



South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Meeting
of the
Working Group on the
SPREP Action Plan

Report



363.7
099
MEE

1-2 July 1996
Siumu, Western Samoa

SPREP Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Meeting of the Working Group on the SPREP Action Plan (1996 : Siumu, Western Samoa)

Meeting of the Working Group on the SPREP Action Plan, 1-2 July 1996, Siumu, Western Samoa : report. - Apia, Western Samoa : SPREP, 1996.
SPREP, 1996.

17 p. ; 29 cm.

ISBN: 982-04-0153-4

1. Environmental protection - Oceania. 2. Environmental policy - Oceania. 3. Conservation of natural resources - Oceania. I. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme. II. SPREP Action Plan. III. Title.

363.7099

Published in July 1996 by:
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
P.O.Box 240
Apia, Western Samoa

Printed by:
Commercial Printers Ltd
Apia, Western Samoa

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South Pacific Regional Environment
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Original Text: English



South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Meeting of the
Working Group on the
SPREP Action Plan

1-2 July 1996 Siumu, Western Samoa

R e p o r t

Published July 1996.

Introduction

1. The Meeting of the Working Group on the SPREP Action Plan was convened in Siumu, Western Samoa, from 1 to 2 July 1996. Representatives of the following SPREP countries and territories attended: Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, the United States of America and Western Samoa. A representative of the Forum Secretariat also attended. A list of participants is at Annex 1.

Agenda Item 1: Official Opening

2. The Meeting was opened in Prayer by the Reverend Faafili from the nearby village of Siumu.

3. The Acting Director of SPREP, Mr. Don Stewart, welcomed delegates referring to this as perhaps the most significant Meeting for SPREP so far this year, in that it establishes the basis for the Ministerial deliberations at the forthcoming Ninth SPREP Meeting to be held in November. He called upon the Meeting to provide clear guidance to the Secretariat to enable it to complete the first draft of SPREP's Action Plan for 1996-2000 which would be circulated to all SPREP Focal Points. He referred to the critical importance for delegates to be cognizant of a vision for SPREP, not only for the next 5 years but well beyond. Other important issues for discussion included SPREP's role as implementer versus coordinator and the relationship to national capacity.

4. The Acting Director of SPREP, introduced the resource persons, Mr. Grahame Hunter and Mr. Andrew Wright, who had jointly reviewed SPREP's Action Plan 1991-

1995, as outlined in WP2, and had produced a discussion paper on the Revision of the SPREP Action Plan (WP1). He also introduced Meeting resource person, Mr. Paddy Gresham, as well as SPREP's four Heads of Division.

Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

5. The Acting Director of SPREP was appointed as Chair, nominated by Australia and seconded by the Federated States of Micronesia. It was agreed that a Vice-Chair was not necessary, given involvement at the Meeting of the Secretariat's HODs.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Arrangements

6. The Agenda was adopted as amended and appears as Annex 2.

Agenda Item 4: Introduction of discussion papers and identification of issues for consideration

Agenda Item 5: Presentation on financial and institutional resources

Agenda Item 6: Report back to Plenary on financial matters

(Agenda Items 4, 5 and 6 were discussed together)

7. The Resource team outlined the process undertaken during the independent Review of the SPREP Action Plan, 1991-1995. The Review was conducted in late May and early June 1996. The Review involved a desk study undertaken by the two consultants who worked in collaboration with the Secretariat to identify programmes and activities representative of SPREP's work. A series of semi-structured telephone interviews were also undertaken with member governments and collaborating organisations, as an effective means of consultation given time and funding constraints.

8. The Acting Director introduced the Secretariat's working paper on Financial and Institutional Resources for Action Plan Implementation (WP4) to provide guidance to discussion of the key issues which were elaborated upon by the Resource team. Key issues identified in the Review as requiring additional input and guidance from the Meeting, were:

- ⊗ Governance;
- ⊗ Coordination/Communications;
- ⊗ Role of the Secretariat;
- ⊗ National Capacity;
- ⊗ Inter-relationships/Servicing Conventions;
- ⊗ Finance;
- ⊗ Monitoring and Reporting;
- ⊗ Response to Change;
- ⊗ Corporate Plan and Action Plan;
- ⊗ Form of next Action Plan - Core Components;
- ⊗ Technical Content of Action Plan; and
- ⊗ Programme Detail.

9. Issues such as national capacity and inter-relationships were raised throughout the ensuing discussion on many of the issues itemised above.

Agenda Item 7: Guidance for preparation of the initial draft of the 1996-2000 Action Plan

Governance

10. The Review recognised the achievements of SPREP but noted that it needed to define itself and Members need to commit to its governance. It was also recognised that convening additional technical group meetings is an expensive undertaking and is against the flow of the current regional direction.

