SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa
E: sprep@sprep.org
T: +685 21929
F: +685 20231
W: www.sprep.org

CLEAN PACIFIC 2012

The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

Twenty Third SPREP Meeting of Officials

4-7 September 2012
Noumea

REPORT

Introduction

1. The 23rd Annual SPREP Meeting was held at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community Conference Centre in Noumea, New Caledonia from 4 to 7 September, 2012.

2. Representatives of the following SPREP countries and territories attended: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America and Wallis and Futuna. Observers from a range of regional, international and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also attended. A list of participants is attached as Annex I.

3. The opening ceremony was conducted on the evening of 3 September. Mr Anthony Lecren, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development of New Caledonia attended and welcomed representatives.

Agenda Item 2: Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

4. In accordance with the "Rules of Procedure of the SPREP Meeting" (Rules 8.1 and 8.2), the Meeting:

   - ***confirmed*** the Representative of **New Caledonia** as **Chair;** and
   - ***confirmed*** the Representative of **Wallis and Futuna** as **Vice-Chair**.

5. The Director-General thanked the outgoing Chair, Republic of Marshall Islands, for their leadership in the past year and welcomed the incoming Chair, represented by Mrs Caroline Machoro.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

6. Nauru requested that Agenda item 9.3.1 also include an update on general activities in waste management in addition to Clean Pacific campaign updates.

7. The Secretariat requested that agenda item 6.4 be moved immediately after the adoption of this agenda item, so as to enable the UK to participate in the discussions following its anticipated acceptance as a Member of SPREP.

8. The Meeting:
   - **considered** and **adopted** the revised Agenda as contained in Annex II;
   - **agreed** on hours of work; and
   - **appointed** an open-ended Report Drafting Committee comprising a core group of Australia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, United States of America and Wallis and Futuna. The Vice-Chair of the 23SM (Wallis and Futuna) would chair the Report Drafting Committee.

Agenda Item 6.4: Request by the United Kingdom for SPREP Membership

9. The Secretariat advised Members of the request by the United Kingdom for SPREP Membership and noted that no Member had submitted a written objection to this request, which was made in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 5 of the SPREP Agreement. The six-month period for objections lapsed on 27 August 2012.

10. Samoa, as the Depository of the SPREP Agreement, advised that nine SPREP Members had announced their formal support in respect of the application for Membership by the United Kingdom: Australia, Cook Islands, France, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and United States of America.

11. American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Niue, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna conveyed their support for the application and welcomed the United Kingdom back to the SPREP membership.

12. American Samoa queried the financial support that the United Kingdom would bring to the region. The Director-General of SPREP advised that the United Kingdom would contribute the same membership fees as other metropolitan members and would also have the opportunity to support activities in the region at their discretion.

13. The Chair consequently invited the United Kingdom to join the meeting. The representative expressed appreciation of the support from Members and indicated United Kingdom's willingness to become an active SPREP member in the region. He advised that the Instrument of Accession was currently being signed and that would complete the formal application process.

14. The Meeting:
    - *Considered* the request from the United Kingdom for SPREP Membership; and
    - *Invited* and warmly welcomed the United Kingdom to join the 2012 SPREP Meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Action taken on decisions made by the 22nd SPREP Meeting

15. The Director-General tabled a report on actions taken on the decisions of the 22nd SPREP Meeting, and on action taken on suggestions made by individual Members during the Meeting. These are detailed in 23SM/Officials/WP.4.

16. Tuvalu congratulated the Secretariat on the work it had carried out in the past year and for maintaining the Members' trust in its work. The representative noted that despite all this work, Tuvalu still faced challenges with staff turnover and capacity and sought SPREP's support in areas of capacity building and in implementing the recently approved Climate Policy and National Strategy and Action Plan.

17. Fiji congratulated the Secretariat on the actions undertaken and requested an update on the Green Climate Fund and on the work programme on Loss and Damage. The Secretariat advised on progress in both areas noting that this would be discussed in detail under Item 9.2.4. The Secretariat also advised that a paper was being prepared by the UNFCCC Secretariat and that inputs were being sought on this (to be discussed during a side event at the Meeting).

18. Samoa also confirmed the advice provided by the Secretariat and stressed that active participation of the Parties in the Green Climate Fund was important.

19. The Meeting:
    - *Noted* the Report.

Agenda Item 5.1: Presentation of Annual Report for 2011 and Director General's Overview of Progress since the Twenty-Second SPREP Meeting

20. The Director-General presented the Secretariat's Annual Report for 2011 and highlighted the change management process that the organisation had implemented over the last 3 years to make SPREP better able to respond to, and support, Pacific island members.

21. The Director-General thanked the Government of Samoa as the host country for their continuous support to SPREP. He also acknowledged support from donors and partners and further expressed appreciation to SPREP members for their wise guidance and partnership. He also thanked the Government of New Caledonia for hosting the 23rd SPREP meeting and SPC for the venue. *Details of the Annual Report are contained in 23SM/Officials/WP.5.1.*

22. American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa and Wallis and Futuna acknowledged the presentation by the Director-General on the annual report and the support by SPREP staff.

23. Niue highlighted Secretariat support in the area of technical back-stopping for the PACC project and assistance with Niue's GEF National Prioritisation Formulation Exercise (NPFE) application as well as recent work on invasive species. However, Niue considered that more work was needed to address asbestos disposal options. In this regard, the Secretariat advised that the regional asbestos strategy had been approved in the previous year. The region now needed to move to implementation, which would require support from metropolitan members. The Secretariat advised that this would be addressed in agenda items 9.3.1 to 9.3.3.

24. Cook Islands acknowledged Secretariat support in developing their National Sustainable Development Plan, noting that this reflects the country's main environmental issues.

25. In response to a query from French Polynesia on the "SPREP campus", the Secretariat advised that this was not a formal programme, but is the principle of co-locating with similar like minded organisations to provide a win-win situation. All these organisations are implementing activities in the region (e.g PACCSAP and J-PRISM).

26. Samoa recognised Secretariat achievements on fund raising and the growth in financial resources and looked forward to discussion in a subsequent agenda item on PMER monitoring and reporting on impacts of SPREP work. Samoa noted with appreciation the close relationship between Samoa as the host of SPREP and the Secretariat, and also acknowledged the joint activities and partnerships with America Samoa, assisted by SPREP.

27. American Samoa encouraged Pacific Islands to utilise the programmes and technical assistance provided by SPREP. The representative noted that his country was in an awkward position because technical assistance is provided through its association with the United States of America. American Samoa expressed appreciation for the assistance from United States and acknowledged joint activities with Samoa. American Samoa also acknowledged the Director-General's visit to American Samoa and extended an invitation to the Director-General to attend the first green building dedication in October. This building could serve as a model for the Pacific on the use of green technology.

28. Wallis and Futuna noted the positive contribution of the Secretariat to the region and advised that it had paid its contributions on time. However, the representative observed that Wallis and Futuna was not mentioned in the activities in the report. He requested greater support from SPREP to Wallis and Futuna, particularly noting the contribution from France.

29. Kiribati noted its close technical and financial work with SPREP adding that much support was given by SPREP during the development of the Kiribati Integrated Environmental Policy. The representative was appreciative of the prompt response from SPREP and acknowledged the doubling of technical and financial support, noting that this was particularly helpful for under-resourced Pacific countries.

30. Fiji extended appreciation for the highly informative report by the Director-General noting that it had helped provide better understanding of the volume of work and responsibilities of the Secretariat. The delegate noted three main issues which include new initiatives, sub-regional presence and member contributions. The representative stressed that, given the need to implement new initiatives, it is important to report and address arrears.

31. The Secretariat thanked American Samoa and Wallis and Futuna for payment of their membership dues and acknowledged the lack of Secretariat support to Wallis and Futuna. This was partly caused by a lack of bilingual staff in SPREP, and the Secretariat was looking to address this. The Director-General also advised that the Secretariat's ability to respond to member requests was dependent on the organisation's resources.

32. The Meeting:

- **Noted** the report.

Agenda Item 5.2: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) on the 2011 Work Programme and Budget

33. In accordance with the SPREP Meeting Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat presented its Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report (PMER) report for 2011. The PMER also provides a tool for the Executive and Management to identify important emerging issues and challenges and to make adjustments in areas of its work where improvement may be needed in the course of the year. The Secretariat noted that the 2011 PMER was presented on the basis of the previous structure, which has been replaced by the new organisational structure approved by the 22nd SPREP Meeting in 2011. Reporting to future SPREP Meetings will follow the format of the SPREP Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

34. The Secretariat further highlighted its view on the usefulness of the PMER, particularly as a transparency and accountability tool on the work of the Secretariat. The Secretariat expressed hope that, with donor support and availability of funding in the future, this internal assessment would be supplemented with independent evaluations of aspects of the organisation's work on a rolling basis.

35. United States acknowledged the new website but noted that it, along with several other countries, United States was not shown on the site as being SPREP members. The Secretariat apologised for this oversight and advised this would be rectified immediately.

36. In response to a request from United States, Niue and Samoa for clarification on the gap between core and programmatic funding, the Secretariat advised that core funding came from member contributions and programme funding from donors and other partners. This would be discussed under subsequent agenda items, in which a request would be made for a small increase in member contributions. The proposal for increase in membership fees would allow SPREP to be more fiscally responsible.

37. Samoa congratulated the Secretariat on its efforts to report on its activities and also expressed its gratitude to donors and partners who have contributed funding to SPREP. The representative sought clarification on the legal assistance requested from the Secretariat relating to various legislations including on Samoa's Waste Management Act.

38. New Zealand joined others in congratulating the Secretariat on the report and, noting that as this was the last year of reporting under the current strategic plan, New Zealand looked forward to the new reporting structure with an emphasis on actual results, focussing on what had actually been achieved through the various regional and national interventions. The

representative further advised that his government had confirmed that New Zealand would shift to multi-year financing with a 3 year funding cycle to commence in 2013.

39. Fiji echoed earlier comments congratulating the Secretariat on the report and made reference to the Pacific Environment Forum discussion, on the State of the Environment Reporting which had focussed on using scorecards to measure the success of activities and their outcomes. The representative expressed hope that next year's reporting would have something similar.

40. Australia congratulated SPREP on its report and, noted the absence of this detailed member country reporting by other CROP agencies.

41. The Meeting:
    - ***noted*** the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the 2011 Work Programme and Budget.

Agenda Item 5.3: Audited Annual Accounts for 2011

42. In accordance with the Financial Regulations, the Secretariat presented its Audited Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December, 2011 noting that these were prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The auditors had provided a clean and unqualified opinion of the Secretariat's financial operations for 2011.

43. Niue commended SPREP for the report, observing that this was an indication of a strong commitment from the Director-General and of the effectiveness of the financial management of SPREP. The representative further observed that while there was a significant increase in programme funding, personnel numbers in the finance area had not changed. He suggested that either the team members were working smarter or were overloaded. Niue recommended that consideration be given to a reward scheme for staff concerned or that additional staff be employed. The representative further acknowledged, with appreciation, the work of the Finance Adviser and her team's work.

44. Cook Islands echoed Niue's comments and commended the finance team on the report.

45. New Caledonia noted, with appreciation, the inclusion of the table in the report outlining what SPREP invests in each Member. The representative added that this provided a clear vision and understanding on what SPREP does in member countries and territories.

46. Samoa also congratulated SPREP, particularly the finance team, on the well-prepared report. The representative recalled the finance reports provided to the two Conventions (Waigani and Noumea) and observed that the Convention finances are handled together with overall Secretariat finances. Samoa observed that where it appeared that some countries (such as Samoa) had overpaid their 2010 annual membership contribution, it was likely to be due to the Party contributions to the two Conventions. He suggested that these contributions be clarified in the future and shown separately from the annual contribution to SPREP. The Secretariat agreed to address this.

47. The Director-General advised that, as reflected in the auditor's comments, the change management process had placed emphasis on improvement of financial management. He also agreed that staffing was a continuing challenge but that the Secretariat had recently taken the significant step in appointment of an Internal Auditor who works closely with the Finance Advisor.

