



SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

Fourth Executive Board Meeting 2024

4 - 6 September 2024

"A Resilient Blue Pacific Continent Free of Plastics"

Report of the Fourth Executive Board Meeting

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Introduction

1. The Fourth Executive Board Meeting was held in hybrid format from 4 to 6 September 2024.
2. Present at the meeting were representatives from France for the French Speaking Members, Palau for the Micronesian Members, Solomon Islands for the Melanesian Members, Samoa and Tokelau for the Polynesian Members, United States for the Metropolitan Members, and Tonga, Tuvalu, and the United Kingdom as Troika Members. Attending as Observers were Australia and New Zealand.
3. The full list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

4. The Meeting opened with a prayer by Pastor Sione Ausage, President of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission, Samoa.
5. The official opening ceremony was held on 4 September 2024. Mr. Sefanaia Nawadra welcomed Members to the Fourth Executive Board Meeting.
6. The keynote address to officially open the Fourth SPREP Executive Board meeting was delivered by Hon. Toeolesulusulu Cedric Schuster, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Government of Samoa. The Honourable Minister's Keynote Address is attached as Annex 2.

Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

7. The Outgoing Chair Tuvalu reminded the Meeting of the Terms of Reference of the Executive Board Meeting (WP2/Att.1), which states that the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be chosen from the Troika as the current and incoming Chair respectively of the Meeting. The incoming Chair being the United Kingdom, and Tuvalu as Vice Chair.
8. Samoa supported the nomination of the United Kingdom as Chair and Tuvalu as Vice Chair. No objections were raised by the Executive Board Meeting.
9. Tuvalu as the outgoing Chair expressed gratitude towards Tonga, the Director General Mr Sefanaia Nawadra and the Secretariat for the support provided in their capacity as the Chair; and congratulated United Kingdom as the incoming Chair.
10. United Kingdom thanked the outgoing Chair and the Executive Board Meeting for their confidence in its role as incoming Chair.

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11. The Director General of SPREP commended Tuvalu in their leadership role as the former Chair. Tuvalu acknowledged the sentiments expressed.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **confirmed** the Representative of **United Kingdom** as **Chair**; and
- 2) **confirmed** the Representative of **Tuvalu** as **Vice-Chair**.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

12. The Revised Provisional Agenda and Hours of Work were presented for consideration.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Considered** and **adopted** the Provisional Agenda; and
- 2) **Agreed** on hours of work.

Agenda Item 4: Action Taken on Matters Arising from the 31st SPREP Meeting

13. The Secretariat reported on actions taken against the decisions and directives from the 31st SPREP Meeting, held 5 to 7 September 2023.
14. In response to a query raised by Solomon Islands on behalf of New Caledonia, the Director General reassured the Meeting of the plans to host the 11th Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in New Caledonia and further advised that it will closely monitor the circumstances in New Caledonia.
15. The Director General advised of his meeting with the Pacific Ocean Commissioner at the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM53) confirming the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commission will coordinate Pacific engagement with support from the Secretariat at the Third United Nations Conference on the Ocean (UNOC) in 2025. This was in response to a point raised by Solomon Islands on behalf of New Caledonia.
16. In response to further issues raised by Solomon Islands on behalf of New Caledonia, the Director General confirmed that these will be addressed during the Executive Board Meeting. These issues include a progress report on support requested by New Caledonia to strengthen the development of regional and transboundary cooperation including marine protected areas and the Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal; and an update on action undertaken in response to request from New Caledonia for support with lithium battery management.

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17. The Director General confirmed the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) leads the work to address the monitoring levels of radioactivity in Pacific waters with support from the Secretariat in response to the request from New Caledonia for the Secretariat to take the technical lead.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted actions taken** against the decisions and directives of the 31st SPREP Meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Overview and Implementation of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017 – 2026

Agenda Item 5.1: Presentation of the Annual Report for 2023 and Director General's Overview of Progress since the 31st SPREP Meeting

18. The Director General presented the 2023 SPREP Annual Report to Members and provided the Executive Board Meeting with an overview report on progress over 2023.
19. The Chair congratulated the Secretariat on the signing of a partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.
20. On behalf of the Metropolitan Members, the United States commended the Secretariat for its focus on core and sustainable financing issues acknowledging the multi-year funding arrangements with Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom. United States further commended the Director General for the focus on people, empowering inclusivity and raising the morale within the organisation.
21. Tuvalu acknowledged the Director General for the confidence displayed in Tuvalu as host of the Fourth Clean Pacific Roundtable which concluded with successful outcomes through the support of the Secretariat, Members, partners and stakeholders.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the Director General's Report.

Agenda Item 5.2: 2022-2023 Performance Implementation Plan (PIP3): Strategic Outcomes and High-Level Summary Report

22. The Secretariat reported on the Third PIP (PIP3) 2022-2023 final strategic outcomes achieved and the implementation of the 2022-2023 Work Programme and Budget as well as the Final PIP3 strategic outcomes achieved by strategic goals: High Level Summary. The Secretariat also reported on the Final PIP3 Crosscutting issues and Lessons Learnt.
23. The Chair commended the Secretariat noting the almost 70 percent achievement rate of its outcomes.
24. The Director General confirmed the Secretariat is committed towards ensuring the Pacific Island region is well represented at UNOC2025 in France in response to France highlighting the importance of Pacific Islands' contribution towards ocean health and the linkages to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiations Committee (INC) for a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution including in the marine environment.