11. The Meeting agreed that the following matters should be reflected in the Action Plan:

- ⊗ the assumption that SPREP meetings will become biennial and that a greater proportion of time will be available for technical or programme discussions;
- ⊗ that encouragement could be given to better use of existing opportunities for technical meetings rather than providing for new opportunities;
- ⊗ acceptance of the proposal to better harmonise activities under the Convention through incorporation of activities into the Action Plan, commonality of language and combined meetings;
- ⊗ the opportunities for enhanced participation by the Secretariat in the technical meetings of other regional institutions with environmental responsibilities;
- ⊗ provisions that would see the Action Plan feature more prominently at SPREP meetings; and
- ⊗ the opportunities for SPREP engagement with agencies other than those with primary responsibility for the environment.

Coordination/Communications

12. The Review raised the issue of effectiveness of SPREP's current Focal Point process, recognising that a more dynamic role was required of Focal Points to ensure greater dissemination of information. The information inundation and work expectations of heavily overloaded and often under-resourced environment units in member governments, was also recognised. It was also recognised in the Review that SPREP's relationship with other organisations, as with coordination between all Regional organisations, could improve.

13. The representative of the Forum Secretariat stressed the importance of SPREP reporting to the Forum on key issues as well as under SPREP's normal reporting requirements. He drew to delegates' attention the fact that regional coordination had improved significantly as a result of commitment on the part of the heads of SPOCC organisations. The development of Programme Profiles under the Regional Strategy also provided an effective tool for regional coordination, especially as it provided for greater transparency thus avoiding duplication.

14. The Meeting agreed that the following matters should be reflected in the Action Plan:

- the critical role of Focal Points and the need to encourage them to effectively communicate with other agencies, recognising the constraints in capacity in small island countries;
- the role of SPREP as a coordinating body linking members' regional activities;
- the maintenance of the provision for reporting to the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Commission. This reporting needs to recognise the

importance of reporting to the Forum given the critical political importance of this body and the need to keep political leaders informed of environmental issues. Reporting to the South Pacific Commission should be a very short report tabled at the meeting; and

- the opportunities that will be increasingly available to make use of electronic media in the communication of information.

Role of the Secretariat

15. The issue was raised in the Review over whether the Secretariat should be a facilitator or implementer of activities, this issue being closely related to national capacities.

16. The Meeting agreed that the following matters should be reflected in the Action Plan:

- the consensus over a vision/goal for SPREP as a facilitator/coordinator rather than as an implementing agency;
- the need to define terms (such as "facilitator") possibly with examples. This could assist SPREP clarify its roles in specific activities;
- the fact that the role of the Secretariat in the Action Plan, should reflect the role of SPREP itself;
- for the time being, there would continue to be a balance between the different roles but that SPREP needed to move purposefully towards the role of facilitation/coordination and away from roles in project implementation;
- a continued implementation role may remain in such areas as "demonstration" projects;
- the role played by the Secretariat may change over the lifetime of an activity;

- recognition of different national capacities for environmental management amongst members and the need for the Secretariat to be responsive to these differences in the roles it plays;
- the Secretariat is constrained by funds and financial sustainability;
- the need for clearer differentiation of activities (global/regional/national and community) which should help the Secretariat define its role in such activities;
- the potential for SPREP to have a lesser role at the national project level where support may best be sought directly from bi-lateral sources; and
- the critical role of SPREP in national capacity building and the inclusion of NGOs, communities and the private sector, as well as governments in these activities.

Finance

17. It was noted in the Review that there is decreasing capacity for member governments to accommodate increases in financial contributions. It was also noted that donors were calling for good governance, and looking at alternative means of delivery for example NGOs and the private sector.

18. The Meeting noted that:

- there is concern over SPREP's current financial situation;
- although there is some uncertainty over the actual Budget position, current forecasts to the end of the year show a cash flow deficit, unless further member contributions are received;
- there have been no changes in member contributions to core funding since 1992;

- urgent action is required by contributors to pay their core contributions; and
- there is a need for further discussion on the current system of member contribution to the primary function budget. The meeting proposed that the Secretariat look at explaining the fundamental nature of the primary function budget and the obligations of members to contribute to that budget.

19. The Meeting agreed that the following matters should be reflected in the Action Plan:

- the context in which SPREP works is one where donor funds are increasingly constrained;
- the need to establish clear priorities to ensure the most effective use of funds; and
- the provision of indicative costs for programmes and activities with the suggestion that three categories of costs could be used:
 - (i) where medium term financing is assured;
 - (ii) where discretionary funds are likely to be available; and
 - (iii) where funds are unknown at present and need to be secured.

