



# Report of the 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting of Officials

**5-7 September 2023**  
Apia, Samoa

## AGENDA ITEM 1: OPENING

1. The Thirty first SPREP Meeting (31SM) of Officials and the Ministerial High-Level Talanoa was held from 5-8 September 2023 at the Taumeasina Island Resort in Apia, Samoa.
2. Present at the Meeting were representatives from American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. A full list of participants, including observers, is available in Annex I.
3. The official opening ceremony was held on 4 September at Taumeasina Island Resort with welcoming remarks from the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Mr Sefanaia Nawadra.
4. The Meeting was officially opened by the Prime Minister of Samoa the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa.

## AGENDA ITEM 2: APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

5. The "Rules of Procedure of the SPREP Meeting" (Rules 8.1 and 8.2), provides that where the Meeting is hosted by the Secretariat, the Chair and Vice Chair shall rotate alphabetically, and where the Meeting is not hosted by the Secretariat, the Chair shall be provided by the host country. The 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting was hosted by the Secretariat.
6. The appointment of Tuvalu as the Chair and the Republic of Marshall Islands as Vice Chair of the Thirty first SPREP Meeting was confirmed in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.
7. Tonga, as outgoing Chair delivered remarks of appreciation for the support received during their tenure as Chair and was presented with a gift for their service by Tuvalu as the incoming Chair.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Confirmed** the Representative of Tuvalu as Chair.
- 2) **Confirmed** the Representative of Republic of Marshall Islands as Vice Chair.

## AGENDA ITEM 3: ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORKING PROCEDURES

8. The Meeting reviewed the revised Provisional Agenda and suggested hours of work.

9. The Chair sought volunteers for the drafting committee that shall be Chaired by the Republic of Marshall Islands as Vice Chair.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Considered** and adopted the Provisional Agenda;
- 2) **Agreed** on hours of work; and
- 3) **Appointed** the drafting Committee chaired by the Republic of Marshall Islands and consisting of Australia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Palau and Wallis and Futuna.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: ACTION TAKEN ON MATTERS ARISING FROM THE THIRD EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

10. The actions taken against the decisions and directives from the Third Executive Board Meeting on the 8th and 9th of September 2022 were presented to the Meeting.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** actions taken against the decisions and directives of the Third Executive Board Meeting.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5: 2022 OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPREP STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 – 2026**

##### **Agenda Item 5.1: Presentation of the Annual Report for 2022 and Director General's Overview of Progress since the Third Executive Board Meeting**

11. The Director General presented the 2022 SPREP Annual Report to Members and provided the Meeting with an overview report on progress over the last year since the Third SPREP Executive Board Meeting.

The Meeting:

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

##### **Agenda Item 5.2: Strategic outcomes from the 2022/2023 Performance Implementation Plan (PIP)**

12. The Meeting was presented with the Third PIP (PIP3) 2022-2023 strategic outcomes and the implementation of the 2022-2023 Work Programme and Budget as well as the progress made towards achieving the PIP 3 High Level Summary Report, which highlighted key crosscutting issues that includes innovation, strategic linkages, gender mainstreaming, risk management, and lessons learnt.
13. The United Kingdom acknowledged the report on the strategic outcomes from the 2022/2023 Performance Implementation Plan and requested that examples of impacts at an operational level be reflected in future reporting including the enhancement of staff capacity and core engagements.

14. The Director General responded that later agenda items will report in more detail on the impacts of actions and that the Secretariat has taken note of the request for future reports to include impacts.
15. The Cook Islands noted the progress of achievements in targets and highlighted the concern from the Audit Committee on the slow progress of the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework (CTSPF) and requested clarification on why progress is slow to date.
16. The Director General highlighted this process is the latest effort in improving engagement with Members and attributed the delay in progress to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts and the need for proactiveness from Members to initiate this process with the Secretariat.
17. New Zealand commended the Secretariat for their work in implementation during the challenging pandemic, notably the ability of the Secretariat to expedite the approval of Weather Ready Pacific by Pacific Leaders.
18. Republic of Marshall Islands supports the recommendation of the Strategic Outcomes of the PIP-3 and welcomes the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework finalisation in country which will improve service delivery of the Secretariat.
19. Solomon Islands requested the Secretariat to report on the challenges in achieving the strategic outcomes to allow members to recommend solutions for improvement.
20. The Cook Islands requested a follow up on the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework process moving forward to achieve the country completion rate.
21. The Deputy Director General highlighted this is the final year of the PIP 2022-2023. Moving forward to the next PIP 2024-2025, the current process in the four mentioned countries is undertaken in alignment to country priorities in the given period. The challenge in achieving the required 21 Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework continues to stem from the impacts of COVID-19. The Secretariat continues to urge the engagement of Members in initiating this process.
22. The Director General noted planning in relation to the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework is not undertaken in isolation but is complementary to other processes such as the National Environment Management Strategy (NEMS) development. In the event the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework is not ready, other documents are utilised to guide the work of the Secretariat.
23. Palau highlighted its positive experience with the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework process during the COVID-19 lockdown, as it allowed all stakeholders to be available in-country for required consultations and input. In addition, the Palau NEMS was endorsed in July 2023 and was aligned to the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework. Palau commends the Secretariat for work undertaken and the recent 2023 Palau mission and looks forward to being the first Member to sign their CTSPF.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the PIP3 (2022-2023) Progress Towards Achieving Strategic Outcomes with the actual expenditures of Annual Work programme and Budget 2022-2023;
- 2) **Noted** the Secretariat's responses and actions on cross-cutting issues and lessons learnt in the implementation of PIP3; and
- 3) **Noted** the update on the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework progress.

### Agenda Item 5.3: Outcomes of the SPREP Partnership Dialogue

24. The Secretariat reported on the outcomes of the SPREP Partnership Dialogue, seeking endorsement of Members for the Partnership Dialogue to be convened as a key event at every SPREP Meeting.
25. The United Kingdom noted that the Partnership Dialogue was a useful platform and commended the Secretariat's efforts in organising the forum.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the SPREP Partnership Dialogue;
- 2) **Thanked** Partners for their engagement; and
- 3) **Approved** the hosting of the SPREP Partnership Dialogue as an ongoing forum to be held in the margins of the SPREP Meeting.

### Agenda Item 5.4: Audited Accounts for 2022

26. The Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022 were presented to the Meeting.
27. The Secretariat mentioned a surplus for financial year 2023 as compared to the previous financial year.
28. United Kingdom and New Zealand thanked the Secretariat for the report.
29. United Kingdom commended the Secretariat for the financial control measures in place and mentioned that it would be useful to get actual figures on core funding percentages against programme funding and operational costs, including staff costs.
30. New Zealand sought clarification from the Secretariat as to what would be a good state of reserves and also asked what the possible impact on the Secretariat's budget would be, if all paid a fifteen percent programme management fee.
31. In relation to the query from New Zealand on the reserves, the Secretariat clarified that the ideal position for reserves would be a minimum benchmark of at least twenty five percent of anticipated budget which if based on the 2022 Core budget of USD 6.3 million, the ideal reserves position should have been USD 1.6 million.

32. In response to the programme management fee issue raised by New Zealand, the Secretariat clarified that based on programme activity in 2022, income of USD 1.8 million was realised against programme activities of USD 21.6 million, which is an average of 8.3 percent of total fees. The Secretariat further clarified that between 12 and 15 percent would be ideal and that there would have been USD 2.6 million to USD 3.2 million realised in programme management fees, that would have bridged the shortfall in income relative to the budget.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Reviewed** and **adopted** the audited Financial Statements and Auditor's Report for 2022.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6: GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, AND MECHANISMS**

### **Agenda Item 6.1: Audit Committee Report for 2022**

33. The SPREP Audit Committee (AC) Report on its work over the past 12 months was presented by the Audit Committee Chair.
34. France sought advice on the rationale of Recommendation 4. The Chair of the Audit Committee responded that this is an earlier resolution of the SPREP Meeting. The Director General referred to the Report of the 28<sup>th</sup> SPREP Meeting (28SM) in 2017 under 'Agenda Item 9.2: Sustainable Financing' noting the resolution as follows:
- a. recommended a 20% increase in contributions by Members, subject to confirmation by capitals, commencing in time for the SPREP 2018 financial year. This does not include United States and France, noting that France prefers an 'up to 20%' recommendation. Tonga will consider the matter after its general election.*
35. The Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed that its responsibility is to report on actions that remain outstanding. The Director General further elaborated that this resolution is for Members to action.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** and **approved** the report of the Audit Committee for the period August 2022 to July 2023;
- 2) **Noted** the improvement in performance and reserve position in the last 6 years, but that it is not sufficient for long term sustainability and growth;
- 3) **Urged** Members to actively engage in dialogue with the Secretariat in making payment arrangements for outstanding contributions;
- 4) **Requested** Members to fully implement the resolution of the 28SM (2017) regarding the 20% increase in membership contributions and to consider making extra voluntary contributions in support of the Secretariat;
- 5) **Requested** that Members provide full support and commitment in finalising their respective county and territory strategic partnership framework to allow more

effective engagement, intervention, and support from the Secretariat in addressing their environmental challenges;

- 6) **Requested** that the review process be prioritised by the Independent Corporate, Mid-Term, and Staff Remuneration Review Working Group as it has a broader effect on the Secretariat's governance and operations; and
- 7) **Recorded** its appreciation for the cooperation and support it has received from the Director General, Deputy Director General, Senior Leadership Team, and staff of SPREP over the past 12 months.

