

The Pacific Climate Change Roundtable as a mechanism for coordination and monitoring of the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change

The Pacific Climate Change Roundtable (PCCR) will be convened in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands from 19 to 21 October 2009, with UNFCCC negotiations discussions to follow on the 22 to 23 October. This paper sets out the purpose and the agenda for the PCCR, and also looks at some strategic considerations for improving its functioning as a coordination and monitoring mechanism for the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change (PIFACC). This builds on the experiences from other regional processes.

Background

SPREP, as the lead regional CROP agency on climate change issues in the Pacific was tasked by the Pacific Island Leaders to develop the Action Plan for the PIFACC. A key element to the Action Plan is its use of a regional roundtable on climate change as the main modality for consensus building and decision-making. This Pacific Climate Change Roundtable (PCCR) is intended to be a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary and participatory body, supported by SPREP, and incorporating Government representatives of Pacific Island Countries and Territories; other Government representatives; regional and international development agencies and partners; NGOs; academia; researchers; and other stakeholders as its main audience.

The PCCR seeks to bring together several different sets of stakeholders, such as technical staff and policy makers from national and regional institutions; technical staff and policy makers from regional offices of international organizations and; key experts from the region involved in scientific and policy research on sustainable development issues. The stakeholders will have expertise in sectors relevant to climate change and sustainable development.

The PCCR aims to strengthen capacity in the Pacific Islands region by providing a forum for representatives of organizations and institutions who are responsible for working on climate change at the national and regional levels. The PCCR will facilitate the exchange of experiences (lessons learned, good practices, impacts and benefits) and the use of those experiences as the basis to develop a long-term need driven strategy for strengthening national, regional and inter-regional capacity through collaboration.

At the 2008 PCCR additional mechanisms such as formalized thematic working groups were considered and this will be further elaborated at the 2009 PCCR. This would ensure that the PCCR will fully engage in its role as the overall umbrella coordinating mechanism for climate change activities in the region.

Objectives of the Roundtable

In general the objectives of the roundtable are:

1. To help update the PICTs on regional and international actions undertaken in support of the Framework and Action Plan;
2. To update a matrix¹ which would provide a clear overview of ongoing and planned activities at the national and regional levels, with responsible agencies or entities, and agree on mechanisms for measuring progress, identifying difficulties, and addressing actions needing special attention;
3. To assist donors in gaining an understanding of climate change initiatives in the region and allow for better targeted assistance to areas in the Action Plan where there are gaps;
4. To share lessons learned from best practices in the implementation of climate change programmes;

¹ This is expected to become an integral part of the work on the climate change portal, so will not be a major activity at this year's PCCR

5. To engage a wide range of stakeholders and regional organizations;
6. To provide an opportunity to prepare for international meetings of the UNFCCC; and
7. To disseminate information on new and existing funding modalities and opportunities.

Draft agenda

The draft agenda is attached. Comments are being sought from Members, CROP and others. One recent addition to the FCCC days (22 and 23 Oct) is a suggestion from UNDP to discuss the scope and potential for their Human Development Report focusing on climate change in the Asia-Pacific.

PCCR mechanisms – learning from the Nature Conservation Roundtable

To meet its stated objectives, the PCCR will need to establish some clear ways of working beyond the meeting in October. It has been proposed that a series of working groups be developed, which will be tasked with addressing the objectives, either directly or under specific thematic areas. The Pacific Islands Nature Conservation Roundtable (NCRT) also uses working groups to carry out its work and there is much to be learnt from this process.

The Pacific Islands Nature Conservation Roundtable (NCRT) has been operating for a number of years in the Pacific, but had its inception in different circumstances from the PCCR. Its role is to *promote, facilitate and monitor implementation of the Pacific Islands Action Strategy for Nature Conservation* with the mandate, as directed by the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Nature Conservation, to *increase effective conservation in the Pacific Islands*. It is becoming an effective forum for donors and practitioners enabling coordination of nature conservation initiatives and projects in the Pacific. The NCRT operates through a series of sub-working groups and **reports to the Pacific Island Nature Conservation Conference, which meets every 5 years.**

In the case of the nature conservation model, the Conference is the mechanism through which information and experiences are shared. The Conference brings together academics, researchers, practitioners, resource owners, governments and non governmental organisations to discuss and evaluate the implementation of the 5 year Action Strategy for Nature Conservation. The Action Strategy is revised for another 5 years through the Conference.