Monitoring and Reporting/Response to Change

20. The Review and the Meeting recognised that there is a need for a periodic review process and a sound database. The need for flexibility to accommodate change, was also recognised as was the fact that the last Action Plan had served SPREP reasonably well.

21. The Meeting agreed that the following matters should be reflected in the Action Plan:

- SPREP's role as information broker

which could be expanded, in recognition of information as a critical tool for change;

- SPREP's role as a focal point for dissemination of information through the Internet, etc., and also the important role it can play as an interpreter/filter of information;
- the inclusion of performance measures which are an important tool for ensuring accountability;
- the concept of the Action Plan as a living document and provision to have the Action Plan become an agenda item in future SPREP Meetings;
- flexibility does exist for change at the project level;
- the importance of traditional knowledge (e.g. anecdotal information which is very powerful) as well as information from scientific and other sources; and
- SPREP's role as a coordinator for relevant international environmental agreements and programmes.

Corporate Plan/Action Plan

22. SPREP has a number of other management documents that are relevant to its activities and the Action Plan. These include the Corporate Plan and the Annual Work Programme. There is currently some duplication/overlap of the documents and it is desirable that these are clearly linked and duplication avoided. It was considered that, when the Corporate Plan is rewritten, this could be limited to the Secretariat's administrative, technical budgetary and legal structures.

23. The meeting agreed that the following matters should be taken into account in the revision of the Action Plan:

- to use the current Corporate Plan as a source of text, where appropriate;
- that future annual work programmes would reflect the objectives of the Action Plan; and
- the likely revision of the Corporate Plan being limited to Secretariat structures.

Form of the next Action Plan

24. The Meeting sub-group which was requested to address the matter of issues to be included in the programme areas for the revised Action Plan, comprised the Pacific Island Country and territory representatives.

25. The sub-group:

- agreed that the six programme areas identified in Discussion Paper: Revision of the SPREP Action Plan (WP1) adequately reflect the major issues perceived by Pacific Island Countries themselves. These are:
 - ▶ Biodiversity and Natural Resource Conservation;
 - ▶ Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Management;
 - ▶ Environmental Management, Planning and Institutional Strengthening;
 - ▶ Waste Management, Pollution Prevention and Emergencies;
 - ▶ Environmental Information, Education and Training; and
 - ▶ Management, Finance and Administration.
- expressed concern about how the Action Plan and its Programme areas address what individual countries see as their priorities;

- ⊗ agreed that the Action Plan should be very focused and achievable and therefore needed to look, not only at SPREP's capacity to implement activities, but also at national capacities;
 - ⊗ recognised that the ratings in the matrix (Table 2: Issue rating and perceived trend, State of the Environment Reporting for the Pacific, SPREP, March 1996) will change from time to time and that there is a need for flexibility and freedom for countries to have these changes reflected;
 - ⊗ agreed that there is a need for Pacific Island Countries and territories to look closely at the Work Programme of SPREP to ensure that it reflects actual needs;
 - ⊗ agreed that in Programme Area 5 (Environmental Information, Education and Training), there is the need for SPREP to assist with development of a Network for information dissemination and that this should assist with translating information into a form usable at the community level.
26. Additionally, the sub-group agreed that:
- ⊗ the Action Plan should cover all Pacific Island Countries and territories; and
 - ⊗ where language creates difficulties, it should be interpreted to ensure inclusion of all Pacific Island Countries and territories.
27. The Meeting sub-group tasked with addressing Action Plan sections on Regional context, Definition, Goals and Objectives, agreed as follows:

Regional Context

28. Sections 1 and 2 of the Regional Con-

text section of the Action Plan should be restated:

Paragraph 1 should read

"The countries and territories which are responsible, through SPREP, for the development and implementation of the Action Plan are:

[The Action Plan would then list all the countries and territories]".

Paragraph 2 should read

"The principal focus of the Action Plan activities is the area covered by the island countries and territories of the South Pacific Region".

29. **Definition** should be:

"The Action Plan sets out the strategies and objectives of SPREP. The Action Plan is SPREP's framework for a regional approach to address environmental issues of the South Pacific region."

30. The sub-group further agreed:

- ⊗ that the Action Plan should include the SPREP mission as stated in the Corporate Plan;
- ⊗ the goal of the Action Plan would be
"To protect and improve the environment of the region for the benefit of Pacific island people now and in the future."
- ⊗ a supplementary comment would be attached to the goal to emphasise the priority to be given to national capacity building as follows:
"For the period of this Action Plan, particular attention will be given by SPREP to building national capacity in environmental management. National capacity building will involve; government agencies, communities, NGOs and the private sector."