## Agenda Item 6.2: Report on Members Contribution

36. The Secretariat presented on contributions from Members. Noting the discussion in 'Agenda Item 6.1: Audit Committee Report for 2022' on the resolution from the 28th SPREP Meeting (28SM) in 2017, this matter was further discussed under Agenda Item 6.2: Report on Members Contribution.
37. The Republic of Marshall Islands sought to discuss matters related to delivery of service to Members which included the procurement threshold, noting the request for three quotes. It was recommended that the Secretariat review its procurement thresholds.
38. The Director General responded that the cost of doing business has gone up 100 percent and yet the membership contributions remain the same. It was noted that Projects are not a problem, the key challenge however is the gap in core funding for long term sustainability of the work of the Secretariat.
39. The Cook Islands sought guidance on what the Secretariat is doing to address the outstanding membership contributions of approximately USD 303,000 by two Members. The Director General responded that it has not received advice from the noted Members but will continue to engage with them bilaterally.
40. Solomon Islands noted its support of a 20 percent increase in membership contributions in line with the resolution of 28SM in 2017.
41. Wallis and Futuna noted its concern with an increase in 20 percent in membership contributions given budgetary challenges and sought guidance from the Secretariat on appropriately addressing the issue of the outstanding contributions and whether consideration has been given for any penalties or implications on those that have not updated contributions.
42. United Kingdom requested that such information be included in official documentation to Members including letter of request and invoiced accordingly, reflecting the resolution of the 28SM in 2017.
43. Wallis and Futuna suggested that a regulation be introduced to ensure that Members pay its membership contributions. It was noted the current status enables Members to not pay noting it is voluntary.
44. The Cook Islands noted that the membership contributions are what is assessed by the Secretariat subject to country size and territory status and is obligatory not voluntary.

The referenced 28SM resolution from 2017 needs to be clarified by the Secretariat to guide Members on next steps as it requires further consideration by capitals given the financial impact.

45. Papua New Guinea supported the proposal from Solomon Islands for a 20 percent increase and suggested that consideration be given to Members, where required for a payment plan to enable flexibility for membership contributions to be paid.
46. French Polynesia noted the payment of membership contributions is important to demonstrate ownership of the Secretariat. Ten percent is the maximum increase it can pay for membership contributions.
47. American Samoa noted that it was present at 28SM, and that the resolution should be respected. American Samoa requested advice on whether any member has paid the 20 percent increase referenced.
48. The Secretariat responded that six Members have paid 20 percent. It was noted that nine Members have executed its commitment to that decision noting it is 'up to 20 percent' and includes French Polynesia of ten percent.
49. The Director General emphasised the importance of increasing the core budget as the costs of doing business has increased significantly. It was suggested a Friends of the Chair be established comprising of the Cook Islands, United Kingdom, and Solomon Islands as Chair and convene a meeting to discuss the matter and resolve the issue.
50. The Friends of the Chair reported back to the Meeting with revised recommendations for the due consideration of Members.
51. The Cook Islands, Niue and Palau sought clarification on whether the invoicing for membership contributions, would be backdated to 2018.
52. Nauru reiterated the importance of checking with capitals and that invoicing should not be backdated to 2018.
53. Kiribati reminded Members that SPREP is its only regional environmental organisation and needs support from Members. It was noted that the response from the Secretariat is prompt, and the services provided are in a timely manner, particularly in technical areas. It was highlighted the importance of re-examining the services that the Secretariat will be providing to Members.
54. The United States noted the interventions including the 28SM resolution of 2017. It was acknowledged, that half of the Members have actioned, and others require further consultation with capitals.
55. Wallis and Futuna agreed to a 20 percent increase to apply the measure from 2024 noting not all Members committed at that time. The services from the Pacific Community and the Secretariat viewed as invaluable.
56. The Director General reminded the Meeting that this was a matter raised by the Audit Committee, as an outstanding issue to be addressed by Members.

57. Solomon Islands noted the interventions and the concern on backdating invoices to 2018. It was suggested to revise Recommendation 6 and to revise invoices accordingly for the period starting in 2024. It was shared that this enables Members to consult with capitals accordingly and to seek approval as outlined in the 28SM resolution from 2017.
58. French Polynesia requested inclusion under Recommendation 4 that it has already increased its membership contributions by ten percent. It will also follow-up with its capital regarding a further increase of up to 20 percent.
59. The Director General requested a stipulated time frame on the decision.
60. Papua New Guinea informed the Meeting that it has paid the 20 percent membership contributions increase in line with the 28SM resolution of 2017. Papua New Guinea encouraged payment plans for Members with outstanding membership contributions.
61. The Director General noted that for most Pacific islands the 20 percent increase is USD 2,000 except for Guam, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu of USD 4,000.
62. Wallis and Futuna highlighted the challenges of the membership contributions increase, noting SPREP is one of many organisations that it pays subscriptions to. Wallis and Futuna acknowledged the importance of the Secretariat in supporting the environmental services of Members.
63. The Director General reiterated that the Secretariat provides services to Members regardless of whether Members have paid membership contributions or not.
64. American Samoa and United States supported the interventions of Solomon Islands and the work of the Friends of the Chair. American Samoa highlighted the importance of reporting back on the decision.
65. France echoed the sentiments of Wallis and Futuna that Members take into consideration the wide range of circumstances of Members and suggested that the membership contributions are reviewed or increased in line with the 28SM resolution in 2024.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Considered** the report and sought to address the issue of outstanding member contributions;
- 2) **Noted** that some Members' contributions remain outstanding totalling USD\$786,161 as at 31 August 2023;
- 3) **Noted** the decision in 2017 at 28SM that "recommended a 20% increase in contributions by Members, subject to confirmation by capitals, commencing in time for the SPREP 2018 financial year. This does not include United States and France, noting that France prefers an 'up to 20%' recommendation. Tonga will consider the matter after its general election." And the same meeting "directed the Secretariat to continue to work with Member countries with outstanding contributions including development of payment plans";

- 4) **Noted** that to date the following members have increased their contributions above the 2004 level by 20% Australia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tuvalu. France and the United States of America, already among the main contributors to the SPREP budget and emphasising their particular national budget processes, have since committed and paid their contribution with an increase of 5% for France, 10% for French Polynesia and 7% for the USA;
- 5) **Committed** itself collectively and individually to paying current and outstanding Contributions in full in 2023.; and
- 6) **Directed** the Secretariat to formally write to Members who have yet to implement the 28SM resolution reminding them of that decision and requesting that contributions are increased or reviewed by 20% in line with the 28SM Resolution effective from 2024 which can be reflected in revised invoices.

### Agenda Item 6.3: Sustainable financing: Report of the independent review

66. The Secretariat presented an update on the Independent Review of the Core Funding Structure of SPREP and development of SPREP's Finance and Resource Sustainability Strategy to address sustainable financing for the long-term financial resilience of SPREP.
67. The United Kingdom queried the plan for a Sustainability Strategy and whether the review extends to cover core staff and funding approaches.
68. The Secretariat responded that part of the consultant's terms of reference includes a comprehensive assessment of core staff and resources required to support increasing and upcoming projects. The Secretariat referred to 'Agenda Item 10: Consideration and approval of the 4th PIP 2024-2025 and the 2024-2025 Biennial Work Programme and Budget', which shall highlight that funding of projects and activities continue to increase significantly in contrast with the core funding amount, which tends to remain the same. It was further noted that the Review will span over six months and a report will be produced to indicate findings in this area.
69. The Cook Islands queried if there is anticipation that the findings from the review will mean an increase in core funding and hence, whether the Secretariat would anticipate programme management fees contributing to core funding or an increase in membership contributions.
70. The Secretariat clarified that the core budget comprises of membership contributions, other donor income from Australia and New Zealand's core funding, as well as programme fees. The core budget tends to be heavily reliant on and greatly impacted when project/programme implementation is affected. The example of delays during COVID-19 highlighted. The donor fees' structure for some of the Secretariat's partners such as the EU and the GCF restricts the Secretariat charging 12 to 15 percent. The focus of the review is to look at a more appropriate core funding structure and how this may impact core funding income and provide new opportunities. The core funding donors of Australia and New Zealand have advocated through donor dialogue sessions for further support e.g., Weather Ready Pacific.