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25. France, on behalf of the French Speaking Members congratulated the Chair on its new role and commended the Director General for the achievements presented by the Secretariat.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the PIP3 (2022-2023) Final Achieved Strategic Outcomes with the actual expenditures of Annual Work programme and Budget 2022-2023; and
- 2) **Noted** the Secretariat's responses and actions on cross-cutting issues and lessons learnt in the implementation of PIP3.

Agenda Item 6: Governance, institutional arrangements, and mechanisms

Agenda Item 6.1: Audited Accounts for 2023

26. In accordance with Financial Regulation 27(e) the Secretariat presented its Audited Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2023, prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards and advised the auditors had provided an unqualified opinion of the Secretariat's financial statements for 2023.
27. The Chair commended the Secretariat for its succinct presentation and unqualified opinion achieved.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Reviewed** and **adopted** the audited Financial Statements and Auditor's Report for 2023.

Agenda Item 6.2: Audit Committee Report

28. The Chair of the SPREP Audit Committee, presented an overview report of the Committee's work over the period between 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.
29. The Chair of the Meeting confirmed further support from United Kingdom will be forthcoming this year.
30. The United States on behalf of the Metropolitan Members thanked the Audit Committee for the report and further stressed the need to strengthen policies to protect children from exploitation, requesting this be discussed during Agenda Item 10.1.
31. The Director General commended the work of the Audit Committee (AC) and the leadership of the AC Chair and expressed appreciation of the commitment and long service of the Chair in this role noting the recruitment of a new Audit Committee Chair is underway.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted and approved** the report of the Audit Committee for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024;

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- 2) **Acknowledged** the significant improvement in the reserve position, from US\$1,043,972 in 2022 to US\$2,304,271 in 2023;
 - 3) **Appreciated** the increased support from partners and donors;
 - 4) **Emphasised** the importance of timely settlement of member contributions to uphold regional solidarity and ensure SPREP has the resources to fulfil its mandates;
 - 5) **Encouraged** the establishment of a membership profile webpage and the conduct of a membership feedback survey at least every two years to gauge members' views;
 - 6) **Urged** the Secretariat to prioritise and allocate resources to fully implement the ICR and MTR recommendations and ensure readiness for the 2026 review;
 - 7) **Noted** the progress in endorsing Country and Territory Strategic Partnership Frameworks (CTSPFs) for Palau and American Samoa and encourage continued member collaboration to finalise the remaining CTSPFs by December 2025;
 - 8) **Prioritised** and expedite upgrade and full operationalisation of the Project Management Information System (PMIS) to ensure effective project monitoring, tracking, and reporting capabilities;
 - 9) **Recognised** the progress in reviewing key policies and procedures and encourage continued efforts to ensure all policies are up-to-date and supportive of SPREP's objectives;
 - 10) **Urged** promptly filling the vacant Risk Officer position to strengthen risk management framework;
 - 11) **Urged** the implementation of proactive cybersecurity measures, including regular review and testing of the cybersecurity plan, staff training, and collaboration with other CROP organisations for knowledge sharing;
 - 12) **Urged** the expedited development and socialisation of Project Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), Anti-Money Laundering (AML), and Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) policies to strengthen governance and risk management;
 - 13) **Encouraged** the Secretariat to leverage its GCF and AF accreditation status to explore new strategic project opportunities;
 - 14) **Urged** the Secretariat to address the human resource constraints and enhance capacity-building support to the Internal Audit Unit;
 - 15) **Encouraged** investing in e-learning platforms and development strategies to enhance staff onboarding, integration, and professional development; and
 - 16) **Recorded** its appreciation for the cooperation and support received from the Director General, Senior Leadership Team, and staff of SPREP over the past 12 months.

Agenda Item 6.3: Report on Members Contributions

32. In accordance with Financial Regulation 14, the Secretariat reporting to the meeting on the status of Member contributions as of 31 December 2023 as well as a brief update on the status of membership contributions.
33. The Chair commended the Secretariat and urged all Members to pay their contributions in a timely manner noting the proposed Talanoa Session with Members to discuss outstanding contributions as noted in the Audit Committee Report for 2023 under Agenda Item 6.2.

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34. The Director General welcomed the request from United States for SPREP to provide information and jointly explore solutions to outstanding membership payments of U.S. territories including the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **considered** the report and **addressed** the issue of outstanding member contributions; and
- 2) **committed** itself collectively and individually to paying current and outstanding contributions in full in 2024.

Agenda Item 6.4: Report of the SPREP Working Group on the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review and the Core Funding Review and Sustainable Financing and Resourcing Strategy.

