

**FORTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(24–26 July 2017, Noumea, New Caledonia)

AGENDA ITEM No. 6: CROP COHESION AND COORDINATION

(Paper presented by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat)

Summary

1. This paper, prepared by PIFS, provides a status report on developments facilitated by the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) since CRGA 46, to deepen CROP agency cohesion in relation to the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*. In particular, it summarises the key areas for CROP coordination and collaboration in 2017, as outlined by the 2017 CROP Action Plan, and the important role to be played by the Pacific Community.
2. CROP is a regional mechanism that was developed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 1988¹ to ensure coordination, cooperation and collaboration among regional intergovernmental organisations to jointly work toward achieving the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. Guided by a CROP Charter, which was last revised in 2012 to reflect regional priorities under the *Pacific Plan*, the Council operates in an increasingly dynamic and crowded regional landscape. The proliferation of regional and international institutional presence in recent years, and greater competition for regional finance lends an urgency to review CROP's strategic role in regionalism. Replacement of the *Pacific Plan* by the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* in 2014, has highlighted the need for strategic strengthening of CROP arrangements.
3. In this context, Forum Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat to undertake an analysis of governance and financing options for the pursuit of Pacific regionalism, in collaboration with Member states, the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) and other stakeholders (2015 Forum Communiqué, paragraph 19). This paper provides a summary of key messages emerging from this analysis to be conveyed to Leaders at the 48th Pacific Islands Forum in September 2017. The Pacific Community is commended for its active participation in, and contribution to, the analysis.
4. The paper also seeks feedback and in principle agreement from CRGA regarding the draft report for the Review of the 2012 CROP Charter, prior to its submission to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders. Since commencing the review in October 2016, CROP Executives have agreed the importance of membership-wide consultation of proposed revisions to the CROP Charter, including through the respective governing bodies of CROP agencies.

¹ Formerly the South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) until 1995 when it became known as CROP.

Recommendations

5. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. Confirm the Pacific Community's role in delivering against Forum Leaders' priorities, as outlined in the 2017 CROP Action Plan;
 - ii. Support emerging key messages of the PIFS-led analysis of regional governance and financing arrangements and its implications for CROP agencies; and,
 - iii. Comment on the working recommendations of the draft report of the Review of the CROP Charter, and agree in principle to future endorsement of the CROP Charter, subject to endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders.

CROP COHESION AND COORDINATION

Purpose

6. The purpose of this paper is to inform the CRGA of: (a) CROP coordination and collaboration in support of regional priorities; (b) emerging key messages from the PIFS-led analysis of regional governance and financing arrangements; and (c) key issues emerging from a review of the 2012 CROP Charter.

Background

7. Established by Forum Leaders in 1998, and guided by a CROP Charter, CROP (formerly known as SPOCC) is a regional mechanism that was developed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 1998 to ensure coordination, cooperation and collaboration among intergovernmental regional organisations to jointly work toward achieving the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. With the recasting of the *Pacific Plan* by the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* in 2014, CROP's role within the regional public policy process, including in supporting implementation of Forum Leaders' priorities, has grown.
8. In September 2015, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders tasked the Forum Secretariat to undertake an analysis of governance and financing options for the pursuit of Pacific regionalism, in collaboration with Member states, the CROP and other stakeholders (Forum Communiqué, paragraph 19). The analysis commenced in early 2016, with an anticipated 12-24 month overall timeframe. This comprises the analysis of financing flows through CROP in the first instance - to enable understanding of how finance flows through the regional agencies over which Pacific island countries have the greatest influence and control - and analysis of the collective governance of the network of regional organisations. Together, the key findings form the basis of a synthesis paper to Forum Leaders in September 2017 to inform a Pacific-wide conversation about options to strengthen the collective governance of regional organisations.
9. Recognising the greater focus provided to CROP by the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* processes, CROP Executives developed a 2017 CROP Action Plan to guide focus areas for coordination, cooperation and collaboration between and across their agencies (see [Annex A](#)). In October 2016, CROP Executives also commenced a review of the 2012 CROP Charter to explore options to strengthen CROP arrangements in support of the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* (see report at [Annex B](#)).