48. The Meeting:

- ***adopted*** the audited Financial Statements and Auditors' Report for 2011.

Agenda Item 6.1: Strengthening Regional Linkages

49. The Secretariat presented the Consultant report outlining the costs and benefits of establishing a sub-regional presence for strengthening regional linkages and Members' access to SPREP services.

50. Several options were examined and are detailed in 23SM/Officials/WP.6.1: (1) co-location with other regional agencies in Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu or Solomon Islands; (2) establish a single agency or country office in six countries; (3) establish SPREP Small Island States (SIS) Desk Officers; (4) maintain *status quo*; (5) establish project-based regional or sub-regional presence; (6) periodic sub-regional fora especially for the North Pacific Members; (7) develop country-specific SPREP strategies; and (8) placement of SPREP technical officers in Federated States of Micronesia or Marshall Islands until the end of the current Strategic Plan period. The first four options were based on the recommendations of the earlier Gowty report.

51. The Secretariat highlighted that the purpose of the report was to present the options and provide the best information to enable decision making, however, the Secretariat had adopted a neutral position with respect to a preferred option.

52. Marshall Islands, supported by Nauru, expressed interest in hosting a sub-regional office in Majuro, noting that this was supported by the Presidents of Palau and Federated States of Micronesia at the 2012 Micronesian Chief Executives Summit. Marshall Islands had submitted a letter to this effect and sought further guidance from the SPREP Meeting regarding making a decision on this offer.

53. United States indicated that although they were sympathetic to the idea of a sub-regional presence and recognised its value, core budget resources were fixed and if the decision was adopted it would require other SPREP activities to be cut to pay for any new associated costs.

54. New Zealand expressed concern regarding the potential budget implications, especially in light of the other agenda items relating to increase in Members' contributions. The representative sought further information on how the option of an SIS model would function.

55. American Samoa observed that many countries had not yet paid their obligatory contributions and objected to the idea of a sub-regional presence, due to potential duplication. Nonetheless if the issue of a sub-regional presence were to progress, American Samoa proposed a doubling or tripling of the contributions of the countries benefiting from this. The representative recommended the need to investigate the budgetary implications further.

56. France, citing the clear picture given by the budget associated with the various options, qualified that while previous SPREP Meetings had endorsed the strengthening of regional delivery, the idea of a sub-regional presence had always been subject to further discussion and agreement. The representative also cautioned that a decision should be made based on current available funding without further increasing Members' contributions.

57. Tonga questioned the efficiency and effectiveness of establishing a staffed sub-regional office, stressing that the mandate and TOR of such an office would need to be clearly articulated to avoid duplication. The representative cited previous experience with another CROP agency undergoing a similar exercise that has led to overlap and confusion of roles.

58. Fiji supported the concept of working together and indicated that the member states of the Melanesian Spearhead Group looked forward to the outcomes of this discussion as an input to the Melanesian Environment Ministers' Meeting later in 2012.

59. New Caledonia supported the principle of regional strengthening, but cautioned that the economic situation had changed since 2009, when the independent institutional assessment citing the need for sub-regional strengthening was first carried out. In the present economic climate, the creation of a sub-regional entity seemed impossible and the representative urged Members to quickly reach a consensus on the issue to avoid further delays.

60. Samoa supported the idea of strengthening regional presence, and suggested that there was a need to further examine the financing options for the proposed options. The representative added that compartmentalisation of SPREP into sub-regional units could compromise effectiveness in the long-term. The Director-General suggested that an appropriate course of action would be to first agree on an option and then develop a fundraising strategy.

61. French Polynesia agreed on the principle of strengthening regional links but questioned whether it was really necessary given the number of staff of SPREP. French Polynesia disagreed with establishment of sub-regional offices because of the budgetary implications.

62. Federated States of Micronesia urged Members to consider the benefits over the cost, before killing the idea of a sub-regional presence and suggested that some of the potential benefits might not be easily foreseen at present.

63. In responding to some of the issues raised, the Secretariat clarified that the report made no specific recommendations but presented several options for consideration, with the costs presented in the context of a cost-benefit analysis, as per the TOR and direction given by Members at a previous SPREP Meeting. The Secretariat stressed that it had adopted a neutral position on this issue and was committed to strengthening support to members regardless of the decision taken with respect to a sub-regional presence. It emphasised that a decision for a country-hosted presence would have implications and obligations for the host country and advised that there were no provisions in the 2013 budget for a sub-regional presence.

64. As the discussions were at an impasse, the Chair directed the establishment of a working group consisting of Australia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tokelau and to discuss the options further and report back to the Plenary with concrete recommendations.

65. New Zealand, as Chair of the working group, reported on the outcome of the discussions, noting that there was a genuine consensus on the way forward.

66. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the report of the KVA Consultant;
- ***Recommended*** the placement of SPREP contracted technical desk officers in Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands for a one year trial period, subject to funding being available within the existing SPREP budget;
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to negotiate and finalise appropriate host-country agreements with the two Governments;
- ***Agreed*** to reconsider a sub-regional office for the North Pacific at SM 2014 based on resource availability and updated cost benefit analysis; and
- ***Recommended*** that the Secretariat explore partnership mechanisms with the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) secretariat to enhance coordination and delivery of services to South West Pacific members.

Agenda Item 6.2: Establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for SPREP

67. The Secretariat advised Members on the development of its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and presented a number of key documents for consideration of the Meeting. These were:

1. An overall performance management framework
2. Results measurement process for projects and activities
3. Monitoring and evaluation work plan format for project and activities
4. Revised format for PMER reporting commencing for 2013 reporting
5. Establishment of an internal Project Review and Monitoring Group.

68. The Secretariat noted that the framework aims to ensure that all levels of SPREP programme implementation are results based and outcome focused. It will also enable outcomes and effectiveness to be measured over short to long term time frames.

69. The framework takes into consideration the need to link institutional M&E requirements of the Secretariat with regional and national environmental monitoring to assess progress in achieving environmental outcomes for the region. This requires indicators at three levels – Secretariat institutional monitoring and reporting of activities; outputs and outcomes; national environmental performance and achievements; and regional level environmental monitoring, evaluation and reporting undertaken by the Secretariat in collaboration with Members and partners.

70. The Secretariat advised that it had commenced work on developing an acceptable methodology for ongoing monitoring of environmental outcomes at national and regional levels and that this was part of the issues discussed during the 2012 Pacific Environment Forum.

71. The Secretariat also acknowledged the assistance of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to develop a results-based M&E framework. It noted the collaborative work between SPREP and the Frankfurt School "Fit for Funds" Programme (outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP. 9.2.1), which would allow further development of the framework in view of the M&E standards and criteria required by multilateral funding agencies such as the GEF and Adaptation Fund. This refinement will assist SPREP in its applications to both agencies.

72. Further work in progress includes:

1. Defining Standard Output Indicators for each strategic priority to enable data to be consistently aggregated across the organisation.
2. Reaching agreement with Members on a process for monitoring long term impacts of SPREP support/interventions beyond the life of funded programmes, projects and activities.
3. Reaching agreement with Members on national and regional environmental indicators to underpin objective assessments of medium and long outcomes of Strategic Plan implementation.

73. New Caledonia thanked the Secretariat and acknowledged the support of New Zealand in the work.

74. The Meeting:

- ***endorsed*** the M&E framework presented.

Agenda Item 6.3: SPREP's Application to become a GEF Agency

75. The Secretariat provided an update on progress made for SPREP to become a GEF Project Agency and noted the directive of the 22SM that the Secretariat apply for accreditation as a GEF Project Agency under the GEF Pilot Scheme. The overall goal of this exercise is to increase funding from GEF for Pacific Island member countries. Details of the process are outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.6.3.

76. The Secretariat advised that it had submitted its Stage I application on 15 December 2011 and, subsequent to GEF Secretariat comments on the Stage I Application, submitted its Stage II Application on 21 May, 2012. The GEF Council assessed SPREP's Stage I Application on the basis of the report of the panel and noted a number of areas for improvement before SPREP's application could proceed. These areas included Environmental Safeguards, Fiduciary Requirements and Project Development, Monitoring and Evaluation.

77. The Secretariat advised that it was now working with the GEF Secretariat to obtain assistance in addressing the identified areas for improvement through a Medium Sized Project in time for the second round of agency accreditations (the date of which will be decided at the 43rd GEF Council Meeting in November 2012). The Project Identification Form for the Capacity Building Medium Sized Project was submitted to the GEF Chief Executive Officer on Friday 27th July 2012. The Secretariat emphasised that SPREP is the only agency receiving this type of assistance from GEF.

78. The Secretariat advised that it was also cooperating with the UNEP Collaborating Centre based at the Frankfurt School in the context of the SPREP application for Regional Implementing Entity status to the Adaptation Fund Board (see 23SM/Officials/WP.9.2.4 for more details) and this process had identified concrete steps to be taken in ensuring SPREP's compliance with the Adaptation Fund's project and fiduciary criteria as well as those of the GEF. The Secretariat will ensure that support provided under the medium sized project is closely linked and integrated with support provided by Frankfurt School.

79. The Secretariat further advised that an internal auditor had been recruited to assist with additional financial improvement. In response to a query from American Samoa, the Secretariat clarified that there had been agreement between SPREP and EU about the need to start with an internal auditor based within SPREP, given the limited size of SPREP. An external auditor could be adopted in the future if the organisation were to grow. The Secretariat advised that the internal audit and control framework was in line with accepted international standards.

80. The Secretariat also noted the establishment of the internal audit function within the organisation; the development of the internal audit charter; a committee charter; an Internal Control policy and plan to comply with GEF requirements; and an effective monitoring and evaluation process.

81. Members congratulated the Secretariat on this undertaking and expressed their support of this process.

82. In response to a query from Niue, the Secretariat clarified that SPREP is an executing agency while implementing agencies for GEF include the World Bank, UNEP and UNDP. As an executing agency, SPREP takes an overhead/management fee of around 6%, while the rest of the funds go to countries. The Secretariat stressed that the 6% fee applies only to operating costs and not to any funds that are ear-marked for countries. It also advised that UNDP applies a 10% fee on GEF projects.

83. Tonga recommended an additional evaluation layer, at the international level – in addition to the national, SPREP and regional evaluations. Tonga also suggested to use the SPREP Convention in order to have more binding legal instruments. Tonga asked what kind of support SPREP required in order for it to become a GEF implementing agency and whether there was a template available for countries to show their support.

84. United States asked whether SPREP would become a GEF implementing agency before the end of the GEF 6 funding round.

85. Nauru recommended that SPREP seek support of those members attending meetings where GEF representatives are also present. Member countries could also support this process through their representatives at the GEF Council. The representative advised that it would be very helpful to always stress the fact that the process is country-driven and is in the benefit of countries.

86. Responding to a question from New Zealand, the Secretariat advised that to the best of its knowledge, no other regional or sub-regional agency had yet obtained GEF accreditation.

87. Tuvalu expressed its support to this process but also expressed some concerns that this process may divert energies and resources of the Secretariat from its responsibilities of providing technical support to members.

88. Responding to a request from Marshall Islands, the Secretariat advised that the GEF accreditation was separate and independent from its application for accreditation with the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund. However many requirements were similar to the GEF application, hence applying to both these accreditations made sense and actually would save resources and time.

89. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the progress made by the Secretariat and ***encouraged*** the work to be continued as quickly as possible;
- ***Encouraged*** Members of SPREP, who are also Members of the GEF, to strongly support the application of SPREP to become a GEF Project Agency; in accordance with the accreditation criteria established by the GEF council;
- ***Encouraged*** interested donors and partners to ***support*** the implementation of any new standards, regulations and operational structures through possible secondments or financing.
- ***Noted*** the establishment of an internal audit function within the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 7.1: Report on Members' Contributions

90. In accordance with Financial Regulation 14, the Secretariat submitted a report on the receipt of Member contributions in 2012 (up to 30th June) and provided an update on the status of contributions as at the end of 2011. A summary sheet was also provided as part of 23SM/Officials/WP.7.1.