35. The SPREP Member Working Group presented an assessment and review of the Consultant's Report and the draft Finance and Resource Sustainability Strategy for the Secretariat. An update on the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review was also provided. The SPREP Member Working Group also sought guidance from the Executive Board as to the direction and endorsement of the recommendations from the Working Group.
36. The Chair noted the importance of this and how it directly affects the ability of SPREP to effectively carry out its mandate.
37. The Chair and the Director General commended the Working Group's efforts in addressing the financial challenges faced by the Secretariat.
38. The Chair further highlighted the need to ensure that SPREP remains adequately resourced, both in terms of core funding and staff remuneration to maintain its operational effectiveness.
39. The Director General further noted the lessons from work on SPREP's core financing strategies such as the multi-year funding arrangements of key partners as a solution should the membership increase not be approved.
40. Samoa supported the convening of a special meeting of Members to deliberate on the outcome of the review.

SPREP Finance and Resource Sustainability Strategy

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Acknowledged** the completion of the independent consultant Review of the Core Funding Structure of SPREP and development of SPREP's Finance & Resource Sustainability Strategy;
- 2) **Endorsed** the:
 - i. Final Report on the SPREP Finance and Resource Sustainability Strategy with twenty-four (24) Recommendations and
 - ii. Policy Brief Highlighting Eight (8) Key/Priority Recommendations and Implementation Considerations.
 - iii. Inclusion of Recommendation 11 of the Final Report as an additional priority recommendation to address.

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- 3) **Noted** the Working Group position and recommendations outlined in the table in Para 13 above;
 - 4) **Adopted** the Finance and Resource Sustainability Strategy set out in section 6 of the Final Report;
 - 5) **Endorsed** that the Working Group continue to work closely with the Secretariat to provide guidance and oversight of the implementation of the rest of the report recommendations, in particular where there are funding implications; and
 - 6) **Invited** the Secretariat to report on progress on implementation of these recommendations at subsequent SPREP Meetings.

SPREP 2021 Remuneration Review

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** that a consultancy has been engaged to carry out an independent review of remuneration and employment conditions, and a report is expected to be prepared by mid-October 2024; and
- 2) **Indicated** the Meeting's preference for a mechanism to decide on recommendations, through either:
 - i. an out of session decision, with papers circulated to Members for a decision by email; or
 - ii. calling a Special Meeting of the Members.

Agenda Item 6.5: Review of the Staff Regulations

41. The Secretariat presented on the status of the Review of the 2012 Staff Regulations.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** that the substantive overarching principles that govern staff terms and conditions remain outstanding pending the outcomes of the Remuneration Review.
- 2) **Noted** that the Members Working Group will provide a report on the Remuneration Review under Agenda Item 6.4; and
- 3) **Approved** that a Report on the Staff Regulations Review and Update be presented to the 32nd SPREP Meeting, subject to the completion of the Remuneration Review.

Agenda Item 6.6: Preparation of the next SPREP Strategic Plan 2027–2036

42. The Secretariat sought Members' endorsement of the proposed approach, process, timeline, and indicative budget for preparing the next SPREP Strategic Plan 2027–2036.
43. Supported by the Chair and Tuvalu, the Director General clarified the engagement of Troika in the preparation of the next SPREP strategic Plan 2027 – 2036 was to provide oversight and guidance to the Secretariat.
44. In response to a query from Samoa, the Director General confirmed Members will be consulted through the range of existing mechanisms in place, such as the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable and the Clean Pacific Roundtable, to ensure broad Member consultation involving a wide range of Member institutions. Specific consultation meetings with Members will take place based upon guidance from Troika.

45. The Chair confirmed United States will be an incoming Troika member.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the proposed approach, process, timeline, and indicative budget for preparing the SPREP Strategic Plan 2027–2036; and
- 2) **Endorsed** the involvement and engagement of the Troika in providing strategic guidance and support to the formulation of the next SPREP Strategic Plan.

Agenda Item 6.7: SPREP Director General's Performance Assessment – closed session

46. The Troika presented its assessment of the Director General's Performance Development Plan (PDP) for the period September 2023 – August 2024; and its proposal for the SPREP Director General's Performance Development Plan for September 2024 – August 2025.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted and endorsed** the review completed by the Troika of the DG's PDP for the period September 2023 - August 2024 acknowledging the many initiatives and positive outcomes the DG has achieved and led as Head of the Secretariat, as well as noting areas that are highly ambitious for next year's PDP, which the Troika would like to work closely with the DG on for implementation; and
- 2) **Invited** all Members through a circular to propose relevant and appropriate specific targets they wish to be included in the DG's next PDP, by the 15 October 2024. The Troika will then discuss and finalise with the DG his PDP targets by the end of October 2024.

Agenda Item 7: Regional Cooperation and Strategic Partnerships

Agenda Item 7.1: Implementing the Pacific Leaders Agenda Update on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent implementation

47. The Secretariat presented an update on the 2050 Strategy implementation, with reference to CROP strategic priorities and coordination, Pacific Partnerships for Prosperity, and the review of the regional architecture.
48. France, Tonga, and United States commended the Director General and the Secretariat for achievements made. France further commended the collaboration between SPREP and other CROP agencies in implementing this work.
49. Tonga acknowledged the support from the Secretariat in greening the PIFLM53 noting the lessons learnt, and further expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for assistance with developing the Tonga Single-Use Plastics Roadmap. The Director General noted the request for support to implement the Roadmap will be forthcoming.
50. Addressing a query from France, the Director General confirmed the Ministerial is between Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) Climate Change Ministers and Australia and New Zealand.