Current issues

(a) 2017 CROP Action Plan

10. Endorsed by CROP Executives in February 2017, the 2017 CROP Action Plan outlines both individual and collective commitments of CROP agencies to take forward the 2016 Forum Leaders' decisions, as relevant to the mandates and comparative advantages of each agency. Of particular relevance to the Pacific Community, the Action Plan establishes a new CROP Disability Taskforce to advise and support implementation of the Pacific Disability Framework, of which the Pacific Community is a key member. The Pacific Community is an active member across all six CROP working groups,² and has committed agency resources to serving on a Fisheries Taskforce; progressing the Leaders' decision on Coastal Fisheries Management; and supporting the implementation of the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the Smaller Islands States Strategy, where relevant. A progress update has been requested at the 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in September 2017. Further information on the role of the Pacific Community in progressing Forum Leaders decisions is provided in CRGA papers 5.1A, Implementation of Regional Priorities under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, and 5.2, Implementation of the SIS Leaders' Strategy.

(b) Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing Arrangements

11. Analysis of financing flows through CROP enables an understanding of Pacific island countries' joint governance of regional organisations and identifies where further discussion of the influences on priorities of the respective agencies may be warranted.
12. The Pacific Community has been a valued partner in the PIFS-led analysis of regional governance and financing arrangements, both in terms of data validation and active contributions through the Director-General into the analysis. Regular CROP Executives' discussion over the past year regarding this work has enriched the analysis and, following the April 2017 meeting of the Joint Steering Committee for the analysis (which comprises CROP agency governing council Chairs), the following key messages regarding areas of focus to strengthen regional governance and financing have emerged:
- i. A need for high-level commitment by Pacific island countries and territories to whole-of-government coherence in engaging with regional agencies.
 - This is intended to underpin whole-of-CROP coherence in regional priorities, and which in turn will facilitate a strengthened regional architecture.
 - ii. A need for greater clarity on the expectations of Forum Leaders' decisions on regional agencies.
 - This is intended to clarify initiatives that are truly regional solutions, thereby enabling appropriate prioritisation of regional finance.
 - iii. A need for greater alignment and effective use of regional resources – whether through CROP, donors or other stakeholders – in relation to Leaders' decisions.
 - This is intended to assist Pacific island countries and territories to better leverage the totality of available regional finance in support of a regional agenda.

² These include: the Sustainable Development Working Group (which coordinates the development of the SDGs Roadmap); the Gender Working Group (reporting against the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration), the Health & Population Working Group, ICT Working Group, the Marine Sector Working Group and the Working Arm on Resilient Development (WARD).

13. In developing options for political decisions, consideration is being given to the merits of: CROP agencies governing councils Chairs dialogue; high-level regional donor dialogue; as well as longer term investment in tracking regional financing through CROP agencies to underpin CROP-wide sustainable financing strategies.

(c) The review of the 2012 CROP Charter

14. Guided by CROP Executives and facilitated through a CROP Review Team comprising representatives of FFA, PIFS, SPC, SPREP and USP), the review of the CROP Charter recommends a number of revisions that have implications for governing council decisions/views. In particular, the perspectives of the various CROP governing bodies regarding the following elements would assist in ensuring that the recommendations submitted to Forum Leaders in 2018 are acceptable and implementable by all CROP agencies:
 - i. CROP Membership
 - CRGA's views are sought regarding the continued participation of SPC as a member of the CROP.
 - ii. Proposed joint meeting between CROP Governing Council Chairs
 - CRGA's views are sought on the merits of a CROP agencies governing council Chairs meeting, to strengthen whole-of-CROP governance, and the appropriate frequency of such a meeting.
 - iii. Commitment to the CROP Charter
 - CRGA's commitment is sought to confirm in principle support of the revised CROP Charter, pending the Forum Leaders' endorsement.

Conclusion

15. The Pacific Community remains a valued, committed and important member of the CROP. As the largest regional organisation supporting the achievement of regional, and Pacific island countries and territories resilience and sustainable development aspirations and objectives, SPC's role and functions within the CROP and the broader regional governance and financing architecture is crucial.

Recommendations

16. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. Confirm the Pacific Community's role in delivering against Forum Leaders' priorities, as outlined in the 2017 CROP Action Plan;
 - ii. Support emerging key messages of the PIFS-led analysis of regional governance and financing arrangements and its implications for CROP agencies; and,
 - iii. Comment on the working recommendations of the draft report of the Review of the CROP Charter, and agree in principle to future endorsement of the CROP Charter, subject to endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders.