"The long-term objective of this project is to build local capacity to conserve and sustainably manage the coastal and ocean resources of the Pacific region. While we expect the process to be long and involved, we are confident that the eventual benefits for the region will make our efforts worthwhile," he said.

To achieve that goal, the SAP will set up a series of demonstration projects that, in collaboration with local communities, will attempt to define best

conservation practices for watershed and coastal habitats through such initiatives as the establishment of protected areas and programmes that promote the reduction of waste in communities.

"Tied in to those objectives are other important and related issues related to small island developing states, namely biodiversity, vulnerability to climate change and land degradation", says Mr Wright.

He points out that despite the remarkable biodiversity of the region, and the extent to which the economic health of the region is based on sustainable coastal and ocean fishery regimes, marine resource conservation and management is inadequate with the result many local resources are under severe threat.

"We are heading down the path where coastal areas are being degraded by increased land-based sources of pollution, land degradation, the modification of critical habitats, and the growing unsustainable exploitation of resources."



The International Waters team of Mr Andrew Wright and Ms Rosanna Galuvao.

On a chirpier note the new Programme will also allow Mr Wright to renew acquaintances with colleagues at his old stamping ground the Forum Fisheries Agency, where he was once Deputy Director.

The Pacific SAP is part of a growing portfolio of International Waters projects supported by the GEF and distributed around the planet. Other significant projects in areas like Asia, the Black Sea and the Danube are faced with similar challenges as this Programme for the island States of the Pacific.

Pacific countries included in the SAP are: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. 



Regional Forecasters Head for Clearer Skies

Pacific weather forecasters from 20 Pacific island countries met in Samoa, to talk over ways of improving meteorological services around the region. They were joined by experts from international meteorological organisations and services from around the world.

Opening the Global Climate Observation Systems (GCOS) Meeting, Samoa's Minister for Agriculture, Forest, Fisheries and Meteorology, Hon. Mafasolia Papu Vaai congratulated the 50 Pacific island delegates for their work pointing out the amount of public scrutiny, responsibility and trust involved.

"When you are correct no one seems to remember, or people take it for granted. However, when it is the opposite, I am sure it will hit the front page. Nevertheless you must remain patient and understanding," he said.

The three-day meeting worked on strategies to overcome deficiencies and needs in observing systems on land, sea and air.

SPREP Director, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, says that although rapid progress was being made, the majority of Pacific Island Meteorological stations were still struggling to provide basic services to their communities, pointing to national budget constraints as a key reason.

"This poses a dilemma to development partners who generally prefer not to be

committed to any on-going costs that may be associated with the provision of technical infrastructure.

"The low priority meteorological services were given, made a difficult situation even tougher," he said.

The 25 countries and territories attending were: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Finland, French Polynesia, Italy, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, People's Republic of China, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Switzerland, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Fatuna.


The GCOS meeting ran prior to the Seventh SPREP Meeting of Regional Meteorological Service Directors (7 RMSD).

Much of the meeting surrounded a just published report on the Pacific Meteorological Services Needs Analysis Project (PMSNAP), that was eight years in the making. Discussions on over 20 draft reports that emerged from the Project were held, plus reviews of PMSNAP project proposals and pro-

SPREP Director, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, says that although rapid progress was being made, the majority of Pacific Island Meteorological stations were still struggling to provide basic services to their communities, pointing to national budget constraints as a key reason.

grammes since the Tahiti meeting last year. A review of progress and major achievements since last year's meeting included an update on the 10 year Strategic Action Plan, to take regional meteorological services from now through to 2009.

Mr Tutangata emphasised that despite the difficulties faced by weather services and staff, SPREP believes that real progress towards having "all meteorological services in the region being able to fully provide all appropriate services to each respective nations through skilled and fully trained professionals" is now being made.

Both the GCOS workshop and 7 RMSD meeting were organised and sponsored by : the World Meteorological Organization, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service, Australia's Bureau of Meteorology, Meteo France, Met Service of New Zealand Ltd, the Government of Samoa, GCOS Secretariat and SPREP. 



Participants take time out to bask beneath Apia's clear blue sky.

photo Chris Peteru, SPREP.

Indicators Point to Conservation Success

New ways of revealing the condition of marine conservation areas in the region were laid out during an environmental workshop in Samoa in August this year.