Objectives and Guidelines

31. Plenary agreed that the "generic" objectives in the early section of the Action Plan should reflect the priority programme areas namely:

- Biodiversity and Natural Resource Conservation;
- Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Management;
- Environmental Management, Planning and Institutional Strengthening;
- Waste Management, Pollution Prevention and Emergencies; and
- Environmental Education, Information and Training.

32. The material in the current Action Plan objectives and those proposed in the discussion paper should be incorporated into the strategies section, as should the way environmental education, information and training contribute to all programme areas. The programme area relating to Financial Management and Administration should be included in the Corporate Plan.

33. An additional guideline should be included as follows:

- *National Capacity Building*

All of SPREP's activities will aim to build national capacity in environmental management including in other sectors and to this end, SPREP will aim to facilitate the management of activities at the local and national level.

Education, Information and Training

34. SPREP will facilitate the collection, synthesis and distribution of information, and promote the use of environmental training and

education as primary capacity building tools across the range of its activities.

35. The Secretariat was encouraged to continue the national consultation process, within a representative sample of countries, especially involving those countries not represented at this meeting.

36. Delegates referred to the importance of the new Action Plan having:

- objectives that relate to the Programme areas;
- performance indicators; and
- five year budgeting plan containing indicative aggregate amounts for each year of the plan.

37. The Meeting suggested that, when circulating the draft Action Plan and undertaking in-country consultation, the Secretariat/Consultants should endeavour to apprise member countries of the subtleties in the wording and provide information on the deliberation at this Meeting over the specific wording.

Implementation Strategy

38. It was recognised that movement of SPREP's role from "implementor" to "facilitator" would not lessen, but rather increase the work of the Secretariat. It was noted that the building of national capacities and the encouragement of national implementation was more difficult than, for example sending in an outside consultant and running a SPREP-organised training activity.

39. The Meeting agreed that:

- the objectives originally prepared by the consultants should be incorporated, as appropriate, in the implementation strategy;

- the strategy for implementation should more strongly develop the concept of SPREP as a facilitator;
- the section on strategic implementation should clearly indicate that SPREP is purposefully moving towards facilitation and coordination, through the life of the Action Plan;
- the section on strategic implementation should be in the early sections of the Action Plan;
- the guiding principles should form part of the section on implementation strategy;
- part of the strategic approach should be, to circulate the communication of successful national activities in environmental management and to learn from its own activities and to use this knowledge to improve performance;
- it should include consideration of the function of the Secretariat and to ensure that these are consistent with Article 7 of the SPREP Agreement;
- it should indicate that part of its strategic approach will be to make effective and efficient use of the resources at its disposal;
- consideration should be given to a narrative approach to facilitate communication of the information in the section;
- the Secretariat should let members know how wording in the Action Plan was reached; and
- to amend the reference to SPOCC to read "Coordinate with SPOCC to promote cooperation and to remove duplication of effort."

Focal Points

40. It was agreed:
- to include wording from the current Action Plan and to recognise the constraints on the effectiveness of some focal points and the need for the Secretariat to look at the opportunities for ensuring the effectiveness of this important role; and
 - that the Secretariat should ensure that separate copies of communications are sent to the Foreign Affairs focal point as well as a technical focal point.

Structure

41. It was agreed:
- that the format proposed by the review team should be used as the basis for the Action Plan;
 - there was a need to be focused and realistic about what can be achieved during the period of the Action Plan, to clearly prioritise activities and relate them to the programme goals;
 - the Action Plan should recognise the importance of all the five substantive programme areas and the need to ensure adequate funding for each so there is balance in the overall programme; and
 - indicative budgets for each programme area for each year of the Action Plan should be given as well as an indication of the availability of funds by the categories proposed in paragraph 20.

Agenda Item 8: Other Business

42. There was no other business.

Agenda Item 9: Adoption of Report

43. The report was adopted by the Meeting.



South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Meeting of the Working Group on the
SPREP Action Plan

1-2 July 1996 Siumu, Western Samoa

Annex 1: Participants List

Governments and Administrations

AUSTRALIA

Ms Janaline Oh
Office of Pacific Island Affairs,
South Pacific Multilateral Section
South Pacific Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Telephone: (616) 261 2840
Fax: (616) 261 2332

Ms Natalie Daalder
Trade, Environment and Nuclear Section, ILD
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Mr Cliff Brock
Pacific Multicountry and Regional Programs (MPAC)
Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Telephone: (616) 245 4245
Fax: (616) 276 4720