71. The Director General elaborated that the review is for SPREP sustainability and to ensure it can continue delivery of services and interventions necessary for meeting Member's needs. It was noted that the Secretariat needs to prepare for growth including supporting Members on Loss and Damage; and Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) as examples. Frontline staff are often costed through project budgets, however funding of staff by the core budget is limited. The example of one procurement officer for all of the Secretariat was highlighted by the Director General.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the updated report on the Independent Review of the Core Funding Structure of SPREP and development of SPREP's Finance & Resource Sustainability Strategy;
- 2) **Committed** to engaging in the consultations to be undertaken by the Consultants with SPREP Members, Donor, and Partners during the SPREP Meeting including follow up consultations as part of this consultancy work; and
- 3) **Endorsed** the existing SPREP Member Working Group assessing the recommendations of the 3rd Independent Corporate Review and Mid-Term Review of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026 to be the mechanism for assessing and reviewing the consultant's report and draft Finance & Resource Sustainability Strategy for SPREP.

#### **Agenda Item 6.4: Report of the SPREP Working Group on the SPREP Independent Corporate Review, Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2017 – 2026, and the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review Report**

72. The report of the Working Group regarding its assessment and prioritisation of recommendations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Independent Corporate Review (ICR) and the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026 was presented to the SPREP Meeting by Working Group Member the Cook Islands.
73. The United Kingdom requested to join the Working Group on the Remuneration review. The Cook Islands responded that the Working Group is open and that the United Kingdom and other Members are welcome to join.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the report of the Working Group and its prioritisation of recommendations from the MTR and ICR review;
- 2) **Acknowledged** the Secretariat's proactive approach to implementing the proposed priority recommendations put forward by the Working Group; and
- 3) **Endorsed** the Working Group to work closely with the Secretariat to facilitate engagement of an independent consultant, proficient in supporting the Remuneration review, and to develop a timeline for the completion of the Review for an out of session consideration by Members in the first quarter of 2024.

### Agenda Item 6.5: Appointment of External Auditors

74. The Secretariat presented for the consideration of Members the appointment of External Auditors, to conduct the annual audit of SPREP's financial accounts for the financial years ending 31 December 2023 and 2024.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Considered** the paper and **endorsed** the appointment of KPMG (Fiji) to audit SPREP's financial accounts for the financial years ending 31 December 2023 and 2024.

### Agenda Item 6.6: Review of the 2012 Staff Regulations

75. The Secretariat presented the status of the Review of the 2012 Staff Regulations.
76. The Cook Islands emphasised the importance of CROP Harmonisation and that the Review be carefully done in respect of similar benchmarking with other CROP Agencies.
77. The Secretariat noted that the way forward on the remuneration review would be discussed as part of the Working Group, as agreed to in 'Agenda Item 6.4: Report of the SPREP Working Group on the SPREP Independent Corporate Review, Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2017 – 2026, and the 2021 Staff Remuneration Review Report', and as discussed in 'Agenda Item 6.3: Sustainable Financing: Report of the Independent Review'.
78. The Director General noted that the CROP Working Group on Harmonisation is no longer in existence and hence Members need to consider measures to address this matter for the Secretariat.
79. The Director General stated that it was always difficult to achieve CROP Harmonisation because organisations are different and needed different capacity to provide their services. Harmonisation should take place where the capacity to provide services is the same or similar.
80. The Cook Islands highlighted the importance of the Review of the Regional Architecture where CROP Harmonisation will be considered a key principle, including on staffing, remuneration and appropriate benchmarking across CROP agencies.
81. The Director General noted the interventions of the Cook Islands but requested the flexibility to allow the Secretariat to be competitive for the recruitment of the best persons possible to serve Member requirements.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the progress of the 2012 Staff Regulations Review; and
- 2) **Decided** on a firm way forward for the 2021 Remuneration Review in the absence of any progress from the Members Working Group.

## Agenda Item 6.7: SPREP Director General's Performance Assessment (Closed Session)

82. The Troika presented its assessment of the Director General's Performance Development Plan (PDP) for the period April 2022 – August 2023; and its proposal for the SPREP Director General's Performance Development Plan for September 2023 – August 2024.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted and endorsed** the review completed by the Troika of the DG's PDP for the period April 2022 - August 2023, acknowledging the many initiatives and positive outcomes, as well as areas requiring attention over the next year; 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 end of September 2023. The Troika will then discuss and finalise with the DG his PDP targets by the end of October 2023.

## AGENDA ITEM 7: REGIONAL COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

### Agenda Item 7.1: Implementing the Pacific Leaders Agenda

83. The Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat provided a joint presentation to Members on the coordinated efforts of CROP to implement the Pacific Leaders Agenda. The presentation focused on the Implementation and Monitoring Plan for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and the process for the out-of-session endorsement, before it is presented to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the Pacific Leaders Agenda Update; and
- 2) **Noted** the process for the out-of-session endorsement of the Implementation and Monitoring Plan for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

### Agenda Item 7.2: Sustainability of the Pacific Climate Change Centre

84. The Secretariat presented the Pacific Climate Change Centre Sustainability Plan for Capacity Building and the Partnership Frameworks for Knowledge Brokerage, Science to Services and Research and Innovation.
85. Solomon Islands expressed support for the recommendations and commended the work of the Pacific Climate Change Centre. Clarification was sought on whether during its establishment the Pacific Climate Change Centre was intended to have a semi-independent or fully independent governance structure.
86. The Secretariat responded that Pacific Climate Change Centre has an Advisory Board, as part of its governance structure that allows flexibility to be inclusive of Non SPREP Member agencies. It was noted that the Advisory Board has met four times since the Pacific Climate Change Centre was established and consists of Samoa as the

permanent Chair, Australia, New Zealand, JICA, and the Secretariat. It was shared that the Advisory Board continues to meet and provides guidance to the work of the four key functions of the Pacific Climate Change Centre.

87. France expressed full support of the Pacific Climate Change Centre, particularly on the objectives relating to research and innovation. It was highlighted that the Pacific Climate Change Centre explore stronger partnerships with all countries in the region. France noted it would like to be involved in areas relating to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
88. The Secretariat thanked France for the commitment extended to the Pacific Climate Change Centre, especially the partnership with IRD. It was noted that the Pacific Climate Change Centre is under the Climate Change Resilience programme. The Pacific Climate Change Centre takes the lead under the four key functions of: knowledge brokerage; applied research; capacity building through training and learning; and supporting innovation; and aims to ensure the sustainability of climate change adaptation tools such as hosting the Pacific Climate Change Portal, Ecosystem-based Adaptation tools, and Impact Analysis (iA) methodology tool.
89. The Secretariat noted that as part of the Advisory Board, French Polynesia requested that some courses be delivered in French. In partnership with IRD and Fonds Pacifique the Pacific Climate Change Centre worked collaboratively to host 'The Adapting Coastal Cities and Territories to Sea Level Risk in the Pacific' workshop, which was held in Fiji in July. Key alignment with IRD is in innovation and research, as demonstrated in the MoU signed with the Secretariat on 4 September 2023.
90. The Director General reiterated discussions during the sixth Pacific Meteorological Council Meeting that the Pacific Climate Change Centre may be used to implement through or with to complement existing mechanisms, that have been put in place to continue the work that the Secretariat needs to do. It was noted that with respect to governance arrangements, it took many years for SPREP to become a standalone entity, hence with respect to the Pacific Climate Change Centre, Members must allow more time for this process to continue.
91. Solomon Islands requested that the outcomes of the Advisory Board be shared with all Members for their information. It was further noted that operations should not take over the strategic oversight and original goal of the Pacific Climate Change Centre.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Sustainability Plan for Capacity Building and the Partnership Frameworks for Knowledge Brokerage, Science to Services and Research and Innovation; and
- 2) **Encouraged** Members and Partners to commit strengthening the services of the Pacific Climate Change Centre through investment in the PCCC Partnership Frameworks.