The Roundtable, which is formed out of the Conference, is essentially a *voluntary membership-based coalition of conservation organizations and donor agencies created to increase effective conservation action in the Pacific islands*. Members of the Roundtable have signed a Charter, committing them to working within an agreed set of principles.

The work of the Roundtable is carried out a series of working groups. Prior to the 2007 Conference, there were 11 Working Groups with around 170 members. A monitoring and evaluation study conducted on the Roundtable and its working groups found that few of the working groups had been effective in terms of their mandate to *track progress towards their assigned objective using the indicators adopted by the RT*. Additionally, the large number of working groups was seen as an indication of a loss of focus of the RT. It was also found that due to the voluntary nature of membership on the working groups, some groups tended to function better than others, usually due to a few committed individuals.

At the 8th Nature Conservation Conference, held in Alotau in 2007, Members agreed on the need to “formalise” the working groups and the role of the RT Chair while maintaining the voluntary nature of the process.

The following points are considered to be key to the effective functioning of the Roundtable:

- “Formalised” appointment of the Roundtable Chair – the RT Chair is from one of the Member organisations and is expected to work to a clear terms of reference;

- **A Process Management Group** has been established to advise on functions and process of the RT. The PMG reports to the Chair;
- **Working groups are focused and have clear terms of references.** All Working Groups must provide guidelines, a work plan or similar indication of purpose and must be working to assist countries implement some aspect of the current Action Strategy. “Thematic interest groups” are encouraged but are now distinguished from the Working Groups, thus ensuring that working groups remain action-oriented and focused;
- Working groups are supported through the Members of the RT - Members commit staff time and resources to those working groups that align with their own objectives;
- **A secretarial service (Roundtable Coordinator) is provided** (currently through membership (voluntary) contributions). The RT Coordinator is currently based with the RT Chair;
- **A monitoring framework for the Action Strategy** must be developed and working groups should align their work with the framework;
- The RT Membership system now requires that organisations sign a Charter, which commits them to working in line with a set of Principles.

The lessons from the NCRT can potentially be applied to the climate change roundtable to assist in developing an effective mechanism for *consensus building and decision-making* on climate change issues in the region. An important point that needs to be given consideration in the Climate Change RT is whether the current process (a large annual meeting) can adequately meet the expected functions of a Roundtable. There is scope to consider an annual (or even biennial) Conference from which a more focused “roundtable” is formed.

Development Partners Climate Change Group

The Suva based Development Partners Climate Change group meets on a regular basis to update each other on climate change activities. The matrix developed by them, in conjunction with a larger matrix developed by UNDP for the study on a proposed climate change centre in the region, are helpful in gauging actions in the region. However, the PCCR working group on the climate change portal identified the need to have further tools and resources available to stakeholders, and as such the work of the DPCC is viewed as a very valuable input to the development of the portal.

Issues for discussion with SDWG

1. SPREP is seeking to get approval for a steering committee for the PCCR along the same lines as exists for the Nature Conservation Roundtable. This would allow work of a “non-decision making” nature to progress in smaller meetings, and would allow the PCCR to meet every 2 years instead.
2. SPREP is seeking the understanding of the PCCR for the delays in launching the climate change portal, due to financial delays.
3. The PCCR is expected to give additional guidance on adaptation work in the region including ecosystem based adaptation, mainstreaming of climate change, and on the special concerns of the atolls on climate change.
4. SPREP is also seeking to establish technical working groups that would work online and provide inputs and advice, for example through the proposed committee.
5. A technical paper on the implementation of PIFACC has been commissioned and will likely determine the need for a review of PIFACC.