Mr James Florent
International Unit
Environment Strategies Directorate
Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories (DEST)
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Telephone: (616) 274 1359
Fax: (616) 274 1858

Mr Adam Lees
Australian High Commission
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 23411
Fax: (685) 23159

Ms Angela Polita
Australian High Commission
Beach Road
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 23411
Fax: (685) 23159

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Mr Gabriel Ayin
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia
Suva
Fiji

Telephone: (679) 304180/304566
Fax: (679) 304081

FIJI

Mr Epeli Nasome
Director of Environment
Department of Environment
PO Box 2131
Government Buildings
Suva
Fiji

Telephone: (679) 311699
Fax: (679) 312 879

KIRIBATI

Mr Teken C. Tokataake
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Social Development
PO Box 234
Tarawa,
Republic of Kiribati

Telephone: (686) 28 211/28630
Fax: (686) 28 334

Mr Andrew S Teem
Assistant Environment Coordinator
Ministry of Environment and Social Development
P O Box 234
Tarawa
Republic of Kiribati

Telephone: (686) 28 211
Fax: (686) 28 334

NEW ZEALAND

Dr Rod Hay
Department of Conservation (DOC)
PO Box 10240
Wellington
New Zealand

Telephone: (644) 471 0726
Fax: (644) 471 3279

Mr David Bartle
Deputy Director
Environment Division
Private Mail Bag
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Wellington
New Zealand

Telephone: (644) 473 2102
Fax: (644) 494 8507

Mr Bill Dobbie
Second Secretary
New Zealand High Commission
Beach Road
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 21711
Fax: (685) 20086

NIUE

Ms Fifita Talagi
Director
Community Affairs Department
PO Box 77
Alofi
Niue

Telephone: (683) 4019
Fax: (683) 4021

Ms Esther Pavihi
Temporary Environment Officer
PO Box 77
Alofi
Niue

Telephone: (683) 4019
Fax: (683) 4021

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Mr Moses Biliki
Director
Environment and Conservation Division
Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation
PO Box G24
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Telephone: (677) 25848
Fax: (677) 21245

TOKELAU

Ms Luisa Sale
Management Assistant of NRE
Tokelau Apia Liaison Office
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 20822
Fax: (685) 21761

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ms Karen E. Krueger
US Embassy
PO Box 1190
Wellington
New Zealand

Telephone: (644) 472 2068
Fax: (644) 472 3537

WESTERN SAMOA

Mr Terry To'omata
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 25313
Fax: (685) 21504

Ms Desna Solofa
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 25313
Fax: (685) 21504

Mr Sailimalo Pati Liu
Principal Environment Officer
Department of Environment and Conservation
Apia
Western Samoa

Telephone: (685) 22481
Fax: (685) 23176

Organisations**FORUM SECRETARIAT**

Mr Iulai Lavea
Forum Secretariat
Private Mail Bag
Suva
Fiji

Telephone: (679) 312 600
Fax: (679) 300 192

Resource People

Mr Paddy Gresham
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10-362
Wellington
New Zealand

Telephone: (644) 473 4090
Fax: (644) 471 0195

Mr Grahame Hunter
Hunter Consulting Services Pty Ltd
32 Kirkwood St
Seaforth, NSW 2092
Australia

Telephone: (612) 99486537
Fax: (612) 99486537

Mr Andrew Wright
Tutumarem Marine Consultancy Services Pty Ltd
PO Box 30
Kavieng 631
New Ireland Province
Papua New Guinea

Telephone: (675) 942020
Fax: (675) 942026

SPREP Secretariat

Mr Don Stewart
Acting Director

P.O. Box 240
Apia, Western Samoa
Telephone: (685) 21929
Fax: (685) 20231

Ms Neva Wendt
Head, Environmental Education, Information
& Coordination Division

Mr Joe Reti
Head, Conservation of Natural Resource Division

Mr Gerald Miles
Head, Environmental Management & Planning Division

Mr Nuku Jones
Head, Finance and Administration Division

Ms Dorothy Kamu
Personal Assistant to Director

Ms Apiseta Eti
Personal Assistant to Deputy Director

Ms Saunoa Mata'u
Conference Assistant



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Annex 2: Agenda

1. Official Opening.
2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair.
3. Adoption of Agenda and Working Arrangements.
4. Introduction of discussion papers and identification of issues for consideration.
5. Presentation on financial and institutional resources.
6. Report back to Plenary on financial matters.
7. Guidance for preparation of the initial draft of the 1996-2000 Action Plan
8. Other Business.
9. Adoption of Report.