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51. The Chair further queried as to how the Secretariat will proceed with Ministerial level meetings for Members of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat but aren't Members of SPREP.
 52. The Director General clarified a pathway forward for a Climate Change Ministerial for all SPREP Members is being explored.
 53. Samoa and Tonga further supported the current PSIDS Ministerial to take place in October as presented. Samoa stressed this is part of ongoing negotiation preparations with negotiation blocs in the United Framework Convention to Climate Change process.
 54. The Director General further reiterated Metropolitan Members can also request climate change bilateral meetings and events with PSIDS Members.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the progress on the 2050 Strategy Implementation and Monitoring Plan 2023 - 2030;
- 2) **Noted** the update on the review of the regional architecture and acknowledge the Secretariat's continued engagement in this process;
- 3) **Confirmed** that SPREP is an independent intergovernmental organisation established under the SPREP Agreement and the SPREP Meeting is the plenary body responsible for its governance;
- 4) **Noted** that SPREP is convening an ad hoc Climate Change Ministers Meeting in October 2024; and
- 5) **Approved** in principle, SPREP convening an annual Pacific Climate Change Ministers Meeting subject to Pacific Island Forum Leaders approval and finalisation of the Review of Regional Architecture.

Agenda Item 7.2: Financing climate change priorities, sustainable development and resilient prosperity in Pacific SIDS.

55. The Secretariat presented an update on new initiatives and pathways in accessing climate and other multilateral funding since the 31 SPREP Meeting. The Meeting was also informed of the strategic focus towards institutional strengthening activities undertaken by the Secretariat to enhance its capacity to effectively respond to Members' priority needs in climate change, sustainable development and resilient prosperity.
56. Donor partners are encouraged to invest in SPREP to sustain the Regional Implementing Entity (RIE) functions including the realisation of a financing-mobilised ratio of 1:45 by 2027 and build a sustainable and resilient financing portfolio into the next SPREP Strategic Plan.
57. France and the Chair commended the work of the Secretariat with France further noting the preparatory mechanisms in place to access the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund.

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58. The Director General expressed appreciation towards Australia, Canada, France and New Zealand for their financial support through the Kiwa Initiative, an avenue in which the Secretariat implements work across the Pacific Islands, in response to the statement from France acknowledging the Kiwa Initiative and the investment from France and partners of 78 Million Euros.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** and **endorsed** the strategic programmatic one-SPREP approach to address the risks, barriers, and challenges to sustaining the regional implementing entity roles;
- 2) **Acknowledged** and **thanked** New Zealand for the continued financial support towards strengthening of SPREP's capacity to enable it to deliver effective and efficient services to Members; and
- 3) **Invited** and **encouraged** donor partners to invest and contribute funding to realise SPREP's planned project investment ratio of 1:45 by 2027 and the ongoing SPREP-operations to assist Members in accelerating access to and scaling up of finance for climate change priorities, sustainable development, and resilient prosperity in the region.

Agenda Item 7.3 – Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) Progress

59. The Secretariat presented an update on the progress of implementing the Sustainability Plan Frameworks of the Pacific Climate Change Centre on Knowledge Brokerage, Science to Services and Research, Capacity Building, and Innovation as, endorsed by the 31st SPREP Meeting of Officials in 2023.
60. France, Samoa, and Tonga commended the work implemented through the PCCC. Samoa further stressed it looks forward to ongoing work with the focus on sustainability and stronger partnerships. Tonga commended the gender balance achieved across the training participants through the PCCC courses.
61. In response to France, the Director General highlighted the partnerships of the Secretariat with institutions such as the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia further advised of new initiatives planned following a visit with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre after the SIDS4 Conference. The Director General also confirmed the Secretariat hosts the World Meteorological Organization and works closely with WMO to enhance early warning systems including that of the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS).

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the progress of implementation of the Sustainability Plan Frameworks of the Pacific Climate Change Centre from September 2023-September 2024 including the initiatives to progress long-term investment to sustain and deliver on PCCC's four key functions including the innovative climate investment hub; and the focus on stronger partnerships and greater collaboration to mobilise resources for the sustainability of the Pacific Climate Change Centre.

Agenda Item 8: International and regional engagement

Agenda Item 8.1: UNFCCC COP28 outcomes and Preparations for COP29

62. The Secretariat presented the Twenty-Eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) outcomes for PSIDS Parties. COP28 was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December 2023.
63. An update was also provided on the preparations for COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 22 November 2024.
64. France, the Chair, and Samoa commended the Secretariat for their work.
65. France further congratulated the Secretariat for support provided towards PSIDS negotiators resulting in the outcomes of COP28 encouraging the phase-out of fossil fuels as the world moves towards COP29.
66. Samoa expressed appreciation of the additional assistance from the Secretariat towards Pacific Ministers and Officials supporting the PSIDS to amplify voices in the negotiations highlighting the importance of this work going forward to the Climate Finance COP29.
67. Samoa further commended the One CROP approach that assists PSIDS in its work in the UN process.
68. The Chair and the Secretariat acknowledged support from Australia and New Zealand to fund an additional delegate to COP29.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of PSIDS engagement in COP28; and
- 2) **Noted** the progress of preparations by SPREP and One CROP in the lead up to and at the UNFCCC COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Agenda Item 8.2: Preparations for CBD COP16

69. The Secretariat presented an update on the actions arising from outcomes of the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada in December 2022 as well as an update on preparations for the CBD COP16 in Colombia in October 2024.
70. France commended the Secretariat for its work and further requested the Secretariat to encourage Members to post their National Biodiversity Targets, Commitments and Implementation plans online, the Secretariat confirmed this can be supported after the Preparatory meeting of the CBD COP16.