### Agenda Item 7.3: Mobilising Climate Finance amidst a changing landscape

92. Members were updated on progress with bridging the gap between adaptation priorities and climate financing including new and emerging opportunities for climate financing.
93. The Chair acknowledged the importance of accessing climate finance for the region.
94. The Secretariat noted the support of New Zealand since the establishment of the Project Coordination Unit team in 2018 and that provided for the Climate Change Resilience Programme, which are the Secretariat's engine room for accessing climate finance.
95. Highlights were provided of the Secretariats' work including through the Green Climate Fund's Readiness Preparatory Support programme (Readiness and National Action Plans) assisting countries with adaptation planning and preparedness to access climate finance.
96. The Meeting was advised that the Secretariat has undergone a re-accreditation process with the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund; both of which were successful.
97. France acknowledged the update from the Secretariat and its work in the region in implementing projects and enabling access to climate finance.
98. France advised that following the French President's visit to the Pacific region, France and Vanuatu launched the Ifira Call for Immediate Action on Climate Change, which is a call for all countries, multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, philanthropic organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders to significantly increase the resources mobilised for vulnerable countries and communities.
99. France further advised that the Agence française de développement (AFD) budget for the Pacific will increase to 200 million Euros, through grants and loans. France also recalled that combating climate change, protecting the environment, and responding to disaster risks are thematic priorities under the "Fonds Pacifique", granting mechanism for the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs to strengthening regional cooperation between Pacific countries and French Overseas Countries and Territories. France acknowledged the Secretariat's technical assistance to the Kiwa initiative.
100. France noted that a regional Agence française de développement (AFD) office has opened in Port Vila, Vanuatu and informed the Meeting that French Embassy will open in Samoa in 2024. France reiterated its commitment to strengthen support to the Pacific region and cooperation with CROP agencies including SPREP.
101. The Secretariat acknowledged France's announcement and welcomed the increased collaboration with France on climate finance and areas such as the Pacific Climate Change Centre.
102. New Zealand expressed appreciation for the update and queried how fees from donors such as the Green Climate Fund is anticipated to contribute to the sustainability of the Project Coordination Unit.

103. The Director General reiterated appreciation of New Zealand's support and reflected on the Secretariat's consideration in 2022 on the value of being an accredited entity due to the cost to the organisation but lack of benefits gained. Further noted that the relationship with the Green Climate Fund has improved with constructive discussions held during its recent visit to the Secretariat. Progress on the Vanuatu Climate Information Services for Resilient Development Planning (VanKIRAP) project has been gained with approval of Vanuatu's doppler radar and the Green Climate Fund has recently announced making available funding for regional direct access entities. The Secretariat will continue to work with the Green Climate Fund to strengthen its position as a direct access entity.
104. The Secretariat advised challenges remain with project/programme fees as these are prescribed and capped to a certain percentage by donors.
105. The United Kingdom noted the Secretariat's work in the region on climate finance, and highlighted the Report titled "*What GCF do we want in the Pacific? Practical recommendations for reform and capacity support*", which was put together by the British High Commission in Suva with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, that includes recommendations to the Green Climate Fund on supporting Pacific access to climate finance. The United Kingdom thanked the technical inputs that contributed to the paper and hopes it will assist progress and overcoming of challenges for the Pacific to access climate finance.
106. The Director General acknowledged lengthy discussions had with the British High Commission and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and expressed appreciation of the assistance provided by the United Kingdom.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the progress with bridging the gap between adaptation priorities and climate financing;
- 2) **Noted** new and emerging opportunities for climate financing; and
- 3) **Supported** SPREP on the way forward, towards implementing identified actions to bridge the gap between financing priorities and available/emerging climate financing.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

### **Agenda Item 8.1: UNFCCC COP27 outcomes and update on COP28 preparations**

107. The Secretariat presented the UNFCCC COP27 outcomes for Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Parties at the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022; and updated Members on the progress of preparations by the Secretariat and the One CROP, currently underway for COP28.

108. Samoa noted its appreciation for the One CROP team for a job well done at COP28. Samoa highlighted the excellent facilitation and coordination in Sharm el-Sheikh and thanked New Zealand for providing a Pacific home through the Moana Blue Pacific Pavilion. Samoa shared that it would like to see this continue in Dubai, including coordination on the ground. As the past Chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), Samoa acknowledged the work of One CROP with the technical briefs and support that helped Samoa in its role. Samoa noted its continued support for Palau as the current PSIDS Chair.
109. Australia echoed the sentiments of Samoa, recognising SPREP and One CROP as strong advocates for Pacific issues. It was noted that the Global stocktake and Mitigation Workplan (MWP) is what Australia can work with New Zealand and the Secretariat on. Australia emphasised the importance of Pacific support to secure the bid for COP31, as hosting the Pacific COP31 will be an opportunity to amplify Pacific climate change issues.
110. France called on Members to harmonise their actions in the Pacific and requested the Secretariat to coordinate the support.
111. New Zealand acknowledged the Secretariat for its efforts in organising the Moana Blue Pacific Pavilion and Pacific Delegation Office at COP27 and pledged to continue to support these initiatives with PSIDS. New Zealand noted it will continue to work with PSIDS and support the Pacific COP31 bid by Australia.
112. The Secretariat noted the Grant Funding Agreement with New Zealand which pledges funding support for the Pacific for the next three years and acknowledged Australia for pledging support to these initiatives in the future. The Secretariat noted that the decision for COP31 will be made in the constituency in which Australia, France, United Kingdom, and the United States of America are a part of and is relying on their support to secure the COP31 bid for Australia and the Pacific region.
113. Samoa requested One CROP better coordinate Ministerial High-level Meetings on Climate Change. This was highlighted in respect of the recent Meeting held in Suva in August 2023. The importance of advance planning and coordination across the different fora viewed as critical, so that there are no missed opportunities for Pacific Ministers to engage.
114. United Kingdom's COP28 priority is to keep the 1.5 degree Celsius target alive and remains a global priority. The United Kingdom acknowledged the work of the Secretariat in elevating the voice of the Pacific through the COP Pavilion. The United Kingdom welcomes an opportunity to support the Moana Blue Pacific Pavilion.
115. The Secretariat acknowledged the intervention from the United Kingdom in its willingness to support the Moana Blue Pacific Pavilion.

116. The Secretariat noted Samoa's request for One CROP to better coordinate Pacific Ministerial Meetings on Climate Change and assured that it will be conveyed to ensure it happens. The matter has already had been discussed at the CROP Deputies Meeting.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of PSIDS engagement in COP27; and
- 2) **Noted** the progress of preparations by SPREP and One CROP in the lead up to and at the UNFCCC COP28.

### **Agenda Item 8.2: CBD COP15 Roadmap for implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework through 2030**

117. The Secretariat presented the actions required to implement the outcomes and decisions of the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) held in December 2022, Montreal Canada.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the updates and outcomes of the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15);
- 2) **Encouraged** Members to commit to the ongoing global processes associated with the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- 3) **Directed** the Secretariat to continue to collaborate with partners and seek additional resources to support the implementation of Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) decisions and outcomes.

### **Agenda Item 8.3: Report on outcomes of BRS COPS and preparations for Minamata COP**

118. The Secretariat presented the outcomes of the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (BC-COP 16); 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention (RC-COP 11); and the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention (SC-COP 11); commonly known as the BRS COPS.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, and Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention;
- 2) **Encouraged** Parties to undertake necessary national actions to implement the outcomes of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Convention;
- 3) **Noted** preparations toward the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

#### Agenda Item 8.4: Update on the International legally Binding instrument on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction under the Law of the Sea

119. The Secretariat presented an update on its work regarding the adoption of the new international legally binding instrument on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Secretariat noted that it will help strengthen ocean governance, and implementation of the Noumea Convention and the Regional Seas Conventions.
120. France highlighted the importance of validating and signing the BBNJ Treaty and ratifying it as soon as possible. It was noted that the European Union have allocated 40 million Euro to ratify the BBNJ Treaty, which is available for Small Island Developing States including in the Pacific region. France saluted Members with establishing a link between global, regional, and local actions, to achieve the highest level of success in Small Island Developing States, aligned to the review of the Noumea Convention. France wishes to see the BBNJ Treaty enter into force before the Third UN Ocean Conference, which shall be held in Nice, France in 2025. An additional recommendation was suggested to urge Members to speed up the signing and ratification of the BBNJ Treaty.
121. New Zealand noted the Pacific presence and leadership at COP15 and was encouraged to see traditional knowledge and perspectives come through strongly, which addresses gaps in the Law of the Sea. It was shared that the Treaty shall be open for signing on 20 September 2023 and encouraged Members to ratify the Treaty. New Zealand welcomed the support of the European Union and emphasised the importance of partnership and collaboration to implement the work required.
122. Australia welcomed the adoption of the BBNJ Treaty and working closely with the Pacific. It noted it is undertaking due process nationally to sign and ratify the Treaty. Australia noted interest on potential high seas marine protected areas, which may be proposed once the Treaty comes into force and welcomed further dialogue with Members on this matter. Australia supported the intervention from France to sign and endorse the Treaty as soon as possible.
123. The Director General emphasised the importance of the BBNJ Treaty adoption , noting the complexities around exclusive economic zones and high seas and urged Members to speed up signing and ratification.

