



Sustainable, transformative and resilient for a Blue Pacific

## 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5-7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

### Agenda Item 9.4.1 – Harnessing environmental planning and monitoring tools to support environmental governance

#### Purpose of paper:

1. To provide an overview of the Secretariat's efforts in strengthening the use of environmental planning and monitoring tools to support environmental governance in the Pacific; and
2. To seek Members' endorsement of the Secretariat to work with Members, donors, and partners to secure resources to support and strengthen environmental governance.

#### Background:

3. The SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026 identifies environmental planning and monitoring tools as vital in supporting effective environmental governance for better planning, reporting and decision making in the region.
4. Through the Secretariat, the Pacific region benefits from a range of environmental planning and monitoring tools, including Regional Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for Pacific Island Countries and Territories, the Regional Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) for Pacific Island Countries and Territories, Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing (RS) technologies, and environmental data catalogue and management systems. These tools have facilitated data-based decision-making, spatial analysis, and long-term environmental planning.
5. The SPREP EIA and SEA guidelines have been widely acknowledged by Members and international partners as best practice and have facilitated improvements in EIA administration and processes across the region.
6. The Pacific Network for Environment Assessment (PNEA) platform has registered the largest community of practice for environmental assessments in the Pacific, enabling networking, knowledge brokerage, and sharing of EIA and SEA best practice relevant to the region.
7. The network of national environmental data portals and the regional Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) to enhance environmental data management across the region that assisted in the development of State of Environmental (SoE) Reports and National Environmental Management Strategies (NEMS) including the Regional State of Environmental and Conservation Report (SOEC). This is complemented by e-learning modules to build capacity and support the use of the data portals as well as the environmental indicator guidebook to strengthen environmental monitoring and reporting.

8. The Geospatial Information System (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS) and Spatial analysis is strengthened to support Member countries through resourcing, workshops, trainings, and e-learning modules. This includes the recruitment of a Spatial Analysis Specialist and an Environmental GIS Specialist through existing projects which needs to be sustained for a longer term.
9. The importance of the application of these planning, monitoring, and reporting tools are also recognised in existing Global and Regional Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as reporting to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and the Noumea Conference of the Parties. By utilizing these tools, member countries can enhance their capacity to fulfill their obligations under the MEAs and contribute to global environmental and sustainable development goals (SDGs).
10. These tools have also been recognised in the on-going global negotiations on the legally binding treaty on plastic pollution and the recently adopted treaty on the conservation sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (“BBNJ”).
11. Despite the availability of these tools, the challenge of utilising these tools remains due to lack of technical capacity and skills, staff turnover, inadequate resourcing and funding, inadequate data availability, weak policies and insufficient institutional arrangements and coordination to name a few.
12. There are a range of opportunities to leverage and support the use of existing tools, platforms, and policies to strengthen environmental planning and monitoring in the Pacific region.

These include:

- a) capacity building to enhance technical expertise in the application of environmental planning and monitoring tools.
- b) increased funding to support the adoption and effective implementation of these tools.
- c) stronger institutional support for environmental planning and monitoring through the establishment of clear policies and guidelines both at the regional and national levels.
- d) recognising the value of Indigenous and traditional knowledge (ITK) and integrating them into the design and implementation of environmental planning and monitoring tools.
- e) scale up the impact and the outcomes of the Inform project to enhance data collection, management, analysis, reporting and sharing with other initiatives within the Secretariat. This contributes towards the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, SDGs, post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and other international commitments; and
- f) enhancing collaboration and coordination among partner institutions, organizations, and stakeholders both at the regional and international level.

## Recommendation

13. The Meeting is invited to:

- 1) **Note** 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) **Endorse** 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.
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03 July 2023