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71. In response to a request from France, the Director General further clarified the Secretariat is supporting Members to align their National Biodiversity and Strategic Actions Plans permitting them access to the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund and to join the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Encouraged** Members to strengthen their national coordination for COP 16 including with their respective missions to the UN in New York;
- 2) **Agreed** to ensure country delegations attending CBD COP16 are actively engaged and participate fully in the CBD COP 16 process and negotiations; and
- 3) **Noted** that SPREP is liaising closely with PSIDS Chair and will coordinate One CROP and PIRT support to Pacific delegations to CBD COP 16.

Agenda Item 8.3: Report on Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (BRS), and Minamata Conventions

72. The Secretariat presented an update on the strategic importance of the decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the BRS and Minamata Conventions respectively and further discussed challenges that impede the representation and active engagement of SPREP Member countries at the BRS and Minamata Conferences of the Parties.

73. Tonga acknowledged the Secretariat for its work.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the strategic outcomes of the BRS and Minamata COPs and **commended** those SPREP Members and staff who, despite challenges in participation, actively voiced their concerns and represented Pacific interests, significantly contributing to the shaping of international environmental policies;
- 2) **Encouraged** SPREP Member countries that are Parties to the BRS and Minamata Conventions, to implement all necessary national actions to fulfil the outcomes of the COPs, seeking SPREP's assistance as needed; and
- 3) **Expressed** gratitude to Australia and New Zealand for their substantial support and collaboration, which significantly enhances the Pacific's capacity to engage effectively in these vital international discussions.

Agenda Item 8.4: UNEA6 Strategic Outcomes

74. The Secretariat presented an overview of the outcomes of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA6) which was convened from the 26 February to 1 March 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

75. France commended the Secretariat and noted the Resolution on Oceans and Seas as important, with the signing of the BBNJ Treaty and the role of UNOC in 2025.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the UNEA6; and
- 2) **Requested** the Secretariat to assist and support Members towards achieving the commitments made at UNEA6.

Agenda Item 8.5: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to negotiate an International Legally Binding Instrument to address plastic pollution including from the marine environment

76. The Secretariat updated the Meeting of the outcomes from the Third and Fourth sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-3 and INC-4) to negotiate an International Legally Binding Instrument to address plastic pollution including from the marine environment.
77. The Secretariat acknowledged the financial support provided from the Government of Australia, New Zealand and the United Nations to help Pacific Small Islands Developing States prepare and engage in the INC process was acknowledged. Other donor partners were encouraged to also assist.
78. France commended the key role of PSIDS in the INC and highlighted the importance of a legally binding agreement to address plastic pollution and encouraged all Pacific Islands to be ambitious in the INC process.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the INC-3 and INC-4 sessions as well as the preparatory meetings;
- 2) **Acknowledged** with appreciation the support for our Pacific Islands Members led by the Secretariat, with funding support from the Government of Australia, Government of New Zealand and the United Nations as well as partners;
- 3) **Acknowledged** the leadership of the Government of Vanuatu as the Pacific SIDS Chair and **requested** the Secretariat to continue to lead coordination and support from all interested Pacific agencies including the CROP for effective, unified support to our Pacific Island Members negotiating in the INC process;
- 4) **Encouraged** financial support from other donor partners to assist with the negotiations process as is currently undertaken by the Government of Australia and the United Nations; and
- 5) **Supported** the recommendation by Pacific Islands Leaders at their 53rd Meeting for all Members to endorse the Bridge to Busan Declaration.

Agenda Item 9: Strategic and substantive programmatic matters

Agenda Item 9.1: Regional Goal 1 Overview: Pacific people benefit from strengthened resilience to climate change

79. The Secretariat presented an update and overview of key priorities to support the implementation of Regional Goal 1 for the biennial period 2024-2025.
80. Samoa, Tonga, and United States commended the Secretariat for its work towards building a resilient Pacific.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** and **endorsed** progress in the implementation of activities under Regional Goal 1 for the biennial 2024-2025.

Agenda Item 9.1.1: The Pacific Climate Change Roundtable Outcomes

81. The Secretariat presented the “Endorsed Recommendations” of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable (PCCR) reconvened as per decision of the 31st SPREP Meeting.
82. The Secretariat confirmed coordination of the PCCR will utilise the One-CROP Mechanism which is successfully applied in other climate change areas noting the convening of the PCCR through a rotational basis across CROP was not an outcome of the 2024 PCCR.
83. The Director General further reiterated discussions are ongoing with all CROP and Members highlighting attendance from One-CROP Members to the 2024 PCCR upon invitation as an example of CROP collaboration. This aligns with the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy confirming SPREP as the lead coordinating mechanism on climate change.
84. These clarifications were in response to a request from United States on behalf of Metropolitan Members to adapt the Agenda 9.1.1 Recommendations to outline the convening of the PCCR on a rotational basis across CROP, seeking further assurance CROP Members were informed of the collaborative process.
85. Samoa and Tonga reiterated their support for the recommendations to remain as is without the proposed edits from United States on behalf of Metropolitan Members. Samoa further confirmed its support for the application of the One-CROP Mechanism when convening the PCCR citing its demonstrated success in other climate change areas.
86. The Director General expressed that the Ministerial component of the PCCR requires further discussion as addressed in Agenda Item 7.1.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable-endorsed recommendations and approved the amendment of the Terms of Reference of the PCCR; and
- 2) **Acknowledged** with appreciation the funding from the Government of France – Pacific Fund and the additional support from the Government of New Zealand.