#### The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the updates on the Legally Binding Instrument on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) under the Law of the Sea; and
- 2) **Urged** Members to consider ratification or accession of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty (BBNJ) at the earliest opportunity to allow for entry into force as soon as possible.

**Agenda Item: 8.5: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to negotiate an international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution including from the marine environment.**

124. The Secretariat presented the outcomes of the first and second sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC-1 and INC-2) to negotiate an international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution including from the marine environment.
125. The Cook Islands thanked Australia for its support on the legally binding instrument and the Secretariat on coordination. As noted in the working paper, the Cook Islands is a member of the High Ambition Coalition for Plastic Pollution. The issue of plastic pollution is a key issue for the Cook Islands as Forum Chair under the Pacific Partnership for Prosperity, which shall be championed at the Pacific Forum Leaders Meeting in November. The Pacific Partnership for Prosperity strengthens new and existing partnerships to help mobilise further political support and funding. The Cook Islands supports recommendations in the paper and suggested a new recommendation to note the Cook Island intention to elevate the profile of the global treaty on plastics under the Pacific Partnership for Prosperity.
126. France supported the recommendation to set the bar as high as possible for the INC to end plastic pollution by 2040.
127. The United Kingdom expressed support for the interventions shared by the Cook Islands and France and welcomed any further opportunities to support the Pacific with the negotiations.
128. New Zealand reiterated support towards the negotiations for a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, emphasising the importance of the Pacific speaking with one voice. It was noted that New Zealand shall host a preparatory meeting in 2024. It was highlighted that New Zealand has contributed to the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States fund with the INC Secretariat to assist with the INC negotiations process.
129. Solomon Islands acknowledged the excellent support by the Secretariat on the work of the INC negotiations and the support from Australia and metropolitan Members. With respect to the recommendations, Solomon Islands emphasised the importance of the Secretariat assisting countries to articulate specific issues relevant to the Pacific. As with climate change, the Pacific needs to drive areas that are important to the region in the INC negotiations process, in that the Pacific as a region is disproportionately impacted by plastic pollution.
130. The Secretariat appreciated the support extended to Members in the negotiation process. The Secretariat noted it will examine the zero draft recently uploaded to the INC Secretariat website on 5 September 2023 and will ensure that in the negotiations process positions are relevant to the Pacific, through confirming Pacific positions to speak with one voice in Nairobi.

131. The Director General urged Members to ensure that when delegates arrive to negotiate, that they are prepared and have the mandate to negotiate on behalf of their government. Another key issue highlighted is the lack of continuity in representation. The High Ambition Coalition for Plastic Pollution is aligned to the interests of the Pacific and Members are highly encouraged to join Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, France, New Zealand, and Palau in the Coalition.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the First and Second Sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1 and INC-2) 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 and the United Nations as well as other Metropolitan Members and partners;
- 3) **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 Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee process;
- 4) **Encouraged** financial support from other donor partners to assist with the negotiation process as is currently undertaken by the Government of Australia and the United Nations;
- 5) **Encouraged** Member states to join the High Ambition Coalition of like-minded countries to end plastic pollution by 2040; and
- 6) **Noted** and **supported** the Cook Islands intention to elevate the profile of the Global Plastic Treaty as a Pacific Partnership for Prosperity at the upcoming Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in November 2023.

## **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.**

132. The Secretariat presented an overview of the key priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 1 for the biennial period 2024-2025.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the updates on activities to be implemented under Regional Goal 1 for the next biennial period 2024-2025.

#### **Agenda Item 9.1.1: Climate and Oceans (TK/PIGOOS/COSPPAC)**

133. The Secretariat presented the progress of work on Traditional Knowledge in climate change resilience and adaptation.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the progress on traditional knowledge by SPREP and partners; and
- 2) **Endorsed** and **directed** the Secretariat to establish a traditional knowledge working group under the auspices of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable.

***Agenda Item 9.1.2: Pacific Meteorological Council & associated Meeting Outcomes including the Pacific Climate Weather Ready***

134. The Secretariat provided an update on the outcomes of the: Joint Meeting of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs); 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC-6); Donor and Development Partners Engagement Meeting; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Meteorology (PMMM)-3; held in Nadi, Fiji from 10 – 18 August 2023.
135. The Secretariat provided an update on Weather Ready Pacific, which was endorsed by Pacific Leaders in 2021 and has initial funding of AUD 30 million from Australia and the support of New Zealand.
136. The Cook Islands noted that the Weather Ready Pacific is a key initiative for the Cook Islands as Forum Chair under the Pacific Partnership for Prosperity, which shall be presented to the Pacific Forum Leaders Meeting in November, with the Prime Minister of Tonga as the champion of Weather Ready Pacific. The Pacific Partnership for Prosperity further strengthens the visibility of Weather Ready Pacific to help mobilise additional political and funding support.
137. The Secretariat suggested that in line with 'Agenda Item 8.5: Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to negotiate an international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution including from the marine environment', that noted the recommendation on the Pacific Partnership for Prosperity, that a new recommendation be included that notes the Cook Islands intention to elevate the profile of Weather Ready Pacific under the Pacific Partnership for Prosperity at the Pacific Forum Leaders Meeting in November.
138. New Zealand and Solomon Islands acknowledged the Weather Ready Pacific initiative as a programmatic approach to bring donors together and urged Members and partners to work together to implement Weather Ready Pacific .It encouraged the Secretariat to seek other donor partners which have yet to be initiated into the Weather Ready Pacific work.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes of the Joint Meeting between the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and the National Disaster Management Offices (NDMO);
- 2) **Noted** the establishment of the Pacific Partnership Coordination Mechanism and the Dashboard to assist the coordination of development partners on Early Warning Systems in the Pacific;
- 3) **Noted** the outcomes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Pacific Meteorological Council;
- 4) **Noted** the Progress made on the Weather Ready Pacific and acknowledge the financial contribution of the Government of Australia of AUD30 million and the support of the Government of New Zealand;
- 5) **Noted** the Weather Ready Pacific Governance Structure and finance facility recommended by the PMC;
- 6) **Noted** and **supported** the Namaka Ministerial Declaration for a Sustainable Weather, Climate, Ocean, and Water Services for a Resilient Blue Pacific;

- 7) **Requested** development partners to invest in the Weather Ready Pacific as the programme to coordinate the wider implementation of people-centred end-to-end multi-hazard early warning systems for all Pacific island countries and territories and coordinate their efforts on end-to-end people-centered multi-hazard Early Warning Systems through the Pacific Partnership Coordination Mechanism and the Dashboard; and
- 8) **Noted** and **supported** the Cook Islands intention to elevate the profile of the Weather Ready Pacific as a Pacific Partnership for Prosperity at the upcoming Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in November 2023.

### ***Agenda Item 9.1.3: Reconvening the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable***

139. The Secretariat presented on the reconvening of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable to facilitate climate change dialogue and networking in the region and to link global and regional stakeholders with action at the national and community levels.
140. It was noted the last Pacific Climate Change Roundtable was held in 2017, as the region transitioned to the Pacific Resilience Meetings underpinned by the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, approved by Pacific Leaders in 2016.
141. Australia, France, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna supported the recommendation to reconvene the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable, noting its importance of facilitating stakeholder sharing and coordination, and the alignment of efforts in the climate change space, highlighting the Secretariat's unique position in facilitation of this Roundtable.
142. The Secretariat conveyed that confirmation on funding had been received from France to host the proposed Pacific Climate Change Roundtable in May 2024. France confirmed its commitment of 100,000 Euro to hosting the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable.
143. Wallis and Futuna asked the Secretariat to ensure the harmonisation of the Roundtable schedule, to optimise opportunities and avoid duplication of efforts.
144. Solomon Islands requested clarification from the Secretariat on the reason the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable was discontinued.
145. The Secretariat responded, the reason for the Roundtable not being convened was the focus on the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific as an integrated platform for disaster resilience and climate change. It had become apparent over time, that the dedicated space for climate change including practitioners was lost, and that there was a need to revive the Roundtable.
146. The Secretariat further elaborated that the difference between the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) and the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable was that the PRP covered a wider scope and working groups were issue based and time bound. The Pacific Climate Change Roundtable is a mechanism that involves all SPREP Members including territories and has dedicated working groups that are communities of practice in the climate change key priorities.