91. A number of Members submitted comments clarifying their outstanding fees. Many also commented that payments had been made recently affecting the amounts shown in the attached summary. It was the consensus of the Meeting that the Secretariat make further effort to pursue outstanding fees.

92. Fiji noted the success in their country of awareness raising internally within their government when seeking support for funding for such purposes, and proposed that the Secretariat assist Members by raising awareness for this purpose.

93. The Secretariat noted that payment of outstanding fees was a collective responsibility of the Secretariat and Members, and urged delegates to pursue the matter of outstanding fees with their respective governments on their return from the meeting.

94. The Meeting:

- ***Committed*** itself collectively and individually to paying current and outstanding contributions in full in 2012

Agenda Item 7.2: Increase in Membership Contributions

95. The Secretariat presented background on SPREP membership fees and sought approval of the SPREP Meeting for a twenty percent increase in membership contributions.

96. The Secretariat cited the growth in services it has provided to Pacific Island Members over the past five years noting that this growth has made SPREP better able to attract and catalyse financial flows to the region in areas relevant to its mandate. This has resulted in greater levels of assistance flowing to Pacific member countries and territories. Further, the change management process at SPREP over the last 3 years has made SPREP a more focused and efficient organisation and has improved internal efficiency ensuring that the majority of funding coming to SPREP is directed to support the priorities of Pacific island members.

97. Despite the increasing, and welcomed, levels of support from donors and partners, the Secretariat advised that the core funding from Members' contributions has remained static since 2004. Core funding largely covers the organisation's basic operational expenses (finance, human resource management and other essential services). The Secretariat stressed that limited core funding limits the ability of SPREP to support delivery of programmes in member countries and recalled the decision of the 19SM (2008), at which Members had reaffirmed the need for a regional environment agency and committed to adequately manage and fund the agency. However, the Secretariat advised that membership contributions had remained unchanged since that meeting.

98. The Secretariat requested Members' consideration of a specific increase of 20% noting that this would translate into an average increase of about USD 2,037 for a small island state and USD 4,072 for other Members.

99. In response to queries from Niue and Samoa, the Secretariat advised that despite increases in project (implementation) funding and management fees, these are specific to management of the project and were not available to support broader corporate services.

100. United States, in calling for zero budget growth, indicated that they could not support the proposal.

101. Fiji and Federated States of Micronesia also indicated they were unable to support the proposed increase as their national budgets for 2013 had already been approved. Fiji noted the value of creating awareness within governments on need for increases in membership contributions and encouraged the Secretariat to consider this.

102. Cook Islands advised that all budgetary decisions in Cook Islands are now made by Foreign Affairs, not the Environment Department, and the delegation was therefore not in a position to make a decision on the proposal. The representative recommended that the Director-General visit countries to try and resolve the issue of arrears.

103. Wallis and Futuna questioned the rationale of raising fees, when arrears remained unpaid. The representative also noted that the Secretariat records did not reflect his country's payment for 2010.

104. American Samoa acknowledged that the issue of arrears is a difficult and sensitive one for the Secretariat and urged that a plan be developed to recover outstanding arrears through a personal approach from the Director-General. The representative also recommended establishing a working committee to investigate the problem and come up with recommendations and suggested that the Ministers' meeting might also be an opportunity.

105. France indicated that they would be unable to support an increase in contributions as long as there were arrears in payments, and until a cohesive approach to recovering outstanding amounts is developed.

106. New Caledonia, Kiribati and Tokelau strongly supported the recommendations of the Secretariat, noting this was a way of strengthening efficiency of SPREP and in recognition of the work of the organisation. The representative of New Caledonia further stated that the proposed increase was consistent with support provided to other regional organisations. Kiribati also encouraged the Secretariat to find a strategy to work with Members to clear their arrears.

107. French Polynesia suggested that any increase be implemented over a 2-3 year period. The representative stressed that any financial increase should be used to increase support to those members who have fully paid their arrears, including French territories, and to improve French translation of official documents. The representative further stressed that increases should not to be used to fund sub-regional offices.

108. Tuvalu, while recognising the important role of SPREP in technical delivery of environmental services in the region, sought clarification on what the increase would be used for.

109. Australia acknowledged the financial limitations of the Secretariat and also recognised its delivery of tangible services, including a marked improvement in its level of reporting, but recognised that countries need time to plan, and when budget measures are proposed of this nature, suggested that at least a year's lead time be provided to give Members time to consider the proposal in terms of their budget cycles.

110. Niue, recognising the increasing work load to be delivered by SPREP in coming years, supported the proposal in principle but advised that further endorsement would be required from higher authorities. Niue supported the lead time of one year proposed by Australia.

111. United Kingdom suggested the decision be deferred by one year to allow the Secretariat to make a stronger case. The representative suggested the Secretariat prepare a list of activities that can be funded or not funded if membership fees are not increased. This was supported by New Zealand.

112. The Secretariat noted that a requirement for fiduciary responsibility required SPREP to better balance its core budget against project expenditure and stressed that project funding and management fees were specific to management of that project and limited in ability to be moved around in the overall organisation budget. The Secretariat agreed on the proposal to develop a discussion paper, noting that this would build on the current proposal but would need to take into account the recent changes in organisation requirements. The cost of preparing the paper would be within the existing budget as it would be prepared by SPREP staff.

113. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the importance of core funding for the continued viability of SPREP and also the fact that SPREP membership fees have remained unchanged since 2004; and
- ***Requested*** that the Secretariat prepare a discussion paper on how SPREP work is being impacted by unchanged membership fees since 2004 within the next 3 months.

Agenda Item 8.1: Report on the Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention

114. The Report of the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Waigani Convention, held on Thursday 30th August, Monday 3rd September, was tabled by the Chair of the Conference (Australia). The Chair provided a summary of the report for the benefit of Members.

115. The Meeting:

- *noted* the Report of the 6th Meeting of the Convention of the Parties to the Waigani Convention.

Agenda Item 8.2: Report on the Convention of the Parties to the Noumea Convention

116. The Report of the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Noumea Convention held on Friday 31 August 2012, was tabled by the Chair of the Conference (France). The Chair provided a summary of the report for the benefit of Members.

117. The Meeting:

- *noted* the Report of the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Noumea Convention.

Agenda Item 9.1.1: 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, November 2013

118. The Secretariat advised of the plans for the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas (the Conference) to be convened in November 2013 noting that SPREP is the lead regional organisation responsible for coordinating the Conference. The last Conference was held in Alotau, Papua New Guinea in October 2007. Despite the remoteness of the venue, the conference was attended by over 400 people.

119. The Secretariat noted that the past conferences had been instrumental in developing new initiatives and partnerships in nature conservation, explaining that the regional 5-year Action Strategy for Nature Conservation is developed at each conference. It also highlighted a number of initiatives and activities that have been initiated as a direct result of the conferences.

120. The next Conference will be held in Fiji in November 2013, hosted by the Government of Fiji and SPREP in partnership with the Roundtable for Nature Conservation. The Conference aims to establish new conservation and protected area targets and actions in the Pacific region. These will form the basis for developing the next Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific.

121. A concept paper to guide preparations for the Conference was developed by the Secretariat with input from members of the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation and was shared with the Meeting. The Secretariat advised that funding proposals were being developed to raise USD500,000 to support the Conference, in close cooperation with SPREP member countries and Roundtable members. Additional assistance had also been received from the New Zealand Volunteer Services Abroad, which is supporting an 18-month position volunteer position to assist with the Conference.

122. Cook Islands stated its full support for the Conference and requested donor agencies to consider providing support for this. The representative highlighted the recent launch of the Cook Islands national marine park and advised that marine conservation was a priority for the Pacific.

123. Fiji updated the Meeting on progress towards hosting the Conference, noting that approval had been confirmed by Cabinet with budgetary support, and that an internal organising committee had been established and was in close communication with the Secretariat to ensure common understanding of needs and objectives for the Conference.

124. American Samoa, Kiribati, Samoa and United States also endorsed and supported the Conference.

125. Kiribati observed that the Conference looks at developing a 5-year strategy for regional activities in nature conservation and encouraged the Secretariat to consider enhancing synergies between biodiversity and climate change. The representative called on SPREP to consider the formulation of an action-oriented strategy for the next 5-years and further requested that the country level practicality in terms of implementation also be taken into account. She welcomed and called on donors and partners to assist with funding not only for the Conference, but also for post-conference activities.

126. Samoa welcomed the proposal to host a ministerial meeting during the Conference, observing that this would give the Conference a higher priority. The representative also requested clarification on funding for national delegations and the Secretariat advised that the funding being sought was to enable country representation.

127. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the Concept Paper for the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas;

- *Gave full support* to the Secretariat to enable it to successfully deliver and achieve the expected outcomes for the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas; and
- *Welcomed and encouraged further efforts by* partners and donors to provide financial support to ensure the effective planning and implementation of the Conference.

Agenda Item 9.1.2: Regional Marine Species Action Plans 2013-2017

128. The Secretariat presented the revised regional Marine Species Action Plans for the next five year period, 2013-2017, noting that SPREP has been facilitating implementation of 5-year regional marine species action plans that focus on three groups of marine species of conservation concern: dugongs, marine turtles and cetaceans (whales and dolphins). The revised Plan was developed following extensive consultation with SPREP Members and partners in the region, including a major review meeting in Nadi, Fiji in March 2012.

129. SPREP's work on marine species has been linked with and supported by species related Conventions, in particular, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) which is supporting an officer at SPREP; and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

130. United States commended the Secretariat on its work in this area and indicated that although comments on the Action Plans had been previously provided, an opportunity to provide further written input would be appreciated. The representative observed that many of the actions had been rated as "high" priority and suggested that a different rating framework may be necessary to differentiate high, medium and low priorities. The Secretariat noted that an attempt was made to accommodate individual national priorities, which may have led to many actions being rated as "high".

131. United States expressed interest on the issue of whale and dugong by-catch, and viewing guidelines, and sought advice on how it could contribute to work in these areas.

132. New Zealand indicated that Whale Watching Guidelines have recently been reviewed in Tonga and these could be shared with other Members.

133. In terms of marine turtles, United States advised that NOAA had previously supported the SPREP turtle-tagging programme, but sought further clarification on the process of data collection, transmission and sharing. The Secretariat clarified that it provides an annual data report to countries that have submitted data, and that each country had ownership of its data.

It was therefore up to each country to communicate their own data on turtle tagging to interested parties.

134. France also commended the Secretariat on work carried out in the protection of marine species and expressed support for the results of the action planning workshop. While France had not been able to attend the workshop, it wished to contribute to the action plans. The representative indicated that it would have been desirable to have more time to allow for comments. It would also have been desirable to have in advance the results of the implementation of expired plans.

135. With respect to the Marine Turtle Action Plan, France acknowledged the importance of traditional structures and practices, but cautioned that such traditional species management practices should be assessed in light of conservation goals and encouraged only when compatible with such goals. The representative requested that appropriate text reflecting this position be included in the Action Plan.

136. France urged that Dugong Range States be encouraged to sign the MOU on dugong conservation and that signatory states be encouraged to implement the MOU. The Secretariat clarified that all Members who are potentially concerned have signed this MOU.

137. France further urged that dugong watching activities should not be developed beyond a level that is consistent with conservation goals.

138. French Polynesia joined other Members in congratulating the Secretariat on the excellent action planning workshop and urged the Secretariat to translate the workshop outcomes and recommendations into French, given the difficulties faced by the Department of the Environment of French Polynesia in working with the English language version. The representative noted the importance of the regional action plans, which are the basis for development of action plans in French Polynesia. He also thanked the Secretariat, for ongoing support provided in marine species conservation on the territory of French Polynesia.