Agenda Item 9.2 : Overview of Regional Goal 2 - Pacific people benefit from healthy and resilient island and ocean ecosystems

87. The Secretariat presented an update an overview of key priorities to support the implementation of Regional Goal 2 for the biennial period 2024-2025.
88. In response to a query from France on the important work to reduce by-catch of dolphins and sharks, the Secretariat confirmed this is of concern and will be addressed in Agenda Item 9.2.2 further highlighting work implemented through the Pacific European Union Marine Programme focusses on Pacific Island Countries only and welcomes expansion of this to Territories.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the update on implementation of Regional Goal 2 activities for the biennial period 2024 to 2025.

Agenda Item 9.2.1: Strengthening Regional invasive species focused climate change adaptation and resilience initiatives

89. The Secretariat presented the steps and plans for strengthening SPREP's Guiding Framework for Invasive Species to include climate change adaptation and build climate change resilience.

90. The Chair commended the work of the Secretariat.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** with appreciation, the strengthening of regional invasive species-focused climate change adaptation and resilience initiatives; and
- 2) **Approved** the development of (i) an Adaptation Fund cross-cutting regional programme to provide support to the GEF-8 Regional Invasive Species Project; and (ii) the development of an Enhanced Direct Access programme for the Global Climate Fund's third cycle for larger invasive species initiatives for countries.

Agenda Item 9.2.2: Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026 Implementation

91. The Meeting was informed of the critical biodiversity loss of rare dolphins and shark from by-catch in the fish maw fishery as well as the status of wildlife trafficking including illegal fishing and the threat to Pacific natural resources and biodiversity.

92. United States acknowledged the Secretariat underscoring on behalf of Australia the work progressed as outlined under recommendation two on the Australian Snubfin Humpback in the Kikori Delta in Southern Papua New Guinea.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Agreed** that urgent work is needed to address the issue of dolphin and shark by-catch in southern Papua New Guinea;
- 2) **Noted** Australia is arranging funding through the CMS for SPREP to run a workshop with Papua New Guinea national authorities and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the bycatch issue of rare dolphins and shark;
- 3) **Noted** SPREP will continue to work with UNODC to strengthen ongoing support for Members to combat wildlife trafficking including through CITES implementation and capacity building; and
- 4) **Agreed** that capacity building on marine turtle and seabird monitoring is important and support government staff participating in training including attending the first Oceania Seabird Symposium scheduled for May 2025.

Agenda Item 9.3: Overview of Regional Goal 3: Pacific people benefit from improved waste management and pollution control

93. The Secretariat presented an update and overview of key priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 3 for the biennial period 2024 - 2025.

94. The Chair expressed appreciation for the work on Lithium battery management by the Secretariat.

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95. France commended the Secretariat for its comprehensive report noting phase one of the AFD-funded Committing to Sustainable Waste Actions of the Pacific (SWAP) project is ending and will enter Phase Two in January 2025 with a 20% increase in funding.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** and **endorsed** progress in the implementation of Regional Goal 3 activities for the biennial period 2024 to 2025.

Agenda Item 9.3.1: Review and update of the Regional strategy to address marine pollution from World War II Wrecks

96. The Secretariat presented an update on the Federated States of Micronesia World War 2 Shipwreck Pollution Mitigation Project.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** a review and update of the regional strategy to address marine pollution from World War II wrecks to evaluate its effectiveness and identify associated emerging challenges and potential risks to be completed by 2026;
- 2) **Supported** the active participation and collaboration with Lloyd's Register Foundation, The Ocean Foundation, and Waves Group to finalise the International Standard for evaluating oil pollution threats from shipwrecks; and
- 3) **Noted** the update for the Federated States of Micronesia WWII Shipwreck Pollution Mitigation Project and advocated to focus resources on tackling the most pressing WWII environmental hazards first.

Agenda Item 9.4: Overview of Regional Goal 4 - Pacific people benefits and their environment benefit from commitment to and best practice of environmental governance.

97. The Secretariat presented an update and overview of key priorities to support the implementation of Regional Goal 4 for the biennial period 2024-2025.
98. The Director General confirmed the Secretariat will send a written response to the query on the Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal from Solomon Islands, on behalf of New Caledonia and will share this with Members. The Director General further confirmed an exercise is underway to consolidate all portals and external SPREP project websites for effectiveness and sustainability post-project. He further noted that Inter-CROP cooperation is underway with the Pacific Data Hub for which the Secretariat is the environment node, highlighting CROP collaboration is ongoing in many ways.
99. The Chair noted the work behind the scenes ensuring a cohesive data sharing system across agencies.
100. Seeking solutions to sustainable financing, the Director General requested Metropolitan Members that contribute funding to the UN Environment Programme to consider channelling funds directly for the Noumea Convention. UNEP does not financially support the Secretariat to administer the Noumea Convention, however, provides support through the ACP MEA Project which comes to a close at the end of next year.