147. The Director General highlighted the discontinuation of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable was a management decision of the Secretariat, to support the advancement of the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, which was anticipated to cover the climate change area, that has not operated as planned. It has become a key lesson learnt, that the Secretariat endeavours to address through the recommendation to reconvene the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable in 2024.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the reconvening of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable in 2024.

### **Agenda Item 9.2: Regional Goal 2 Overview: Pacific people benefit from healthy and resilient island and ocean ecosystems.**

148. The Secretariat presented an update on implementation of Regional Goal 2 for the biennial period 2024 - 2025.
149. France made reference to activities reported on marine conservation and mentioned that they fully approved and endorsed marine spatial planning activities carried out. It further acknowledged the collaboration between countries and commended the Secretariat on the remarkable work done on coral reef conservation. France reconfirmed its commitment on coral reefs and place great importance on the sustainability of coral reef conservation work in the region. France equally commended the Secretariat's work on invasive species, particularly in Wallis and Futuna through the Protégé project.
150. New Caledonia encouraged the Secretariat to facilitate the improvement of coordination between protected area managers and to continue work to revive endangered species. It was suggested focal points lists and contacts be included on the Pacific Islands Protected Area Portal to facilitate direct contact between protected area managers. New Caledonia proposed a new recommendation aimed at improving networking on marine conservation in the region.
151. Solomon Islands thanked the Secretariat for the update on its work under this regional goal and raised the need to recognise transboundary protected areas. It urged the Secretariat to give increased recognition and support to these types of initiatives.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the update on implementation on Regional Goal 2 activities for the biennial period 2024 to 2025; and
- 2) **Encouraged** the Secretariat to strengthen support to Members in developing regional and transboundary cooperation on ocean protection, including Marine Protected Areas and other conservation measures, and facilitate networking amongst Pacific Islands conservation and protected area managers, including through continued strengthening of the Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal (PIPAP).

### *Agenda Item 9.2.1: Progressing SPREP Key Marine Activities to 2030*

152. The Secretariat provided an update on the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026 and implementation of the Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030.
153. New Zealand supported the recommendations and recognised the amount of work gone into the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme and Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan. It was noted that migratory marine species are one of the ways through which Members are connected to each other to help guide collective and coordinated efforts. On the first Sea Bird Action Plan, the role of Bird Life was acknowledged with its contribution to the development of the plan. New Zealand encouraged the Secretariat to continue to support Members on the implementation of the work.
154. United Kingdom supported the recommendations and recognised the amount of work undertaken. The United Kingdom noted that the world's largest marine reserve is around Pitcairn Islands, and a Marine Science Centre will open based in Pitcairn Islands. The United Kingdom seeks for these initiatives to be in coordination with the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species and Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan Programme.
155. The Director General reiterated the collective work gone into the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme and Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan. The Director General sought the support of Pacific Partners and Members in working together for effective implementation of these plans.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Pacific Island Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026.
- 2) **Committed** to implementation of the PIRMSP 2022-2026 and the Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030; and
- 3) **Recognised** and **committed** to supporting the UN Decade of Oceans actions on the science for threatened and migratory marine species and corals.

### *Agenda Item 9.2.2: Restoring island resilience - Scaling up invasive species management.*

156. The Secretariat presented the Guiding Framework for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (Second Edition) for endorsement and sought the commitment of Members to use the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS) to assist with invasive species management and ensure national priorities are captured within the system. The Secretariat also updated the Meeting on invasive species management being an essential tool for restoring island resilience and climate change adaptation.
157. New Zealand shared it is pleased to support SPREP's invasive species work in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, Manaaki Whenua and other technical institutions. It was noted that 90 percent of invasive species happen on island and affected biodiversity resilience. New Zealand supported the working paper and commended the Secretariat for developing the systems and encouraged others to join this effort to restore biodiversity and the health and wellbeing of Pacific people.

158. Republic of Marshall Islands fully supports the recommendations and the work under the PRISMSS programme and the support from New Zealand. It was noted that work is progressing under GEF-6, some of which is under review. Republic of Marshall Islands also recognised that addressing invasive species will also add to its national resilience against climate change.
159. Tokelau fully supports the recommendations and requested support given its isolation. It was highlighted that on the Tokelau island of Fakaofu, there is no bearing of breadfruit as it is infected by mealy bugs. Whilst there are efforts to eradicate the problem, there is no progress. It was noted that the problem of mealy bugs is also affecting water sources, as the invasive species lives on aluminium roofs and enters water tanks. Tokelau requested support from development partners to address this issue.
160. Wallis and Futuna thanked the Secretariat for the presentation, highlighting that invasive species have been introduced through development projects such as agriculture and that there are many similarities and similar invasive species among Pacific islands like Wallis and Futuna and Samoa for example. Wallis and Futuna also reiterated the importance of being careful in moving species between islands, as well as the opportunity and option to use other species to control invasive species.
161. The Secretariat thanked Wallis and Futuna for its comments and reiterated the role of the Secretariat to provide technical assistance to support both member countries and territories, with the help and support of metropolitan member countries, especially the United States support for the North Pacific. The Secretariat also shared coordination efforts with the Pacific Community in terms of biosecurity, recalling the Ecological Security Workshop in Palau.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Guiding Framework for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific (2nd Edition);
- 2) **Committed** to utilising the PRISMSS to assist with invasive species management in-country and ensure national priorities are registered within PRISMSS Business System;
- 3) **Recognised** invasive species management as an essential component needed for restoring island resilience and climate change adaptation; and
- 4) **Directed** and **supported** the Secretariat to continue to develop invasive species focused regional climate change adaptation and resilience initiatives.

***Agenda Item 9.2.3: Host country for 11<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in 2025***

162. The Secretariat presented on the 11th Pacific Islands Conference for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, which shall celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. The Secretariat provided the background and history of the Conference. It was noted that an expression of interest has been circulated to all Members on the criteria for the host country. The Conference will provide an opportunity for a Pacific island to host and celebrate the anniversary and show leadership in this area.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** convening of the 11<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Islands Environment Leadership Awards in 2025; and
- 2) **Encouraged** Members to submit interest in hosting the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference and work with the Secretariat in planning for the event.

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

163. The Secretariat presented an overview of key priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 3 for the biennial period 2024 – 2025.
164. Solomon Islands thanked the Secretariat for the overview and its work on waste management and pollution control. It was highlighted the need to look into the issue of national support for these programmes noting that at the national level, one person may hold responsibility for multiple areas including their substantive position. It was highlighted that Pacific Members need support for national coordinators and that it is important to enable scope to explore other modalities of support to Members. The Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP) was viewed as an example of a different approach to implementation. Members are empowered to lead as part of its normal programmes, but still need national coordinators especially for large programmes. Solomon Islands noted that national coordinators could combine to work across different programmes, including in biodiversity.
165. Samoa acknowledged progress on work done to date in the area of waste management, which is a critical issue for Small Island Developing States such as Samoa. It was noted that the area is crowded with support for countries. Samoa has made institutional reforms and created a separate entity under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as a stand-alone unit. Samoa acknowledged the work done by the Waste Management and Pollution Control team in coordinating regional projects and making sure Samoa can address different streams of waste. The example of landfills that are coming to the end of their life span was highlighted.
166. Samoa noted it wants to see more programmes that can prioritise segregation, and recycling of waste and waste/ energy initiatives. Samoa sees these as a priority at the regional level. On regional waste management systems, Samoa further noted it is important to first build capacity at the national level for waste management personnel. It also shared that it does not want to compete with regional structures taking focus away from capacity building at the national level. The example of enhancing monitoring systems at the national level was shared and support of more partners needed. Samoa acknowledged that regional programmes reduce the burden on national governments allowing them to focus on implementation of activities.
167. Papua New Guinea acknowledged the work of the Secretariat in this area. It was noted that new programmes cause challenges such as lack of human resources. Papua New Guinea also stated that there is a need for sustainability and that countries need assistance to provide that.

168. Papua New Guinea advised that there is an issue of collaboration and coordination for the Secretariat and Members. It was the view of Papua New Guinea that the Secretariat should have a clear indication of what countries need, for example on policy and legal frameworks. Papua New Guinea noted that there should already be a stock take in the region to avoid duplication of efforts, to make an impact in countries to address long term waste problems.
169. The Secretariat noted that a lot of issues raised are being addressed. For example, the Secretariat has difficulty in finding people in country to fill posts made through the projects, but the Secretariat will continue to seek assistance. In reference to donors, some projects are more flexible, while others have specific rules around staffing versus activities. The Secretariat has tried to address this issue by placing where possible, project staff in country to help with implementation.
170. The Secretariat noted that it is aware of what is needed in country, but it is the responsibility of Members to advise the Secretariat what those needs are. The Secretariat will assist, where partnerships and resources, both financial and technical, permit.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the updates on activities to be implemented under Regional Goal 3 for the biennial period 2024 - 2025.

***Agenda Item 9.3.1: Aspirations towards a Cleaner Pacific 2035: New Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy 2026 – 2035 (Cleaner Pacific 2035), New Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme 2026 – 2035 (PACPOL 2035) and Review of the Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan 2018 - 2025***

171. The Secretariat presented on the development of the new Cleaner Pacific 2026-2035; new PACPOL 2026-2035 addressing the Regional Oil Spill Response Mechanism; and the review of the Pacific Regional Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the development of a new Cleaner Pacific 2026-2035;
- 2) **Endorsed** the development of a new PACPOL 2026-2035 as it presents a significant opportunity for Pacific Island countries to continue to take major step forward to protect our ocean from marine pollution; and
- 3) **Encouraged** Members to participate and contribute to the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2018-2025 mid-term review and provide their objectives and expectations of relevant targets whilst keeping a watching brief on the INC plastic pollution process.

***Agenda Item 9.3.2: Circular Economy: Unlocking the potential of waste as a resource.***

172. The Secretariat presented on the opportunities of a Circular Economy approach can have for waste management, resource efficiency, and greener growth opportunities in Pacific island countries and territories.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the development of a Regional Circular Economy Policy Framework and Regional Circular Economy Network; and
- 2) **Encouraged** members to support the Secretariat to seek funds to implement circular economy project opportunities as provided by the various donor initiatives.

***Agenda Item 9.3.3: Capacity development in the waste and pollution sector: regional programmes for behavioural change and community of practice***

173. The Secretariat presented on a holistic approach to sustainable waste management practices enabled by effective community behavioural change initiatives.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the approach of developing and implementing Community Based Social Marketing campaigns; and
- 2) **Encouraged** the active engagement of relevant Ministries within Member countries in the implementation of pilot activities to build capacity for implementing similar campaigns across the region.

***Agenda Item 9.3.4: Environmentally sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste***

174. The Secretariat presented on environmental sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste. It sought the support of Members for the development of strategic regional resources for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes; and the endorsement of the adoption of the technical guidelines developed by the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS) on environmental sound management of hazardous waste.

175. Samoa, Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna acknowledged and commended the Secretariat on the work undertaken with regards to the management of hazardous waste and wanted to raise concerns on the issue pertaining to electric cars, the drive for low carbon economies and issues relating to the safe disposal of lithium batteries. Samoa sought clarification from the Secretariat on the potential influx of the management and disposal of electric vehicles and lithium batteries into the region.

176. New Caledonia noted the challenges faced with the removal of used lithium batteries and shipping them across international boundaries and proposed to have an additional recommendation included in the paper to setup or start technical support or a facility to address the issues of lithium batteries in Pacific islands.

177. Wallis and Futuna noted the importance of addressing lithium batteries, as it has no infrastructure in place nationally and would appreciate support from partners like France and the United States to safely dispose this hazardous waste. Wallis and Futuna highlighted the contradiction of moving to low emission cars with use of lithium batteries, that cause environmental problems.
178. The Secretariat recognised the concerns raised by Members and have yet to address this emerging issue but recognise the need to develop a code of practice to address new types of hazardous waste together with the guidelines. The code of practice will align and complement existing partnerships and modalities and will also consider transboundary issues relating to the movement of hazardous materials including lithium batteries as stipulated under the Basel and Waigani Conventions.
179. The Secretariat urged Members to also consider waste management as a holistic process that needs to account for the full shelf life of batteries from when it enters Pacific islands to what happens at the end. The Secretariat also reminded Members that as part of the holistic approach, environmental assessments and safeguards need to be considered to support and address these issues including the safe disposal of hazardous material.
180. Papua New Guinea requested the Secretariat to amend the recommendations to reflect the options of developing regional codes and/or regulatory tools.
181. The Secretariat clarified that the recommendation is to seek guidance and support from the Meeting to allow the Secretariat to develop something that has not yet been put in place.
182. Solomon Islands supported the intervention from Papua New Guinea and Samoa and suggested the Secretariat provide guidance to Members in progressing work on lithium batteries.
183. The Secretariat requested an amendment to Recommendation 1 (i) to be reflected as 'Pacific Regional outlook on hazardous waste and chemicals guidance to assist Members with new waste streams.'
184. New Caledonia asked the Secretariat to undertake a coordination role to have the monitoring of nuclear waste in the waters of the Pacific and proposed to initiate and launch a technical centre of measurement or tool to collect samples to measure the level of radioactivity in Pacific waters.
185. New Caledonia clarified, the need to develop a standard tool that can be used to test the chemical quality of these waters, as there are pilot activities conducted in country to test radioactivity, but it is not coordinated. It was noted that the idea is to setup a coordinated approach that can account and note radioactivity across the Pacific region.
186. The Director General reiterated that the Secretariat's current capacity does not cover some of these issues, however, the decision lies with the Members, as the capabilities to test radioactive waters needs to be developed.

187. Republic of Marshall Islands recalled its request to the Pacific Islands Forum to undertake similar work as requested by New Caledonia and requested an update from the Secretariat.
188. The Director General clarified that the lead for these issues is the Pacific Islands Forum, unless the Meeting decides that this issue needs to be taken-up by the Secretariat. The Secretariat cannot answer the question or provide an update as this is the work of the Pacific Islands Forum.
189. The Secretariat highlighted the issue of transboundary transportation or movement of lithium, and that the refusal of shipping of used lithium batteries is regulated by the conditions of the Basel Convention. The issue is not about a facility in place, but rather the safe movement and disposal of stockpiles. Shipping can only take these items if a source is identified.
190. Samoa recognised that it may be beyond the current capacity of the Secretariat but emphasised that it is an important environmental issue that the Secretariat should keep track of, noting its potential impacts on the environment.
191. American Samoa recognised the urgency to do something now, with respect to addressing treated and untreated nuclear waste, as there are implications to the environment. It was noted as being beyond the scope of the Secretariat and requested if metropolitan countries can assist with a method or process to address these hazardous issues and its implications to the region. American Samoa recognised that transitioning into new technologies also brings its own issues, such as with lithium batteries.
192. French Polynesia agreed that the Pacific Islands Forum is the political forum leading on this matter, however at a technical and environmental level this topic must also be discussed at the SPREP Meeting. French Polynesia concurred with Samoa that the Secretariat track this issue noting its potential impacts to the environment.
193. The Cook Islands noted that there are already discussions happening in the region including at the Pacific Community, regarding the testing of radioactivity. It was suggested that perhaps there be coordination with other regional organisations to look at this matter.
194. The Director General clarified that the Secretariat has been trying to build its capacity in terms of oceans monitoring and needs the guidance and direction of Members. As a technical agency, the Secretariat needs to ensure that it has the full consensus of Members. The discussions help guide the Secretariat and the Meeting decisions to provide clear direction and collective wisdom on the way forward.
195. Solomon Islands noted that the discussion is reflective of the level of interest and the capacity at the national level, and why countries seek guidance from the Secretariat. It further emphasised that when it comes to environmental issues, hazardous issues, nuclear legacies, the basis of all of this is from an environmental perspective. Solomon Islands noted that SPREP is the environmental organisation for the region and that it should be involved in such issues noting its direct correlation to the environment. It was also suggested that the discussions be reflected in the recommendations.

196. France and Vanuatu expressed support for the previous interventions from Members. Vanuatu requested that the Meeting consider hazardous issues, if appropriate, and add an additional recommendation for consideration. It was noted that Vanuatu is already collecting data as a baseline and urged other Members to do so. It recommended Members add additional recommendations to guide the Secretariat on this area of work.
197. The Secretariat recalled the 23<sup>rd</sup> SPREP Meeting Report (2012) under Agenda Item 9.3.4: Regional Radiation Contamination Information Collation and Review with respect to paragraph 234, which noted that ‘*The Members met in closed session for an informal discussion of the environmental consequences of nuclear testing and nuclear pollution in the Pacific and French Polynesia offered to host a workshop in 2013 which will be described in a forthcoming SPREP circular*’. The Secretariat informed the Meeting that it was, however, unsure as to whether the workshop had taken place.
198. Noting the discussion, the Secretariat suggested a Friends of the Chair meeting convene, consisting of French Polynesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu to draft an additional recommendation for the consideration of the Meeting.
199. The Friends of the Chair reported back to the Meeting with a revised recommendation.
200. The Cook Islands sought advice from the Secretariat on its capacity to address the new recommendation from the Friends of the Chair.
201. The Secretariat responded that it has the capacity to coordinate and seek partnerships with relevant agencies including amongst the membership and with other CROP agencies. However, on technical capacity, it was emphasised that this is something that it will have to build over time and does not have the resources to implement at present.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the development of the:
  - i. Pacific Regional Outlook on Hazardous Waste and Chemicals and guidance to assist Members with management of new waste streams;
  - ii. Regional Action Plan on Mercury; and
  - iii. Regional Codes of Practice on Hazardous Wastes.
- 2) **Endorsed** the adoption of technical guidelines developed by the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS) on ESM of hazardous waste;
- 3) **Encouraged** project focal points to actively engage in project activities, and utilise the resources developed to improve hazardous waste management nationally; and
- 4) **Directed** the Secretariat to conduct an assessment of capacity to coordinate the monitoring of the Pacific marine environment for radioactive contamination in collaboration with expert groups including CROP agencies, and research institutions and report back to Members at the Executive Board in 2024.