139. New Zealand also congratulated the Secretariat on the Action Plans, and noted that they were pleased to be partnering with SPREP on a marine turtle conservation and eco-tourism initiative to be implemented in Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands. This initiative will explore how turtle conservation could work synergistically with locally-based businesses in support of local livelihoods, and will involve education and training for locally-based community monitors, sustainable management of turtles, turtle based ecotourism

programmes at selected sites, and a study tour to Vanuatu where similar programmes are being implemented.

140. Kiribati confirmed support for the Marine Species Action Plans and thanked the Secretariat and partners for ensuring Kiribati's participation in the process. The representative acknowledged support from New Zealand for the turtle conservation and eco-tourism initiative. She encouraged SPREP to consider integrating legislation, community-based initiatives, and the concepts of communication, education and public awareness at all levels, into the Action Plans to strengthen implementation of the plans. She noted that a draft regulation on protected species existed for Kiribati that requires full consultation of communities, and hence Kiribati would benefit from integrated communication, education and public awareness in this area.

141. Kiribati also encouraged the Secretariat to explore a technical exchange workshop for Members to allow local counterparts to work at other successful sites in the region. Further, the representative urged that the capacity building needs of government officers and other stakeholders must be considered in order to contribute to the success of implementation of the action plans in the future.

142. Fiji expressed support for the work of the Secretariat on the Action Plans, and acknowledged the Secretariat's input on the ratification of CMS. The representative indicated that Fiji's ratification instrument would be submitted to Cabinet in September.

143. New Caledonia advised that a partnership was launched in 2008, involving WWF South Province, and *Operations Cetaces*, which led to the development of a charter, and the adoption and implementation of good practices for whale watching.

144. In response to a request from Australia on the nature of the proposed amendments by United States and France, United States advised that it would provide further written input but was happy to allow the Secretariat to act on the input as appropriate and France requested that that their earlier comments regarding traditional practices being compatible with conservation goals be incorporated.

145. Niue informed the Meeting that its whale watching regulations were being implemented.

146. The Secretariat advised that Regional Whale Watching Guidelines had been recently published, and had been adopted in other regions. These guidelines, along with Australia's recently revised guidelines, would be helpful in the development of national guidelines.

147. Australia, noting progress on whale watching activities in the region, suggested that the Secretariat organise a forum for sharing experiences on whale watching.

Recommendation

148. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the revised Marine Species Action Plans for 2013-2017;
- ***Urged*** Members to strengthen their commitment and effort for species conservation work in general and marine species in particular; and
- ***Called*** on partners and donors to increase their efforts to support, conserve and manage marine species in the Pacific region.

Agenda Item 9.2.1: SPREP Climate Change Adaptation Programmes - PACC & PACC+ Progress Report and Key Issues

149. The Secretariat provided a report on the progress made by the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project and associated projects including PACC+. The Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project is funded from the Special Climate Change Fund of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It is executed through UNDP and SPREP, and is now in its third year of operation. The goal of the PACC is to reduce vulnerability and increase adaptive capacity to the adverse effects of climate change in three key development sectors (coastal, food security and water) identified as priorities by the 13 participating Pacific Island countries. The total PACC budget is USD13.125 million. Details of the PACC achievements and issues are outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.9.2.1.

150. Members congratulated and commended the Secretariat for the informative and excellent report on the PACC and PACC+ update and made additional comments.

151. Niue advised that its focus under PACC is water resources, which was not included in the presentation. The representative acknowledged the work of the PACC and PACC+ in establishing a platform for adaptation activities in the region and commended the Secretariat and UNDP for their technical assistance. The assistance by AusAID and USAID was also acknowledged. However, the representative raised concern on the number of additional projects being implemented by other regional organisations, which seemed to have appeared unannounced, and he stressed the need to consolidate some of these projects under the PACC project. Niue noted the importance of the role of the CROP CEO committee to clarify roles and responsibilities in adaptation in the region to enable countries to approach the relevant agencies accordingly.

152. Tuvalu thanked SPREP for its support to the development of the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Strategy. The representative called on SPREP and other partners to assist Tuvalu to implement priorities identified in the Climate Change Strategic Action Plan and suggested that the Secretariat consider up-scaling lessons from PACC to other islands. He also acknowledged the financial support from AusAID and USAID.

153. France noted the positive outcomes of the PACC project and raised concerns on the exclusion of the French territories in the presentation. The representative considered that this needs to be addressed, given that territories were members of SPREP. He requested the Secretariat to consider establishing closer relationships with all overseas territories in the region on its climate change programmes.

154. Cook Islands updated the Meeting on the Cook Islands' Climate Change Policy, which is now ready for implementation, and acknowledged SPREP's support in its development.

155. Nauru stated that PACC should be recognised as the regional framework for adaptation in the region, which provides opportunities to replicate and upscale adaptation projects. The representative raised an issue regarding the slow disbursement of funds to countries due to UNDP requirements and urged SPREP to continue to liaise with UNDP to resolve this long outstanding issue.

156. On the proposed recommendation 5 in the working paper, Tonga pointed out that the SPREP Council makes decisions and gives directive to CROP CEOs through the Director-General of SPREP. He gave an example from Tonga where the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change coordinates all climate change projects regardless of which donor or agency is involved. He suggested that this approach should be practiced at the regional level.

157. Samoa advised that the work of PACC had created a feeling of security in Samoan communities and noted that a number of the coastal adaptation activities which are being funded by the Government are complemented by PACC. The representative acknowledged the assistance of Australia and United States which has helped with the integration of disaster risk management and climate change in coastal areas. He also acknowledged the technical assistance by New Zealand, GIZ and Japan. In response to the proposed recommendation 5, the representative of Samoa pointed out that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment deals directly with both SPC and SPREP, and that Samoa has always considered SOPAC as the research institution that provides accurate or near accurate climate and weather data. He also noted the need to be alert and take advantage of the opportunities to build synergies with similar initiatives in the region as it was inevitable that other CROP agencies would be interested to contribute and assist Pacific Island

Countries to address climate change issues. The representative suggested that the Meeting consider the language in the Forum Leaders' communiqué where it has specifically requested SPREP and SPC to increase efforts in climate change.

158. New Zealand noted and welcomed all efforts from CROP agencies to collaborate on climate change and suggested that a level of coherence and coordination was needed to clarify mandates on climate change as there are sector-specific areas of climate change adaptation particular to SPC as well as to SPREP.

159. French Polynesia noted the need to expeditiously reach an agreement on the issue of coordination. The representative stressed the absence of territories in the presentation, noting that French Polynesia has established a strategic plan on climate change which could be shared with other countries in the region. The representative requested SPREP for technical assistance on climate change.

160. Australia congratulated Tokelau on joining the PACC+ and on its progress in implementation thus far. The representative emphasised the role of SPREP as the leading agency in coordinating climate change in the region, which helps to bring CROP agencies together.

161. United States was concerned that the presentation showed different levels of actions by Members and pointed out the importance of inclusiveness, which helps to bring together all parties involved in climate change.

162. United Kingdom reiterated SPREP'S expertise in and role as the lead coordinator on mitigation and adaptation, which the representative advised was the key reason for the United Kingdom becoming a member of SPREP. United Kingdom looked forward to actively partnering with SPREP and Pacific Island Countries, and indicated interest in exploring EU support to SPREP.

163. Kiribati advised that it was not part of PACC and requested the Secretariat to consider ways to strengthen involvement and participation of Members that are not part of PACC, especially on capacity building activities and sharing of information on adaptation tools. The representative queried whether disaster risk management was part of the PACC project and requested the Secretariat to look at ways to integrate disaster risk management as part of the climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes. She also urged better coordination across CROP agencies to reduce confusion in-country.

164. Tokelau thanked SPREP and Australia for the support that has enabled Tokelau to participate in PACC+. Tokelau's focal area is water in response to a drought experience the previous year. Coastal management and food security remained priorities for Tokelau given the fragility of the environment. The representative called on the Secretariat to continue to supplement on-the-ground efforts. She noted the difficulty of participating in many of the programmes and added that Tokelau was working with New Zealand to address this.

165. Wallis and Futuna gave full support for the recommendations and echoed earlier comments regarding the current non-inclusion of overseas territories. The representative further stated that while climate change impacts all countries, small island countries were feeling these impacts directly. The representative urged industrialised countries to take this into account and asked members France, United Kingdom and United States to do their utmost and intensify their efforts to support this programme, particularly to support Pacific small island states.

166. Marshall Islands echoed other speakers in its appreciation of the Secretariat and the donors and welcomed the SPC initiative on the climate change alliance project. The representative also referred to the issue raised by Nauru regarding delays of funds from UNDP and noted that this had been raised in the last two multi-partite review meetings.

167. The Secretariat, in addition to supporting the points raised by Members, advised that it was pleased to report improved collaboration at CEO and technical level. On the issue of engaging territories, the Secretariat clarified that the GEF framework does not allow support to territories. However, the Secretariat was looking at broadening this through collaboration with Australia and United States and suggested that this could perhaps also be explored with France and United Kingdom.

168. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the positive outcomes from the PACC project in assisting Pacific Island Countries and Territories to adapt to climate change;
- ***Welcomed*** the increased support from the Governments of the United States and Australia for adaptation efforts under PACC+;
- ***Reaffirmed*** the vital coordinating role of SPREP in the Pacific Region on climate change adaptation and mitigation, and mainstreaming climate risks in national and sector development plans and budgetary planning and implementation; and
- ***Commended*** SPREP's technical back stopping assistance on climate change provided to PICTs through the PACC project and ***noted*** this should be adequately resourced to continue beyond the life of the PACC Project

Agenda Item 9.2.2.1: General Update on Meteorological Activities

169. The Secretariat reported on the progress it had made in meteorological support for Members, in particular, the advent of five positions in meteorology and climatology at the Secretariat. This included securing a 2-year secondment from the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Meteorology and Climatology Advisor (MCA) and the approval of two positions through AusAID funding, for the Pacific Meteorological Partnership Desk (PMPD), namely the Meteorology and Climate Officer (MCO) position and an Administrative Officer. The Secretariat advised that the Pacific Island Ocean Observing System (PI-GOOS) position had been transferred to SPREP under the Regional Institutional Process (RIF) and had also been filled, while the Secretariat was securing funding for the Pacific Island Global Climate Observing System (PI-GCOS) position.

170. The Secretariat advised that its work on meteorology was carried out in close partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), National Meteorological Services and other partners. It was also implemented as an integral element of SPREP's overall work on climate change.

171. New Zealand advised that when it moves to multi-year funding, the Island Climate Update funding would be incorporated into the multi-year funding as additional funds over a three-year period.

172. United States reiterated its great interest in meteorological issues, and agreed that progress had been made in recognising the importance of meteorological issues in the region. The representative requested clarification on the organisational structure of the five new positions and further noted that the PMDP (Pacific Meteorological Desk Partnership) concept had been recommended through a regional review as the mechanism to best provide a platform for delivery of meteorological support. United States noted disappointment that neither United States nor SPC (SOPAC) were acknowledged directly in the paper. United States further questioned how SPREP and WMO work together in providing support to SPREP members, suggesting that the PMDP and MCA should engage more fully with the chair of the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC).

173. The Secretariat agreed to provide the organisational structure for the five positions to the United States, noting that the MCA position was only a 2-year position. The Secretariat also clarified that the MCA and MCO had worked closely with the chair of PMC in determining their work plan. It further noted the lack of acknowledgement of SPC (SOPAC) and NOAA in

the Secretariat paper and emphasised that these partnerships were active and important for delivery of key support to members on meteorological issues.

174. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the progress made since the last SPREP meeting in advancing the objective of strengthening national meteorological and hydrological services in the region; and
- ***Noted*** the support given by regional and international partners who have made financial and in-kind contributions to SPREP in the ongoing work to strengthen meteorological and hydrological services in the region.