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101. The Director General further stressed Members' request for technical assistance is not always funded through projects but through core funding highlighting the need for an increase in core funding.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** and **endorsed** progress in the implementation of Regional Goal 4 activities for the biennial period 2024-2025.

Agenda Item 9.4.1: Establishing a Regional Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Development in the Region

102. The Secretariat presented on the need and rationale for a mechanism to strengthen regional coordination on sustainable development in the Pacific islands' region.
103. The Secretariat noted the increased requests from Members for assistance on environmental governance and the need for a Community of Practice in response to the query from United States on behalf of Metropolitan Members for the proposed Roundtable to be integrated into the Pacific Islands "Round Table for Nature Conservation.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Supported** the need and rationale for a regional coordination mechanism on Sustainable Development;
- 2) **Endorsed** the establishment of a Pacific Island Roundtable for Sustainable Development (PIRSD) before the end of 2025 as a SPREP-led regional coordination mechanism; and
- 3) **Directed** the Secretariat to facilitate and coordinate discussions with donors and key partners in mobilising financial contributions and technical assistance towards establishing the PIRSD and its operations.

Agenda Item 9.4.2: SPREP Ocean Governance Framework 2024 - 2026

104. The Secretariat presented the SPREP Ocean Governance Framework 2024 - 2026.
105. In response to a request from France, the Director General confirmed the French Territories of French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna will be listed in the Annexes as Parties to the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) noting these Members are Parties to the different MEAs through France.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the SPREP Ocean Governance Framework 2024-2026.

Agenda Item 10: Consideration and approval of the updated 4th PIP 2024-2025, Country and Territory Strategic Partnership Frameworks (CTSPF) and Supplementary Budget for 2025

Agenda Item 10.1: Updated PIP4 and Country and Territory Strategic Partnership Framework (CTSPF)

106. The Secretariat presented the updated Performance Implementation Plan (PIP4) 2024-2025; and updated Members on the Country and Territory Strategic Partnership Frameworks (CTSPFs).
107. The Chair, France, and United States commended the Secretariat on the progress achieved on CTSPFs.
108. The Deputy Director General welcomed the request from France for French Territories to be part of the CTSPF process, confirming a Circular was distributed to Members in March seeking advice of Members' readiness to initiate the CTSPF process, noting further follow up with remaining Members.
109. In response to a query from United States on behalf of Metropolitan Members, the Deputy Director General confirmed the review of the Child Protection Policy will begin in the fourth quarter of 2024 and will take a 12-month period to complete, with a similar process for the Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy building on the review of the existing Anti-discrimination and harassment Policy.
110. Responding to a query from France on an Organisational Policy on Environmental Behaviour and carbon offsetting, the Director General confirmed internal controls for responsible travel are in place through the Travel Policy and will explore stronger implementation of this.
111. The Deputy Director General outlined work will be implemented to address the Recruitment and Remuneration Policy in response to a query from France.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the updated PIP 4 (2024 – 2025) activities; and
- 2) **Encouraged** remaining Pacific Island Members to initiate and finalise their CTSPFs.

Agenda Item 10.2 : 2024-2025 Biennial Work Programme and Budget – Supplementary Budget

112. The Secretariat presented the Supplementary Work Programme and Budget for 2025 in the Biennial Budget for 2024-2025.

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **considered** and **approved** the proposed Supplementary Work Programme and Budget of **USD\$48,860,347** for 2025. The provisional budget for 2025 as approved last year at the 31SM was USD\$30,082,893; and

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- 2) **noted** that a funding gap of **USD\$7,056,427** provision for Core expenditure for the 2025 Supplementary Budget is not reflected in the proposed budget due to inadequate funding available at the time the budget was prepared. The Secretariat will continue to explore funding sources to address the gap as funding opportunities arise.

Agenda Item 11: Items Proposed by Members

113. No items were proposed.

Agenda Item 12: Other Business

114. The Director General assured the Executive Board the Secretariat is committed to support Members in their endeavour for a healthy ocean in response to France encouraging the Secretariat to keep the political momentum of BBNJ to come into force in 2025. France further noted it has begun the work to ratify the BBNJ Treaty and requested all Members to work towards this also.
115. France congratulated the Secretariat for its work towards preparing Members for UNOC3, highlighting the dialogues held by France on the margins of the PIFLM53 as host of UNOC3. The Director General noted the collaborative approach with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner to coordinate CROP support to the Pacific for UNOC3 and further noted the historical leadership of the Secretariat in working towards ocean health and marine species.
116. Tonga noted the delay in disbursement of funds from the Secretariat to Members slowing the implementation of activities, stressing the current process in place creates delays in work, impacting upon national outputs and achievements and requested the Secretariat explore effective and swift disbursement of funds.
117. The Director General assured Tonga it is in the best interest of the Secretariat to disburse funds swiftly highlighting the financial requirements in place to meet due process and donor requirements, further reassuring Members the Secretariat is committed to working through this and proposed offline discussions with Tonga on this issue.