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

202. The Secretariat provided the Meeting with an overview of key priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 4 for the biennial period 2024 - 2025.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the key strategic priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 4 for the biennial period 2024 to 2025.

#### **Agenda Item 9.4.1: Harnessing the use of environmental planning and monitoring tools to support environmental governance**

203. The Secretariat provided an overview of its efforts in strengthening the use of environmental planning and monitoring tools to support environmental governance in the Pacific. It sought endorsement to work with Members, donors, and partners to secure resources to support and strengthen environmental governance.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the efforts by the Secretariat in promoting and strengthening the use of environmental planning and monitoring tools to support environmental governance in the Pacific; and
- 2) **Endorsed** the Secretariat's proposed work streams in leveraging support of Members, donors, and partners to secure resources to strengthen environmental governance through the use environmental planning and monitoring tools.

#### **Agenda Item 9.4.2: Strengthening ocean governance**

204. The Secretariat presented an update on SPREP's work on ocean governance in the region; and sought endorsement for it to develop a regional ocean governance strategic framework for the Secretariat and its Members.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the work by the Secretariat on Ocean Governance for Members and the region; and
- 2) **Requested** the Secretariat to develop a regional strategic framework for strengthening its capacity on Ocean Governance in consultation with Members, and partners including CROP.

#### **Agenda Item 9.4.3: Scaling up the outcomes and results of the ACP/MEA 3 Programme**

205. The Secretariat informed Members on the outcomes and results of the ACP/MEA Phase 3 Project implementation; and sought endorsement of the scaling up of the ACP/MEA Phase 3 Project to Phase 4.

206. France noted the progress of the ACP MEA Phase 3 Project and expressed full support for the extension of the Project beyond 2024, noting the evaluation and results will be reported to the SPREP Executive Board Meeting in 2024.
207. The Director General highlighted that the ACP MEA Project paved the way for the Inform project and that the Global Climate Fund funded USD 60 million for a project on building climate information in five Pacific island countries, implemented by UNEP in partnership with the Secretariat.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the outcomes and results of the ACP MEA Phase 3 project implementation to date; and
- 2) **Endorsed** the Secretariat to develop an ACP MEA Phase 4 project proposal in partnership with member countries and donor partners to be presented in the Executive Board meeting in 2024.

## **AGENDA ITEM 10: CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> PIP 2024-2025 AND THE 2024-2025 BIENNIAL WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET**

### **Agenda Item 10.1: Draft Performance Implementation Plan (PIP) 2024-2025 and Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework (CTSPF)**

208. The Secretariat presented the draft Fourth Performance Implementation Plan (PIP4) for the biennial period 2024-2025 aligned to the updated Results Framework 2017-2026; and progress on the Country and Territories Strategic Partnership Framework.
209. New Zealand sought clarification from the Secretariat as to whether the Performance Implementation Plan was fully funded over the term of its implementation.
210. The Secretariat responded that the budget for the Performance Implementation Plan will be included in 'Agenda Item: 10.2: 2024-2025 Biennial Work Programme and Budget' and further clarified that the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework was embedded within the Performance Implementation Plan, where priorities of the Performance Implementation Plan were addressed by the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework at the country level.
211. The Cook Islands confirmed its interest to participate in the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework and looked forward to working closely with the Secretariat in the process of its engagement in the framework.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Fourth Performance Implementation Plan (PIP4) 2024-2025; and
- 2) **Noted** the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework 2022-2023 update and invited Pacific island members to confirm their interest to start the Country Territory Strategic Partnership Framework process in their respective countries.

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

212. The Secretariat presented its Biennial Work Programme and Budget of USD 40,679,684 for 2024; and provisional Work Programme and Budget of USD 30,082,893 for 2025.
213. French Polynesia requested the Secretariat provide details of the 'other donors' that comprise 11 percent of project funding. The Secretariat confirmed the list of donors was detailed on Page 9 of paper 10.2.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Considered** and **approved** the Biennial Work Programme and Budget of USD\$40,679,684 for 2024 and provisional Work Programme and Budget of USD\$30,082,893 for 2025; and
- 2) **Noted** that a funding gap of USD\$2,491,109 provision for Core expenditure for the 2024 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: REPORT OF THE SPREP CONVENTIONS

### Agenda Item 11.1: Report on the Seventeenth ordinary meeting of the contracting parties to the convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and related protocols (Noumea Convention)

214. New Zealand, the Chairperson of the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Noumea Convention presented the Report to the Meeting.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Noumea Convention.

### Agenda Item 11.2: Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and the Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (the Waigani Convention)

215. Solomon Islands, the President of the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention, presented the Report to the Meeting.

The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention.

## AGENDA ITEM 12: OTHER BUSINESS

### Agenda Item 12.1: Endorsing Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific by Government of Vanuatu

216. Vanuatu presented the Port Vila Call to Action for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific.
217. France requested that the proposal from Vanuatu be noted and requested further time for approval from capital.
218. Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom acknowledged the leadership of Vanuatu on climate change in the region and noted the ambitious initiative to seek a just transition to a fossil fuel free Pacific.
219. Australia, Cook Islands and New Zealand noted that the matter had been discussed at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting and will also be discussed at the Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting through the Pacific Islands Forum process.
220. It was noted by the Cook Islands that the proposal by Vanuatu will be considered through the Forum political process.
221. Vanuatu noted that the Port Vila Call to Action for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific was also discussed in the Fifth Pacific Regional Energy and Transport Ministers' Meeting (5TH PRETMM) hosted by the Government of Vanuatu in May 2023.

#### The Meeting:

- 1) **Welcomed** the aspiration in the Port Vila call for a just transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific; and
- 2) **Acknowledged** the decision of the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers Meeting that tasked the PIF Secretariat to progress discussions on the region's transition including consideration of a Declaration at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM52) from 06 – 10 November 2023 in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

### Agenda Item 12.2: Criminalising Ecocide at the International Criminal Court by Government of Vanuatu

222. Vanuatu presented the global Coalition of Environment Ministers who are calling for the inclusion of Ecocide into the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
223. Samoa and Solomon Islands extended support for the recommendations presented.

#### The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the invitation of Belgium and Vanuatu for Pacific nations to join the “Coalition of Environment Ministers for The Inclusion Of Ecocide Into The Rome Statute Of The International Criminal Court”; and
- 2) **Encouraged** to further discuss the issue to assist Members in making an informed decision.

### AGENDA ITEM 13: OBSERVER STATEMENTS

224. Observer statements were presented by Conservation International and the European Union. Refer to Annex for observer statements.

### AGENDA ITEM 14: DATES OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

225. The Meeting:

- 1) **Noted** the 4<sup>th</sup> Executive Board Meeting shall convene virtually or in-person from 2-6 September 2024; and
- 2) **Noted** the Executive Board shall consist of the: Troika of Tuvalu as Chair, Tonga as the past Chair, and United Kingdom as the incoming Chair; and also, Palau as the representative of Micronesia; Solomon Islands as the representative of Melanesia; Tokelau as the representative of Polynesia; the United States of America as the Metropolitan representative; and France as the French speaking representative.

### AGENDA ITEM 15: ADOPTION OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> SPREP MEETING

226. The Meeting:

- 1) **Adopted** the Outcomes of the 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting.

### AGENDA ITEM 16: CLOSING

227. France extended appreciation to the meeting translators and interpreters for their excellent support of the Meeting.

228. The Chair thanked all Members for their fruitful deliberations and extended appreciation to the Secretariat for its dedication and hard work in organising the Meeting.

229. The Meeting closed with a prayer from the Chair at 4.10pm.

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