Agenda Item 9.2.2.2: Pacific Islands Meteorological Strategy (PIMS) 2012-2021

175. The Secretariat presented the Pacific Islands Meteorological Strategy 2012-2021 (PIMS) developed by the Pacific Meteorological Desk (PMDP), which comprises SPREP and the World Meteorological Office in Apia. The PIMS was endorsed by the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC) in March 2012 and will serve as a strategy for partners, donors and Members to implement and for the PMDP to provide support in the areas of: coordination; fundraising; technical advice; and monitoring and evaluation.

176. The Secretariat noted that although the Strategy is closely aligned with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Regional Area V Asia and Pacific (RA V) Strategy, it is more focused on Pacific meteorological needs. Implementation of the PIMS will provide a major contribution from the Pacific to implementation of the RA V Strategy.

177. Tuvalu supported the Strategy, recognising the vital nature of meteorological data for better adaptation planning by Pacific Islands. Tuvalu encouraged continued support to these key programmes.

178. New Caledonia noted that the PIMS is in line with the goals of Meteo France and that, should funding be available from the SPREP programme, Meteo France International could provide training and technical expertise to support these efforts..

179. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the Pacific Islands Meteorological Strategy (PIMS) as the principal guide to regional cooperation between meteorological services and partners for the region, and
- ***Noted*** the role of the Pacific Meteorological Desk (PMDP) in the context of the PIMS and for servicing the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC).

Agenda Item 9.2.3: Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System – Support for Fundamental Climate Science in the Pacific

180. The Secretariat provided an overview of the Argo programme, which has involved the deployment of three thousand drifting floats since 2003. The Argo floats measure the heat and salt content of the top 2000 metres of the ocean and thus far, 32 countries are actively deploying floats with a total annual investment of USD 25 million. Many SPREP Members have assisted the Argo programme through a 2002 agreement, signed by the SOPAC Member countries at that time[1]. The Secretariat noted that data from these Argo floats is providing valuable information that will help with predictions of weather and climate around the islands.

181. The Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System (PI-GOOS) coordinator is the contact point for Pacific Island countries for the Argo programme and other ocean observing activities relevant to the Pacific Islands. Hosting of PI-GOOS moved from SOPAC to SPREP under the Regional Institutional Framework (RIF) process. The founders of the PI-GOOS coordinator position (the United States of America National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission) are committed to providing ongoing support for the position.

182. The Secretariat advised that it was currently searching for funds to implement workshops to enhance the capacity of SPREP Members to access, interpret and use available ocean data. This included data from Argo, remote sensing satellites and other sources. The ocean data collected in the region will be critical in analysing current and predicting future sea level rise in the region.

183. The Secretariat also highlighted its input to the SEREAD programme, which is the educational aspect of Argo, supported within the Pacific by the PI-GOOS Coordinator. SEREAD works with primary and secondary school teachers to include Climate Change and Variability into school curricula. SEREAD has been active in Samoa, the Cook Islands and Tonga, and is looking to begin work in Kiribati.

184. Australia advised it would continue support for the PI-GOOS programme and that, through the Climate and Ocean Support Program for the Pacific (COSPac), would continue its support for Pacific Ocean monitoring.

185. Kiribati thanked SPREP for its work and urged the Secretariat to seek funding to assist SPREP members to access, interpret and use the GOOS data.

[1] http://www.argo.ucsd.edu/Organisation.html

186. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the ongoing oceanographic science in the Pacific region and how improved information and understanding of ocean science benefits SPREP Members;
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to continue to seek funds for enhancing the capacity of SPREP Members to access, interpret and use available ocean data;
- ***Agreed to provide guidance*** to the Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System (PI-GOOS) Coordinator and collaborating international programmes on regional priorities for applications of ocean observations; and
- ***Agreed to support*** the Argo float deployment and operation in the Pacific.

Agenda Item 9.2.4: SPREP's role in assisting Members to access climate change financing – and other international climate support mechanisms

187. The Secretariat provided updates on its application for accreditation as a Regional Implementing Entity (REI) of the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund (AF); development of a work programme on Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC mechanism; and on the Green Climate Fund.

188. The Secretariat advised that the process of applying to be a REI had been beneficial for the Secretariat and had generally strengthened its capacity. Based on the experience it had gained in this area, the Secretariat would prepare a guiding document on the accreditation process for Members that wish to seek accreditation as National Implementing Entities (NIE).

189. The Secretariat was now working with the Frankfurt School-UNEP Collaborating Centre (FS) in the context of the UNEP National Climate Finance Institutions Support Programme, also known as Fit for Funds, to build institutional capacity for financing issues related to climate change. A capacity building plan has been developed and will be extended to other CROPs.

190. On the development of the work programme on Loss and Damage, the Secretariat advised that a decision was expected to be made at the UNFCCC COP 18, Doha in December 2012. The establishment of this International Mechanism, could become a source of financing for climate change adaptation in combination with disaster risk reduction, as well as separate financing for a solidarity fund for unavoidable losses due to slow onset climate change impacts like sea level rise and ocean acidification.

191. The Secretariat advised that the Green Climate Fund (GCF), established at COP16 in 2010, provides a mechanism for simplified and improved access to funding, including direct access; has a country-driven approach; and will encourage the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including vulnerable groups and addressing gender aspects. However, so far, its

operationalisation has been hampered by a lack of agreement in some regional groups as to its membership, which has prevented the GCF from meeting due to a lack of quorum. Despite this, developed countries have reassured commitment to USD100 billion under the GCF.

192. The Secretariat also highlighted concerns regarding long term finance including clarity, access modalities, time frames and adequacy of the USD100 billion. It noted the need to consider the inter-linkages between finance and different components of the financial mechanism including: measuring, reporting and verification of support and funding for developing countries; and funding for mitigation and adaptation for LDCs and non-LDCs. Further details and background are outlined in SM23/Officials/WP.9.2.4.

193. Niue and Tuvalu noted the importance of the funding mechanisms for SPREP members and requested the Secretariat be more pro-active in assisting Members prepare funding proposals.

194. United States, on the loss and damage issue, urged caution among member countries that they not take too narrow an approach on the issue. The representative noted the World Bank programme on global risk. United States also requested that it be appraised of SPREP's work on this issue.

195. United Kingdom commended SPREP's work on climate change negotiations and accessing funds for members. The representative advised that the United Kingdom had funded a workshop prior to the UNFCCC COP in Durban to assist SPREP members ahead of the COP. United Kingdom had also presented a document titled "Owning Climate Adaptation" at the Pacific Island Forum the previous week. The document presented 75 practical recommendations on adaptation finance, including best practice, which could be applied across the region.

196. Kiribati noted the lack of capacity in understanding and complying with the complex methods of applying for GEF funds and asked for assistance from SPREP in building such capacity. The representative also noted that the SIDS workshop on loss and damage to be hosted by Kiribati mentioned in the working paper had been deferred.

197. Australia observed the challenges in obtaining accreditation to become a regional implementation entity for the Kyoto Adaptation Fund and encouraged SPREP to continue its efforts in this regard. Australia advised that it is a member of the Green Climate Fund and would continue to act on behalf of Pacific island countries for access to these funds.

198. Nauru advised that it was conducting an in-country review with the Pacific Island Forum on accessing financing for climate change support activities.

199. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the update on SPREP's work to support Members;
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to continue its support for member countries in the UNFCCC negotiations and to disseminate all relevant information including Loss and Damage; and
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to continue to provide support to Members on climate financing, through the continuation of cooperative efforts with other agencies.

Agenda Item 9.3.1: Clean Pacific Campaign Update

200. In response to an earlier request from the Meeting for an update on SPREP's waste management work, the Secretariat provided an outline of its various activities and initiatives over the past year.

201. The Secretariat also provided an update on progress of the Clean Pacific 2012 Campaign which was endorsed at the 21st SPREP Meeting as an activity to be implemented under the Pacific Regional Solid Waste Management Strategy 2010-2015.

202. French Polynesia congratulated the Secretariat for its work in the waste management result areas. The representative encouraged close collaboration between Members to ensure lessons in technologies and systems would be shared and highlighted French Polynesia's extensive experience with hazardous waste management. He also advised that lessons from French Polynesia in health care waste management, particularly through incineration, may be helpful in avoiding possible future mistakes in this area. He further requested the Secretariat for a report on the outcomes of the visit by the SPREP/AFD solid waste management consultant at the beginning of the year, noting that this would shed some light on how the work of French Polynesia is perceived from the outside. In this regard, the Secretariat clarified that the purpose of that visit was to identify lessons learned.

203. Nauru sought clarification on whether the Regional Asbestos Management Strategy was a static or living document and requested information on the means for accession to the Strategy. The representative proposed that the strategy and action plan be guided by best practice models of SPREP's metropolitan members (for example, referring to Occupational Health and Safety standards, etc) rather than reinventing the wheel, and urged that benchmarks be sought from those members such as Australia, who have established codes of practices for asbestos management. He noted that these best practices could be shared

and adopted by Nauru and other Members and requested the Secretariat for immediate assistance on asbestos waste management.

204. Niue echoed the points raised by Nauru in relation to obtaining existing best practices to guide the asbestos strategy and acknowledged the Secretariat's assistance in preparation of Niue's National Waste Management Plan. The representative also requested further information on EDF10 and its contribution to regional waste management. The Secretariat clarified that the EDF 10 is a USD10-12 million programme explicitly designed to manage hazardous waste in the region with a focus mainly on atoll waste management, health care waste, e-waste and asbestos.

205. Samoa requested that the lessons and experiences of countries from the Clean Pacific Campaign be shared at the planned symposium in October in Apia. Samoa acknowledged the work of JICA, noting their significant contribution to waste management in the Pacific. Samoa also recalled earlier mention by the Director General of the Pacific Garbage Patch and suggested that this could be included in SPREP's work programme.

206. Fiji thanked the Secretariat for the waste management support to Fiji and acknowledged the Secretariat's support of grassroots waste management activities and the involvement of smaller groups in communities. The representative encouraged more of these initiatives to be more visible at community level rather than only at higher levels of Government. He thanked the Secretariat for setting up preliminary work on waste oil management, which Fiji is embarking on. Fiji expressed support for the recommendations.

207. Marshall Islands thanked the Secretariat for assistance in completing the Marshall Islands Marine Pollution Plan and also for progressing the Solid Waste Management Plan. The representative looked forward to the proposed training in Honolulu and suggested that there should be a better coordination of solid waste management initiatives in the region. Marshall Islands also sought clarification on whether the asbestos free strategy was a static or living document.

208. Kiribati acknowledged the Secretariat work and commented that Kiribati is one of the countries facing serious waste and pollution issues. The representative thanked the Secretariat for the opportunity to participate in training in Fiji earlier in the year and noted that Kiribati had received USD2,000 for the Clean Pacific Campaign. She advised that Environment Youth Club members who had participated in the training were preparing to put into action some of lessons learned from this training.

209. Wallis and Futuna noted that they were impressed with the activities and the amount of work undertaken by the Secretariat to assist the region in waste management. The representative acknowledged the significant help to the region from this campaign and related activities and noted, with regret, that Wallis and Futuna was not eligible for this type of funding. He reiterated earlier comments that there is no significant involvement from the Secretariat in Wallis and Futuna and requested that the Secretariat consider some future involvement particularly in the area of waste management.

210. United States reaffirmed commitment to the campaign and added that it expected the Secretariat to identify and document any lessons learned. This should include inputs from members and all the good work that was carried out during the campaign. There should be a way for countries to share lessons learned and the Secretariat should ensure all these are captured. United States looked forward to seeing a matrix of progress by the Secretariat.

211. The Secretariat clarified that the asbestos strategy was designed to be a static document but development of national policy and guidelines would ensure its viability.

212. The Meeting:

- ***Reaffirmed*** commitment to implement the Clean Pacific 2012 campaign in each country; and
- ***Noted*** the progress in Regional Waste Management Initiatives.

Agenda Item 9.3.2: Regional E-waste Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015

213. The Secretariat presented the Regional E-waste Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015 (*Pacific E-waste: A Regional Strategy and Action Plan, 2012*) for Members' consideration and approval and explained that E-waste typically refers to end-of-life electrical and electronic products including computers, printers, photocopy machines, television sets, washing machines, radios, mobile phones and toys. The Secretariat advised that the management and disposal of end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment (E-waste) was an increasingly important issue for Pacific island countries as increasing quantities of electrical and electronic equipment are imported into the region.

214. The Secretariat stressed that sustainable management of E-waste would require enforcement of national legislation that enables transfer of costs of disposal of E-waste to the consumer.

215. In outlining the content of the draft strategy and action plan, the Secretariat advised that these were circulated to Members for comment and review in July 2011. America, Australia, Cook Islands, France, New Zealand, Samoa, SPC and JICA were acknowledged for their input to the draft strategy.

216. Cook Islands supported the recommendations, especially adopting the e-waste strategy and action plan and encouraged partners and donors to continue to provide support for implementing the plan.

217. Tuvalu also complimented the Secretariat and asked for Secretariat support in drawing up agreements with Australia and New Zealand for meeting the cost of shipping e-waste, as needed.

218. Fiji confirmed support for the strategy and recommendations and requested that Fiji be added to the list of countries noted as signatories to the e-waste strategy.

219. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the Regional E-waste Strategy and Action Plan (*Pacific E-waste: A Regional Strategy and Action Plan, 2012*);
- ***Called*** on partners and donor agencies to provide assistance where possible to ensure completion of the Action Plan;
- ***Noted*** the involvement of multiple partners (including SPC and the National Environment Service, Cook Islands) in development of the Strategy and Action Plan; and
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to provide assistance to Members in the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan where possible.

Agenda Item 9.3.3: Improved Regional Solid Waste Coordination and Monitoring

220. The Secretariat presented a proposal for the establishment of coordination and monitoring mechanisms to improve delivery of the Regional Solid Waste Management Programme, noting that the increase in support and funding for various regional and national initiatives in recent years necessitated a long-lasting structure that would eliminate duplication, allowing for pooling of limited resources, and promote exchange of ideas and lessons learnt which would benefit countries, projects and relevant organisations involved in this area.

221. The Secretariat proposed to establish a Pacific Islands Waste Management Advisory Council and a Pacific Islands Waste Management Partnership and provided an outline of the mechanism and structure. The proposal is further detailed in 23SM/Officials/WP.9.3.3.

222. United States and France requested further clarification on the nature and costing of the proposed mechanism and France, while supportive of better regional level coordination and cooperation in waste management within the Pacific, indicated that more information was required before it could make a decision. The representative of France also raised concerns that the proposal was duplicating the work already being done by SPREP.

223. Cook Islands, Kiribati and Marshall Islands expressed their full support for the recommendation, recognising the benefits of the committees to assist in coordination and planning in the important issue of waste minimisation.

224. Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga and Kiribati also gave their full support to the recommendations.

225. Nauru commented that this top down guidance would be very helpful in reducing duplication of the many projects and programmes.

226. Federated States of Micronesia applauded the efforts of the Secretariat in coordinating with Members and suggested that, given that there was increasing private sector involvement in waste management, financing of the committees could be addressed through such partnerships.

227. Niue noted the opportunity for the Secretariat to offer assistance to Niue, especially with regard to asbestos management, currently funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Niue also expressed reservations about the proposal for two advisory bodies and suggested that perhaps these could be combined.

228. Samoa considered the management of waste and pollution initiated by SPREP to be excellent. The representative noted that the proposed mechanism is to coordinate efforts at a bilateral, rather than a regional, scale. He cautioned against setting up new coordination bodies, adding that these could mean extra work at a national level to contribute to these committees. He suggested that Members and the Secretariat look for other means to compile information at a country level, such as additional effort at other meetings, including the SPREP meeting.

229. New Zealand was conscious of the region's solid waste issues, and commended the Secretariat for its excellent work over the past twelve months. New Zealand recognised the need for coordination of efforts, but agreed with Niue in questioning the proposed two-tier approach.

230. Fiji thanked the Secretariat and questioned whether there was a specific current problem requiring this greater coordination in waste management. On the Secretariat proposal that the committees could meet on the perimeter of another meeting, he observed that many countries fund themselves to regional meetings and these additional commitments meant additional costs to countries. Fiji asked for a cost benefit analysis of options, and advised they were not ready to confirm the recommendations.

231. United States recognised the pressing and urgent need for better coordination of waste management in the region and suggested a mechanism for further consultation and further input from other regions, such as perhaps the Caribbean, on best practice lessons learned and effective coordination mechanisms.

232. New Caledonia commented on waste management in the southern province of New Caledonia, which hosts the majority of the population and industry of the country. This was an opportunity for centralization of waste processing and communication for behaviour change. Through strategic partnerships and financial instruments, New Caledonia had successfully implemented a waste management plan in the southern province, working towards the preservation of the environment.

233. The Meeting:

- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to further develop the proposals for establishment of an efficient regional coordinating mechanism to include cost implications, and to ensure wide distribution of these proposals for comment; and
- ***Directed*** the Secretariat to continue to use existing fora to collate information on national waste management activities.

Agenda Item 9.3.4: Regional Radiation Contamination Information Collation and Review

234. 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.

Agenda Item 9.4.1: Report on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) – Rio+20

235. The Secretariat provided a report on SPREP participation in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) or Rio+20 which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 20 to 22 June 2012.

236. Other than Cook Islands and Niue, all SPREP member countries and the territories of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Tokelau attended. Cook Islands and Niue did not attend due to a change in the UN criteria, which downgraded these countries from the full status they had enjoyed in the previous summits. The Secretariat acknowledged Samoa for enabling SPREP to participate on the Samoa delegation.

237. SPREP was involved in four side events, including the *Pacific Islands - Applying the Green Economy in our Blue World,* which w*as* coordinated by SPREP. The event was a highly successful platform for presenting Pacific issues and initiatives and was a high profile event with the panel consisting of the heads of government of Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu and Tokelau and the Minister for Environment for Samoa.

238. The Secretariat advised that the Rio+20 Outcomes Document "The Future We Want" was, on balance, good for Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). PSIDS had two key issues leading in to Rio+20 and both were generally addressed to Pacific satisfaction. The two issues were (i) Maintaining SIDS special case and (ii) Highlighting Oceans issues.

239. Details of the outcomes of the Rio+20 are detailed in 23SM/Officials/WP.9.4.1.

240. The Secretariat advised that a regional follow up to Rio+20 would be coordinated through the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). SPREP will continue to play a key role on this Working Group, which will also liaise closely with all Member countries and territories and with the PSIDS missions in New York. The CROP SDWG has developed a matrix that will be developed into a more detailed regional roadmap for Rio+20.

241. Australia commended the excellent side event on Applying the Green Economy in a Blue World at Rio+20. Australia also noted its side event on the International Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, Land and Sea Managers Network, with a follow up conference to be held in Darwin from 27-31 May 2013, and noted that the Australian delegation would be providing more information to interested members in the margins of the Meeting.

242. New Caledonia acknowledged SPREP for the invitation to the side event and noted the huge success of event. The representative advised that the outcomes of Rio+20 would be further raised at the Ministerial meeting.

243. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the report on Pacific participation at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) - Rio+20); and
- ***Endorsed*** the coordination of post Rio+20 activities through the SDWG.

Agenda Item 9.4.2: A Framework for Regional State of the Environment (SoE) Assessment and Reporting

244. The Secretariat presented a draft framework titled *"A Vision for Effective and Streamlined Reporting in the Pacific"* which aims to integrate and streamline and eventually reduce national and regional reporting requirements. It stressed that the state of the environment report is not only a reporting mechanism but can be used as a management tool to facilitate good environmental governance and "best practice".

245. The Secretariat advised that the draft framework had been developed through a regional workshop *"Streamlining Regional Agency Reporting and Linkages to Mainstreaming of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and Regional Ecosystem Condition Reporting"* held in March 2012. The framework is provided in 23SM/Officials/WP.9.4.2.

246. The Secretariat also tabled the *Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook (PECCO) 2012* report developed as part of a series of regional assessments being undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The draft PECCO was circulated to members in July 2012 and can be downloaded at the following web link: http://www.sprep.org/attachments/reports/Draft_PECCO_June_2012.docx

247. The report of the Pacific Environment Forum (PEF), held on 3 September was also tabled. The PEF report outlined a suggested process for progressing regional state of environment reporting.

248. French Polynesia, France, Australia, Samoa, Tonga, USA and Kiribati commended the Secretariat for progressing work on the SOE reporting framework.

249. French Polynesia reminded the Secretariat that French Polynesia is currently updating its SOE. The first SOE report was drafted in 2006 and French Polynesia requested technical assistance from SPREP to assist with development of terms of reference for preparation of an improved version of their SOE. The representative also stated that he would like to learn

from other countries' experiences such as Samoa and proposed that this be a model for future activities in member states.

250. France noted that the PEF report had only been made available within the past hour and expressed concerns regarding the process followed. He expressed concerns regarding a statement in the report that suggested that the PEF was inviting the SPREP Secretariat to undertake specific tasks.

251. Australia recognised the challenges of undertaking work on SOE and noted that there were useful outcomes from the PEF which could help countries to move forward. The representative also pointed out that Australia could only note the PECCO report as it did not include Australia.

252. Samoa echoed the congratulatory remarks to SPREP and thanked the organisation for using Samoa as a pilot. The representative noted the excellent opportunities provided for sharing experiences with other countries however, he observed that fund raising would be an issue to consider and welcomed the technical support offered by Australia.

253. United States, while agreeing with comments by France regarding process, suggested that perhaps there was no need for the 23SM to endorse the SOE Framework as it was already in the Strategic Plan. On the PECCO report, the representative indicated he was prepared to note this but could not endorse it as his delegation had not had adequate time to peruse the document.

254. Kiribati noted that the importance of the SOE reporting and encouraged the Secretariat to ensure the reporting be aligned with the MEA reporting timelines to avoid additional reporting burdens on countries.

255. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the State of the Environment (SOE) framework, and reaffirmed the direction on the SOE in the Strategic Plan;
- ***Noted*** the Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook report (PECCO);
- ***Noted*** progress on SOE formulation; and
- ***Noted*** the report of the Pacific Environment Forum.

Agenda Item 9.4.3: Progress of the EC funded project "Capacity Building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries"

256. The Secretariat provided an outline of the progress made in the implementation of the project "Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries", funded by the European Union. The four-year project started on 1 March 2009 and, in the Pacific, supports capacity building related to MEAs in Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Timor Leste is also involved in this project. SPREP is the Pacific Hub, with a budget of USD1,410,301.

257. The Secretariat advised that, as the Pacific Hub, it is delivering quality capacity-building services to the Pacific island countries, such as practical training on issues such as: project writing; negotiations training; drafting of legislation, policies and plans, information management and exchange of lessons learnt. It provided details of its achievements in 23SM/Officials/WP.9.4.3.

258. The Secretariat further advised that discussions were under way with the EU regarding phase II of the project, which will build on the achievements to-date and target future capacity building needs identified through the first phase of the project, and also through the mid-term review. Phase II will commence in March 2013 and continue for a further 3 years. The Secretariat added that it was also working with UNEP to develop a proposal to the GEF Capacity Building Funds to further support capacity building for improved knowledge management at the national and regional level. There is an opportunity to submit this proposal to the GEF Council in November 2012.

259. The Meeting:

- **Noted** the progress being made by the EU funded project Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in ACP countries; and
- **Endorsed** continuation of this project through a proposed Phase II of the project and the development of a GEF Proposal.

Agenda Item 9.5: Building Leadership Capacity for Environment: The Pacific Emerging Environment Leaders' Network

260. The Secretariat provided an update of Secretariat efforts to build capacity and leadership skills of young environment and sustainable development professionals, through the Pacific Emerging Environment Leaders' (PEEL) Network.

261. Funding assistance was provided by the Commonwealth Foundation and the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative of the Australian Government, with 25 participants selected from across the region on a competitive, merit-based approach.

262. The Secretariat highlighted the value of the PEEL Network as a pool of qualified young people with a vision to "lead, generate and inspire environmental action in the Pacific region" and outlined a number of activities carried out by the network since its establishment in October 2011. The Secretariat also noted that currently PEEL was coordinated by a volunteer from amongst the group but that work was under way to resource this activity.

263. In response to a request from French Polynesia, the Secretariat clarified that participants at the PEEL symposium were selected on a competitive, merit basis and all countries had been sent notifications. The Secretariat advised that one of the participants was from French Polynesia.

264. Australia suggested that PEEL link with other regional leadership programmes such as the Pacific Leadership Programme and the Emerging Pacific Leaders' Dialogue and also with national leadership programmes, such as Leadership Fiji, as well as the USP Future Climate Leaders' Programme.

265. The Meeting:

- ***endorsed*** the Pacific Emerging Environment Leaders' Initiative and Network as an important mechanism through which the Secretariat can strengthen capacity of young emerging leaders for environment in the region;
- ***agreed*** to involve PEEL members in relevant national and regional meetings, where appropriate and relevant; and
- ***agreed*** to work with the Secretariat to ***encourage*** the further development of PEEL.

Agenda Item 10.1: Review of Staff Regulations

266. The Secretariat advised that the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Staff Regulations, which included representatives from Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, New

Zealand, Samoa, Tokelau and United States, had met on four occasions to discuss the Secretariat's proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations.

267. New Zealand, as the Chair of the Working Group, acknowledged the input of other working group members and reported on the recommendations of the Group. A two-pronged approach was recommended wherein the Director-General of SPREP could make unilateral decisions on staff regulation changes that did not have significant budgetary implications. These would be tabled as information papers at the SPREP Meeting as a transparency measure. Conversely, decisions with significant budgetary implications should be tabled for decision by the SPREP Meeting. The presentation of information papers would provide an opportunity for Members to inspect the Secretariat's actions and raise questions if necessary.

268. With respect to changes already implemented by the Director-General of the Secretariat, specifically the introduction of a Staff Security Allowance and Staff Retention Allowance, the Working Group recommended that these be tabled at the present meeting for consideration.

269. United States applauded the anticipated effect of the recommendations in streamlining the meeting proceedings. However, the representative indicated that United States could not adopt the regulations without further consultations, and suggested that they be allowed to submit advice of their adoption through letter. In response to a question from Australia, the United States advised that 30 days would be sufficient to provide this advice.

270. New Zealand, supported by Australia, urged the United States to facilitate a more timely adoption of the recommendations, given their involvement in the Working Group, and stressed that the recommendations were based on CROP related rules and requested that any further analysis take this into account.

271. Tonga expressed the view that this Meeting was the forum for endorsement of decisions, and it was inappropriate to defer decisions to any other forum. The Secretariat further elaborated that decisions on this issue could only be made by the SPREP Meeting and suggested that a proposed option to merely note the paper would not be helpful.

272. Tokelau, supported by Samoa, sought clarification on the process to move forward. Noting that United States was a part of the Working Group, Tokelau questioned the rationale of United States agreeing to put forward recommendations that it could not endorse. United States further clarified that it had hoped to be able to present a clear position on the recommendations at this SPREP Meeting, but that more time was needed for consultation.

273. France, supported by United States, suggested provisionally approving the recommendations, unless there were objections by a specific date.

274. French Polynesia further questioned the process, and sought clarification on what would happen, if on the stipulated date, there were objections to the recommendations of the Working Group, or if more time was required. The representative expressed the view that the SPREP Meeting's purpose was to advance discussions and decision on issues, however a lot of time was being spent unnecessarily on administrative issues instead of discussing substantive matters such as species conservation.

275. The Secretariat provided rationale for the introduction of a Security Allowance, and Staff Retention Allowance. The Security allowance was introduced to reduce security threats and incidences of attacks on staff members and their families. In 2011, an allowance totalling USD11,820.77 was disbursed to 17 staff (or 30% of total staff). In 2012, the amount disbursed was USD4,520.85 to 8 staff (or 13% of total staff).

276. The Retention Allowance is paid on acceptance of a new contract by a staff member, and serves as an incentive to retain qualified staff. In 2011, a total allowance of USD13,348.94 was disbursed to 11 staff. In 2012 USD7,964.68 was disbursed to 5 staff (or 8% of total staff). The Secretariat noted that, as a result of the allowance, the retention rate of qualified staff was much higher.

277. United States thanked the Secretariat for its transparent reporting, and indicated that, based on advice from Washington, it could now approve the amended Staff Regulations with the exception of the Retention Allowance, which the representative noted was not standard practice among CROP agencies. The representative further elaborated that United States was supportive of the Security Allowance provided there was no overall budget increase. He also sought the circulation by email of the Secretariat speaking notes on these two allowances.

278. American Samoa, Niue, FSM, Fiji and Samoa supported the two allowances, citing that recruitment and retention of qualified staff was an issue even within national jurisdictions, and it was to the benefit of SPREP to retain capable staff. Fiji further elaborated that its support was conditional on the allowances being paid within the current budget without affecting the assistance delivered to Members. Samoa questioned whether the practice of paying a Retention Allowance was similar to that of other CROP agencies.

279. French Polynesia supported the Security Allowance. With respect to the Retention Allowance, the representative supported the measure for 2012, but urged the Secretariat to explore and present other means of ensuring that staff turnover does not prejudice efficiency of the Secretariat. This was supported by American Samoa.

280. The Secretariat elaborated that while other CROP agencies do not have a retention allowance, there is an equivalent measure where staff can re-negotiate the salary and other terms and conditions of their contract at the renewal stage. The Secretariat does not have this practice. SPREP's staff salary movements are performance based, and are not re-negotiated on contract renewal.

281. United States stated that CROP harmonisation was a guiding principle in these decisions.

282. The Meeting then discussed procedural issues when there was objection from only one country. The Secretariat's Legal Adviser explained that under Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure, all decisions are to be made by consensus. He further explained that the views of all Members should be taken into account to determine consensus, and that consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity, which is a trend observed in other international organisations. He elaborated that consensus should take into account the overwhelming sense or spirit of the Meeting, and factors such as the number of parties for or against, and whether an objection is frivolous or vexatious.

283. New Zealand, noting that the United States had raised a legitimate objection that was not frivolous or vexatious, moved that this should therefore be considered.

284. The Meeting:

- ***Adopted*** the draft Staff Regulations with the exception of the Staff Retention Clause; and
- ***Agreed*** that an intercessional working group be established to address the issue of staff retention that is consistent with agreed practices across CROP agencies and to report to the 2013 SPREP Meeting.

Agenda Item 10.2: Amendment of Financial Regulations

285. The Secretariat tabled the financial regulations revised to bring them in compliance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Specific changes are outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.10.2.

286. The Meeting:

- ***Approved*** the proposed new financial regulations to become effective immediately after the conclusion of the 23rd SPREP Meeting.

Agenda Item 10.3: Annual Market Data: Internationally Recruited Staff and Locally Recruited Staff

287. The Secretariat presented the outcomes of the 2012 Annual Market Data Review for both International and Local Staff. The reviews were carried out in accordance with the remuneration guidelines adopted by the governing bodies of the participating CROP agencies in 2004 and which have been used for comparing salaries over the past years.

288. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the outcomes of the 2012 Annual Market Data for Internationally recruited staff salary scales and that the Secretariat is not in a position to propose implementation of any or all of the proposed increases; and
- ***Noted*** the delay in the 2012 Annual Market Data report for locally recruited staff salary scales – any substantive salary increases shall be presented to the SPREP Meeting and that implementation will be subject to availability of funding through savings.

Agenda Item 10.4: Report of the Inter-sessional Working Group on the Director-General's Salary Banding

289. The Meeting met in closed session and:

- ***Endorsed*** movement of the Director-General's salary banding from Band 17 to Band 18, on the understanding that the core budget would not be impacted in any way.

Agenda Item 10.5: SPREP Director-General's Performance Assessment and contract renewal

290. The Meeting met in a closed session and:

- ***Noted*** the Director-General's Performance Evaluation for 2011-2012 and ***endorsed*** his Performance Development Plan for 2012-2013; and
- ***Agreed*** that David Sheppard's contract as Director-General of SPREP be renewed for another term in accordance with SPREP rules.

Agenda Item 10.6: Review of Professional Staff Terms and Conditions

291. The Secretariat present the outcomes of the joint CROP Review of terms and conditions for positions advertised internationally (professional staff) and also advised on the interim measure approved in the 22 SPREP Meeting for the SDR Stabilisation Mechanism. Details are outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.10.6.

292. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the outcomes of the 2012 CROP Triennial Review of Internationally recruited staff terms and conditions;
- ***Noted*** that the Secretariat requires further analysis of key recommendations before consideration of any implementation strategy; and
- ***Noted*** that the interim measure for the SDR Stabilisation Mechanism approved by the 22 SPREP Meeting was not implemented due to unavailability of funding and therefore the Secretariat maintained the 2011 rates.

Agenda Item 10.7: Report by the Director General on Staff Appointment Beyond 6 years

293. The Secretariat reported on the reappointment of Ms Makereta Kaurasi-Manueli for a further 3-year term, to the position of Financial Accountant, Corporate Services, noting the recruitment had been conducted in a rigorous and transparent manner and in accordance with the Staff Regulations. Details are outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.10.7.

294. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the reappointment of Ms Makereta Kaurasi-Manueli to the position of Financial Accountant, Corporate Services, for another three year term.

Agenda Item 10.8: Appointment of External Auditors

295. The Secretariat advised on the appointment of Auditors to audit the SPREP's accounts for the financial year 2012 and 2013 and outlined the process undertaken, in 23SM/Officials/WP.10.8.

296. New Zealand supported the appointment of Betham and Company of Samoa, but expressed concern that only one company had applied for this tender.

297. The Secretariat shared this concern stressing that the tender had been widely advertised through the usual focal points, the SPREP website and shared with other auditors in Fiji and Tonga.

298. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the appointment of Betham & Co to audit SPREP's accounts for the financial years 2012 and 2013.

Agenda Item 10.9: SPREP Building Proposal (Update)

299. The Secretariat provided an update on the progress of its application to the Government of Japan for construction of a Pacific Climate Change Centre at the SPREP compound. The Secretariat advised that it had first submitted the application in July 2011 and had preliminary discussions with the Government of Japan. The Secretariat has been requested to better link the proposed building with climate change outcomes and programmes in the region, and to resubmit it for consideration in October 2012.

300. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the progress made on the application to the Government of Japan; and
- ***Endorsed*** the follow-up application being made to JICA for Grant Aid to Build a Pacific Climate Change Centre.

Agenda Item 11.1: WWII Wrecks in the Chuuk Lagoon – A paper submitted by FSM

301. Federated States of Micronesia presented a paper outlining the issues surrounding shipwrecks noting that there are over 3800 WWII wrecks within the waters of the SPREP region. The representative advised that in Federated States of Micronesia, it was believed there are at least six WWII wrecks currently discharging oil within the Chuuk Lagoon. Details of work done and possible strategies were outlined in 23SM/Officials/WP.11.1.

302. Federated States of Micronesia sought support and assistance for removal of oil from the *Hoyo Maru* and other Japanese vessels sunk in Chuuk Lagoon to prevent future oil pollution from WWII wrecks in the Chuuk Lagoon.

303. United States noted that previous decisions at SPREP indicated this was a bilateral issue between the flag state of vessels and the state where a given wreck was located. United States asked about the status of discussions with Japan, assuming this was the flag state of most vessels, and also requested some further detail as to where the *Hoyo Maru* is located. Federated States of Micronesia responded that discussions had been initiated with Japan.

304. The Secretariat confirmed that the wreck lies at a depth of 40 metres, close to the Fefan Islands. It is unknown how much oil remains in the vessel, although it is currently leaking.

305. United States clarified that their understanding was that shipwrecked vessels remain the responsibility of the flag state and reinforced the recommendation from the last SPREP Meeting that the best mechanism was through a bilateral approach with vessel flag states to moving forward on this issue.

306. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the proposed pilot activity in Federated States of Micronesia to minimise future oil pollution from WWII Wrecks;
- ***Endorsed*** a detailed assessment of the *Hoyo Maru* to determine the extent of the vessel's hull corrosion and amount of oil left in board; and
- ***Called*** on partners and donor agencies to provide assistance where possible to ensure staged removal of oil.

Agenda Item 11.2: A Broad Look at the Impacts of Invasive Alien Species and Collaborative Pacific Efforts to Prevent Them (A paper submitted by USA)

307. The paper presents a brief summary of invasive alien species (IAS) on Pacific islands, demonstrates the direct linkage of IAS to critical Pacific island issues, emphasises the importance of coordinated efforts to address IAS issues and highlights some proactive efforts to address IAS concerns in the region. It seeks the Meeting's endorsement of Resolution 7 from the 17th Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit.

308. The representative of the United States National Invasive Species Programme presented a paper, 23SM/Officials/WP.11.2, outlining the specific issue of invasive species in the Pacific and current project plans to assist in addressing this issue, noting significant regional collaborations with SPREP, SPC and other key groups.

309. Cook Islands strongly supported the recommendations, acknowledging the importance of invasive species issues and advised that comments by the Cook Islands Prime Minister on this issue were reflected in the 43rd Pacific Island Leaders' communiqué. Paragraph 34 of the Leaders' communiqué requests SPREP and SPC to look for mechanisms to increase efforts in the area of invasive species.

310. France thanked United States and fully supported the recommendations, noting that the Pacific Fund also has provided significant funds for the control of fire ants, a project implemented by SPREP.

311. Federated States of Micronesia noted appreciation of the report and of the support provided to Federated States of Micronesia.

312. French Polynesia congratulated Members for the importance they have given to this issue and, regarding the comment on the project on fire ants, asked for assistance with an early warning system to prevent the propagation of fire ants from Tahiti to other islands.

313. The Meeting:

- ***Noted*** the impacts of invasive alien species (IAS) throughout all strata of society and ecosystems and that these impacts are exacerbated by climate change. IAS impacts directly affect ecosystem resiliency to climate change, food security, the conservation of biodiversity and the establishment of sustainable economies;
- ***Requested*** that SPREP consider integrating its IAS work as much as possible in the areas of climate change adaptation, food security, threatened species conservation and other biodiversity areas, and sustainable development;
- ***Noted*** Resolution 7 of the 17th Micronesia Chief Executives Summit; and per the communiqué of the 43rd Pacific Islands Forum, ***encouraged*** SPREP to work with SPC and enhance their efforts on IAS in collaboration with relevant national, regional and international partners, such as the Pacific Invasives Partnership, to develop initiatives that will prevent and mitigate IAS damage through effective biosecurity and IAS control and eradication efforts.

Agenda Item 11.3: The Future of the Pacific Environment Forum (PEF) – (A paper submitted by USA)

314. United States advised that it considered the Pacific Environmental Forum (PEF) discussion is too important to be separated from the SPREP Meeting. Given the region's ongoing and clearly expressed desire to reduce the number of meetings, frameworks, reports and document preparation, United States considered that consolidation of the PEF agenda with the SPREP Meeting both in the current year and in future years would bring many benefits while reducing the burden on officials of attending more meetings.

315. United States further stated that regarding this year's PEF agenda, no single meeting could begin to address the diversity of national environmental challenges in the Pacific. The representative noted that one size does not fit all and suggested that formulation of a Joint Country Strategy with each of the Island members of SPREP would go much further in capturing the individual Member's challenges and SPREP's response. United States noted that the SPREP Secretariat had pronounced itself neutral on the question of whether the PEF continued.

316. Cook Islands stated that it considered PEF to be a very important forum, and that it saw no other way to cut costs. The representative proposed to keep PEF associated with SPREP annual meetings.

317. In response to a query from Tonga, the Secretariat advised that the outcome of this year's PEF was a brief document with key issues tabled soon after the PEF at the 23SM.

318. Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Samoa and Tuvalu stated that PEF was a good informal way to discuss environmental issues, and they had enjoyed participating in it in both years as this was a good way to allow them to focus on concrete and substantial issues.

319. Tonga said that the PEF is actually useful as a lead-in to the SPREP meeting, noting that issues raised at PEF can be then endorsed by SPREP meeting.

320. The Secretariat acknowledged the wide agreement by Members of the value of this forum for enabling informal discussion on environmental issues.

321. United States acknowledged the enthusiasm of other Members for the PEF and advised that it would be keen to be guided by the advice of Members and by the Secretariat.

322. The Meeting:

- *noted* that most Members strongly felt that the Pacific Environment Forum offers a useful forum for broad and informal discussion of key and new issues that complement the work of the SPREP officials meeting.

Agenda Item 12.1: CROP Executives Meeting Report

323. The Director-General reported on the outcomes of the CROP CEO Group, which had met three times in 2012. He advised that the meetings are chaired by the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and noted that this arrangement had contributed to improvement in cooperation among CROP Agencies on key issues including harmonisation of staff benefits and conditions. He added that the CROP CEO Group is supported by various Working Groups such as the Working Arm on Climate Change, which played a key role in increasing cooperation on climate change programmes; the Sustainable Development Working Group, which played a key role in bringing together efforts of CROP on Rio+20; the Marine Sector Working Group, which is focused on practical implementation of the Oceanscape Framework; and the Human Resource Working Group, which played a key role on harmonisation on staff conditions.

324. Nauru suggested that consideration be given to also addressing waste management issues through the CROP Working Groups.

325. New Caledonia requested a copy of the report of the CROP CEO Meeting which was not available as part of the meeting documents. In response, the Director-General informed the Meeting that the report was not part of the formal meeting documents and would be circulated to Members for information.

326. The Meeting

- ***Noted*** the outcomes of the CROP CEOs Meetings in 2012.

Agenda Item 9.6: Consideration and Approval of Proposed Work Programme and Budget for 2013

327. The Secretariat tabled its Work Programme and Budget for 2013.

328. United States, Australia, New Zealand, Niue and Wallis and Futuna commended the Secretariat on the previous year's financial management and the presentation of results. United States asked for confirmation that the budget figures for next year would not include the requested 20% increase in Member contributions. Australia requested that in Climate Change Item 2, greater emphasis be placed on coordination of knowledge services, given the SPREP overarching coordinating role.

329. New Zealand noted the gap between project and programme funding, and hoped that other Members would increase their programmatic funding to help address this gap. New Zealand also asked if the Waste Management budget figures included the new initiatives that would be coming online this year.

330. Niue noted there was no mention in the work programme regarding asbestos, and requested this be included. Niue also noted that there is much on the ground work being done regarding Ozone Depleting Substances that needs to be backstopped by SPREP, and requested this also be included in the work programme.

331. Wallis and Futuna requested that presentation of the budget be included at the start of the next SPREP meeting, directly after adoption of the agenda.

332. The Director-General also noted the work done by the SPREP Finance Division, and noted that specific questions will be addressed in next year's budget. He advised that next year's budget did not include future money such as the GEF-PAS.

333. The Director-General also noted appreciation for the programmatic funding from Australia and New Zealand, and applauded the move of New Zealand to commitments of multi-year funding.

334. Regarding the request of Wallis and Futuna, the Director General advised that previous meetings had decided to present issues that would have impacts on the following year's budget before presenting the budget for approval.

335. The Meeting:

- *Approved* the proposed Work Programme and Budget of USD18,882,502 for 2013.

Agenda Item 13: Statements by Observers

336. Statements were made by: Conservation International, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Meterological Organization (WMO) and the New Caledonian Society for the Protection of Birds. Observer statements are provided in Annex III.

Agenda Item 14: Other Business

337. United States noted public awareness was a key element of tsunami preparedness, and requested the SPREP Meeting to take the progressive step of declaring a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day in 2013. The representative noted that the proposal being made had no implied costs to Secretariat or to Members who associated themselves with it. A document was circulated to all delegations and is included in Annex IV.

338. Samoa advised that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment commemorates a series of national events including the National Environment Week in late October/early November. The representative indicated that Samoa would be quite flexible to consider other events as necessary.

339. United States noted that it was not proposing a particular day. Rather it hoped the Secretariat could work with Members to determine all appropriate dates to declare a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness day, week or month.

340. New Zealand noted that in conjunction with the EU, it would be co-hosting a Renewable Energy Summit in April 2013. The aim will be to provide a platform for Pacific Island countries to present their national energy sector plans and targets and to mobilise additional finance to help Pacific Island countries implement these plans.

341. The Meeting:

- ***Endorsed*** the creation of a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day;
- ***Requested*** that SPREP engage with other appropriate CROP organisations at the next meeting of the CROP heads to advance the creation of a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day; and
- ***Further requested*** that the SPREP Secretariat work with its Members to hold the first annual Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day in 2013.

Agenda Item 14: High Level Ministerial Segment

342. Ministers from French Polynesia, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tuvalu, and senior officials from Australia and Cook Islands made statements and discussed issues pertaining to innovative financing for climate change and biodiversity; renewable energy; implementing the Oceanscape agenda; and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) – Rio+20. Ministerial statements which were submitted to the Secretariat are attached as Annex V.

343. The Ministerial Communiqué is attached as Annex VI.

Agenda Item 15: Date and Venue of Twenty-Fourth SPREP Meeting

344. The next SPREP meeting will be Apia, Samoa, in accordance with established practice. The Secretariat proposed that the meeting be held during the week commencing the 2nd September 2013. The discussions on this took place during the Ministerial segment of the 23SM.

345. The Minister of Federated States of Micronesia requested information on whether a decision was made during the Officials meeting to hold the next SPREP meeting prior to the Forum Island Leaders' Meeting in order to table important issues at the latter. The Secretariat clarified that it was not aware of a specific decision for the 2013 SPREP Meeting, but that the Pacific Environment Forum had made a suggestion relating to State of the Environment reporting.

346. United States indicated that the first week of September was not ideal as it coincided with national holidays and commencement of the school year. The representative suggested shifting to the week commencing 9th September 2013. He further noted that meeting preparations later in September coincided with the American August school vacation, but

indicated he would defer to the Pacific countries in recognition of their complex and infrequent travel routes.

347. Samoa, as the host of the next SPREP Meeting, indicated that it preferred the first date, given that it coincided with national festivities that may interest intended participants. Cook Islands supported the Samoan proposal.

348. The Meeting:

- ***Agreed*** that the 2013 SPREP Meeting would be held during the week commencing the 2nd September 2013.

Agenda Item 16: Adoption of Report

349. Marshall Islands, recalling Agenda Item 6.1, reiterated its offer of hosting a sub-regional office in Majuro, citing that this would be a positive step towards achieving sustainable targets, and reducing vulnerability to negative impacts of climate change. The Minister indicated that while the outcome desired by Marshall Islands had not been achieved, he welcomed the recommendations of the Officials Meeting, and expressed appreciation to Members for their support. He further congratulated the Secretariat for a successful meeting.

350. The Meeting adopted the Report.

Agenda Item 17: Closing

351. In his closing remarks, the Director General of SPREP expressed his appreciation for the wise guidance of Members through the Ministerial component and the Officials meeting, despite the challenging and difficult nature of some sensitive matters. He registered deep appreciation to SPREP staff, SPC as the host venue, and the hard-working translators and interpreters. He further thanked Ministers and Heads of Delegations for their constructive guidance, and the Chairs of the Officials Meeting and Ministerial Meeting for their excellent and positive leadership through agenda items.

352. The Chair of the Ministerial segment, Mr Anthony Lecren, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development of New Caledonia, expressed his thanks to the Members for their faith and support to New Caledonia as the Chair of the SPREP Council and reaffirmed New Caledonia's commitment to the task of Chair for the next 12 months.

353. The 23SM Meeting was then closed.
