

31st SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5, 6, and 7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

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

Purpose of paper:

1. To provide the Meeting with an overview of key priorities to support the implementation and achievement of Regional Goal 4 for the biennial period 2024 - 2025.

Introduction:

2. For the biennial period 2024-2025, SPREP will continue to assist Members to achieve goals on environmental governance, policy development, planning, monitoring, and reporting for sustainable environmental outcomes and to keep pace with socio-economic development. This will include strengthening and supporting political leadership on environmental issues in the region.

Key Areas of Work for 2024-25:

RO4.1: Strengthen national sustainable development planning and implementation systems.

3. SPREP will continue to deliver awareness, training, and capacity building on the regional Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines; the regional EIA coastal tourism development guidelines; and the regional Strategic Environment Assessment guidelines; the guidance note for coastal engineering development; and provide policy advice and technical assistance on the review of existing and development of new EIA policies, legislations, and guidelines, and Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS).
4. Continue to strengthen SPREP's Geographical Information Systems (GIS) capacity through funding support from existing and possibly new SPREP projects; produce GIS e-learning module for beginners and environmental assessors; and building partnerships to convert critical SPREP data into GIS data for use by PICTs.

RO4.2: Improve national capacity for good environmental governance and development of policy and legislation to support of the implementation of Member international and regional commitments.

5. SPREP will continue to support PICTs to update and develop National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) and the integration of NEMS and Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) commitments into national planning processes.

6. Continue implementing the EU ACP MEA Phase III Programme implemented through UN Environment and executed directly by SPREP. This programme will contribute towards the implementation of key priorities for Regional Goal 4 specifically capacity building on MEAs and the strengthening and implementation of the Noumea Convention and SPREP as the Secretariat of the Noumea Connection.
7. SPREP will continue to provide advice to OPOC and PSIDS with the recently adopted treaty on BBNJ; seek support from development partners and secure resources to support member countries.
8. Work with at least 2 PICTs in developing national environmental standards for issues such as water quality, air quality or soil toxicity standards.
9. Continue to perform the role of Secretariat of the Noumea Convention and work closely with the Parties to the Noumea Convention in raising awareness of the Noumea Convention Articles and its purpose to encourage more Members to join.

RO4.3: Strengthen environmental data collection, monitoring and analysis and reporting on results, nationally and regionally.

10. SPREP will continue to build capacity on national level environment reporting in at least 2 PICTs to support the State of Environment Report (SOE) reporting, MEAs and SDGs reporting obligations.
11. SPREP will continue to implement the outcomes and results of the Regional Inform Project focusing on:
 - Maintaining and strengthening the Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) network, updating the content management systems and user interface.
 - Supporting the use and adoption for the Indicator Reporting Tool (IRT) in at least 2 PICs and document use for strategic reporting requirements.
 - Building capacity in at least 40 staff in member countries to use the environmental portal supported by e-learning platforms
 - Implement the Inform sustainability plan including development of a full sized scaled up project.

RO 4.4: Strengthen access to funding mechanisms and using funds effectively and efficiently to deliver required interventions.

12. Review the progress of the ACPMEA Phase III Programme and develop a new project proposal to address critical priorities that will be identified.
13. Secure more country support from the Country GEF 8 STAR Allocation and work closely with members and partners to develop the INFORM Plus full project proposal. Cook Islands, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, and Solomon Islands have provided letters of support.

Challenges, Opportunities and Coordination

14. The main challenge in implementing Regional Goal 4 is the limited capacity of the Secretariat to meet increasing demands from PICTs for policy and technical assistance.

15. The Inform project which has established national and regional environment data portals as well as the development of SoE Reports and NEMS ended in June 2023 and the Secretariat requests the support of the Members from the GEF8 STAR Allocation to work with the Secretariat in developing new funding proposals to sustain the project beyond 2023.
16. Some of the opportunities that are available to support the implementation of Regional Goal 4 include:
 - The effective implementation and application of key policy documents such as SoE Reports, NEMS, EIA guidelines, tools and data portals produced and developed to support planning, reporting and decision making. For example, SoE Reports are useful tools to use as the basis for Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) reporting including reporting to relevant national processes including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - The ACP/MEA III Programme¹ is fully integrated across the SPREP Technical Programmes namely the Environmental Monitoring and Governance, Islands and Oceans Ecosystems and the Waste and Pollution Programmes. This approach creates an excellent opportunity to address key environmental issues and priorities in an integrated and holistic manner.
 - SPREP and the World Bank are developing a partnership to support Environmental and Social Impact Assessment in the region. This builds on from the Pacific Learning Partnership for Environmental and Social Sustainability which consists of SPREP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and University of South Pacific that was used as a strategic platform to coordinate the delivery of EIA/ESS capacity building and training to PICTs. The purpose of the new initiative between SPREP and World Bank is to build environment and social risk management capacity in the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) and participating countries to develop and deliver sustainable investments at country level. It will enhance the ability of SPREP to support countries with E&S issues related to country investment projects; strengthen pool of E&S specialists with risk management skills and experience in the region; and support information repository and data management platform which is used by E&S specialists across the region. It will also increase awareness within relevant institutional and Government ministries of benefits of integrated E&S risk management systems, assessment and mitigation throughout project planning, development and implementation.

Recommendation

17. The Meeting is invited to:

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

03 July 2023

¹ The ACP MEAs Programme aims to build capacity to support members to meet their obligations to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and to tackle the environmental issues they face.