Agenda Item 13: Dates of the 32nd SPREP Meeting

118. The Secretariat proposed to tentatively hold the 32nd SPREP Meeting of Officials in the first week of September 2025 to be preceded by the Partnership Dialogue and concluding with the High-Level Ministerial Segment. Dates to be confirmed in due course in line with the regional calendar of events.

Agenda Item 14: Adoption of the Outcomes of the Fourth Executive Board Meeting

The Executive Board Meeting:

- 1) **Adopted** the agreed outcomes of the 4th Executive Board Meeting; and
- 2) **Noted** that the draft full record of the 4th Executive Board Meeting will be circulated to Members for consideration no later than two weeks following the closing of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 15: Closing

119. The Executive Board expressed its appreciation towards the Director General and the Secretariat for their hard work in executing the Executive Board Meeting.
120. France, Samoa and Tonga conveyed its appreciation towards the Chair and the Secretariat for coordinating the Fourth Executive Board Meeting and looks forward to the 32nd SPREP Meeting in Samoa in 2025.
121. The Chair commended the Secretariat for its support and guidance to lead the Executive Board Meeting and also commended the Secretariat on its hard work over the year. The Chair further acknowledged the Executive Board Members for their attendance and participation.
122. The Director General expressed appreciation to the Chair for their leadership in facilitating a smooth Meeting acknowledging all Members for their dedication highlighting United States and Metropolitan Members for their coordinated approach. The Director General further conveyed appreciation for supporting the Executive Board approach held every two years and expressed gratitude to all partners and Members for their support of the work of the Secretariat.
123. The Fourth Executive Board Meeting closed at 3.20pm on 6 September 2024

Annex 1: List of Participants

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INVITED SPEAKERS FOR SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS

On behalf of the Audit Committee (WP 6.2)

26. Tupuola Oloipola Koki Tuala
Partner
Koki Tuala Chartered Accountant (KTCA)
Apia, Samoa

On behalf of the Working Group on the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review and Core Funding Review and Sustainable Financing and Resourcing Strategy (WP 6.4)

27. Michelle Sheriff
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SPREP Secretariat

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| 29. Sefanaia Nawadra
Director General | 33. Anthony Talouli
Director – WMPC |
| 30. Easter Chu Shing
Deputy Director General | 35. Clark Peteru
Legal Counsel |
| 31. Stuart Chape
Director – IOE | 36. Jope Davetanivalu
Director – EMG |
| 32. Tagaloa Cooper-Halo
Director - CCR | 37. Simeamativa Leota-Vaai
Director – HR |
| | 38. Petra Chan Tung
Director – Finance and Administration |

Annex II: Keynote Address by Honourable Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Shuster, Minister for National Resources and Environment, Government of Samoa



**Fourth Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
Executive Board Meeting
Honourable Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster
Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Lands**

Opening Remarks

Wednesday 4 September 2024

Distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and honored guests,

Talofa and Welcome to Samoa and this Fourth SPREP Executive Board Meeting with its theme "***A Resilient Blue Pacific Continent Free of Plastics***," aligning seamlessly with the 2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent and echoes the sentiment of the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Tonga – "***A Transformative and Resilient Pasifiki: Build Better Now.***"

As you gather today, I urge you as to use this time relook at SPREP as a regional organization, if its fulfilling its functions and roles as technical advisor and capacity builder for our national institutions to address the environmental problems we face.

Is SPREP as an organization supporting and providing the technical advice and organizational support for our region when engaging in international environmental for a to ensure our problems and needs are being reflected in the global decisions.

Is SPREP as an organization initiating, coordinating and supporting the accessing of resources to implement our country priority environmental concerns, or its spending too much time implementing regional projects that result in higher administration costs.

Is SPREP as an organization espousing to build regional experts then sending them back to support the national institutions, or is SPREP prioritizing itself as an organization and retaining staff, thus continuing handicap our national institutions through brain drain.

Furthermore, I challenge you to critically analyze the effectiveness of SPREP after serving the region in the last 35 years. Has the environment improved in our countries and the region, or have the problems become worse? Are we as countries any closer to being independent to do the majority of the work ourselves or have we become even more dependent on SPREP to apply, managed and implement projects on our behalf.

Administratively, has SPREP as an organization grown too big, or does it need to expand to accommodate the many needs for the region. Has SPREP achieved financial sustainability or does it need more support from the countries and our partners, or is it only treading above water because of project funding. Either-way, a clear pathway in attaining financial sustainability is an important aspect for your deliberations.

These are challenges that we as the region look to you the Executive Board to deliberate and give us confidence that what was dreamt and started over 30 years ago, is still useful now, and can be sustained going into the future.

I want to acknowledge the past, present and future assistance by the countries, our partners and specifically those countries that contribute to the core budget funding since this is, in my humble opinion, is the only way this organization is able to chart its course properly, without being directed by the donor-funded project needs.

As we move forward, let us remember that our strength lies in our unity and shared commitment to a sustainable and resilient Pacific. Together, we can build a future that honors our natural heritage and secures the wellbeing of generations to come.

Thank you all for your dedication and participation. I look forward to productive discussions and meaningful outcomes from this meeting.

Faafetai.