SPREP's Nature Conservation Action Strategy Coordinator, Mr Samuelu Sesega, says he was pleased with the overall results of the meeting, and was confident the indicators project as a part of the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP), would soon provide a number of benefits for regional conservation.

25 Conservation researchers, officers, and representatives from eight countries poured over the results of data from a two-year test programme to develop a number of socio-economic and biological indicators. Results from the trials at three conservation areas in Uafato (Samoa), Koroyanitu (Fiji) and Vatthe (Vanuatu) were also presented.

"In their basic form, indicators are signals that are used to measure, simplify and communicate complex events. For example, body temperature and blood pressure are indicators of a person's health," said Sesega.

Researchers say they now have a set of indicators and monitoring methods that can be used to assess the progress of all 17 Conservation Areas (CAs) in 12 countries across the region which are managed by SPBCP.


Biological indicators were used to monitor and measure the extent to which the programme is successful in conserving biodiversity, while socio-economic indicators measured the impact of the programme on communities living in the areas being surveyed.

"What we achieved here was that the CA officers and participants are able to return to their countries knowing what the best marine indicators are to use in their own CAs, the best monitoring methods, and how to start set-

ting up their own set of monitoring procedures," says Sesega.

Starting in 1998 the study was actioned in two phases: (i) development of the indicators before (ii) test driving them. A second regional workshop planned

for 2001 will focus on the outcome of indicator trials on land before mainstreaming both sets of indicators.

The SPBCP is pulling out all the stops to get the right result with biodiversity conservation by developing and promoting better use of natural resources contained within each CA in the programme. This workshop also supplied training for staff at Samoa's Lands, Surveys and Environment Ministry, the World Bank and the World Conservation Union. 

Indicators are signals that are used to measure, simplify and communicate complex events. For example, body temperature and blood pressure are indicators of a person's health.

SPREP Heats Up Media Climate Conference

Environmental journalists from around Asia and the Pacific, met in Fiji to discuss the impact of climate change and its effects on the region.

But the week long gathering at Nadi's Macambo Hotel almost did not happen as the political unrest centred in the capital Suva, led to political pressure being put on some of the Asian journalists to boycott the meeting.

The theme for the five-day conference involving 40 delegates was climate change and the role of the media. SPREP's role, based on a request from the conference organiser, the Pacific Island News Association (PINA), was to provide technical expertise and support to the conference in the area of climate change.

SPREP's International Negotiations Officer, Dr Mahendra Kumar, delivered a well received paper covering the main climate issues facing the region, as well as regional and international legislation related to the ongoing negotiations surrounding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.


During subsequent sessions, Dr Kumar provided much needed backstopping to the many scientific and technical discussions relating to the science of climate change and the greenhouse effect. On many occasions, SPREP was asked

by delegates to explain the fundamentals of the global warming phenomenon.

"It took 40 hours to reach Fiji, and in every way it was worth it," says Syed Fahim Munaim, of the *Daily Star*, Bangladesh. "At most conferences, you find empty chairs. This one, this is a group of dedicated, eco-friendly delegates and I feel fortunate to have learned so many things from them."

"I realise how blind I am, and have been," says Olga Keil, of Samoa's Magic 98FM.

"Because I work for radio, which is free and reaches the rural area, I am going to take back what I learned and really push environmental stories. We can't afford to ignore this any longer."


The meeting ended with the signing of the Fiji Declaration calling for increased cooperation between Asian and Pacific islands media groups to promote environmental journalism. The Declaration was passed by the participants and various international organisations, including UNESCO and SPREP. 



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SPREP's Director, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata thanked all those who had contributed, and his staff for seeing the project through to completion.

"The SPREP Centre gives the organisation a sense of permanence and we believe it will become a focal point for much environmental work in the future."

After eight years in temporary headquarters at Vaitele, the heartland of Samoa's industrial area, the staff of over 70 have now settled into the new complex. Construction of an Environmental Education and Training facility, funded by the Japanese Government and a separate Information Resource Centre with funding from the European Union will begin shortly. Both of these additional complexes are due for completion over the next 18 months. 

Clockwise from top: Samoa PM Malielegaoi about to unveil the plaque; balloons released; Rev. Fauolo blessing the Centre; Guests in attendance; Entrance to Centre complex; SPREP choir singing to choir master Dan Devoe's tune.

Middle: Andrew Ah Liki handing over the keys to Tamari'i.

Below: The new Centre opens for business.
(all photos by F.Taufalafi, SPREP)

