

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

3rd SPC Heads of Fisheries
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Forthcoming Meetings

**Marine Resources Division
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
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www.spc.int/mrd



Introduction

This paper is to notify Heads of Fisheries of forthcoming meetings over the next year which may be of some significance to the region, in addition to the “regular” meetings and issues on the calendar at FFC, SCTB, HoF etc.

5th Preparatory Conference towards the Commission for Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (PrepCom V), Rarotonga, 29 September – 3rd October 2003

This will be mentioned in a separate presentation by the SPC Oceanic Fisheries Programme Manager, which will also discuss a paper that SPC has been asked to assist Pacific Island parties to the preparatory process in preparing, to provide PrepCom Working Group 2 with some information by which to assess small island developing state requirements in fulfilling their scientific and data obligations under the Convention. The first draft of this paper is available as IP14.

Deepsea 2003, New Zealand, December 1-5, 2003

There will be a meeting, organised in partnership between FAO, and the New Zealand government and fishing industry, to take stock of global benthic fishing, to be held in Queenstown, New Zealand in December 2003. This will be preceded by several working groups held in Dunedin, including one on artisanal deep-sea fishing (November 26-29th), which SPC has been asked to chair, and which will concentrate particularly on the management of deepwater snapper fisheries.

SPC has not yet been able to put a great deal of effort into the preparation of this workshop, due to the requirements of organising HoF3, but will shortly be compiling a list of potential invitees to talk about artisanal deepwater fisheries management experiences and issues. It is understood that FAO has access to certain amount of funding which will enable representation of a useful number of developing country deepsea fisheries managers and experts at this meeting. The Director of the SPC Marine Resources Division would like to hear from all who feel that they would have something to offer to the workshop, particularly those who are willing to write up and present deepwater fishery case-studies.

As well as providing a rare forum for talking about deepwater snapper and other demersal and benthic small-scale fisheries, and identifying any priorities for regional and international support, this Dunedin workshop will feed its most topical issues directly into the main meeting in Queenstown a week later for consideration in the broader context. The decision about what constitutes a major issue will be up to the workshop to decide, but it is likely that much of the debate at the main meeting itself will revolve around the future role of trawling, particularly on the high seas, and it is possible that any issues brought in from an artisanal working group could be overshadowed unless they touch on these particular topics.

It should be noted that registration for the Deepsea 2003 Conference proper costs around NZ\$1,000, which will limit the potential attendance of many participants, including SPC. However, we understand that registration for the pre-conference workshops is either free, or covered within any financial sponsorship that is available.

See "<http://www.deepsea.govt.nz>" for more details.

Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum, Fiji, February 2004

This will be covered in a separate presentation by the CROP Marine Sector Working Group's coordinator for the meeting. The main purpose of the Forum is to seek more active feedback and participation from CROP agency member countries in developments that are hoped to emerge from the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP) – an initiative which has been hailed as a major step forward by the international community, but which has so far not attracted a great deal of attention from governments within the region.

The policy arose from a workshop that discussed ways of better implementing the full range of the International Convention on the Law of the Sea in the Pacific Islands region, and a recommendation later endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum was that a regional ocean policy should be drafted. The point of the Policy that resulted is to pin down the basic principles underlying all of the international and regional agreements, conventions and instruments that Pacific Islands have already agreed to concerning the Pacific Ocean. It covers all sectors, and provides a potential framework for rationally managing and balancing various competing and cooperating interests for the long-term good of the entire region. It is neither conservationist, nor exploitative, but recognises the need to improve livelihoods and develop thriving economies, without undermining the ocean resources and systems on which the quality of life in this region substantially depends. It simply makes clear the basic sustainable framework for future development, and specific activities have yet to be defined.

HoF has a particular stake in the PIROP. The draft of the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy was actually first discussed by the region at the 2nd SPC Heads of Fisheries Meeting in 2001, although it has since been discussed at several CROP agency governing council meetings before being endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum in 2002, and its principles generally upheld by the SPC Governing Council later in the same year. However, despite these numerous opportunities for discussion and feedback, there still appears to be little sense of “ownership” in the policy by member countries and territories, perhaps because it appears so abstract when viewed from the sectoral or departmental level. The Ocean Forum has been planned as a way of trying to alleviate this. The meeting in Fiji will provide national and territorial representatives from a range of sectors with an opportunity to examine the possibilities of the policy in detail, and to suggest a series of positive ocean development and management activities that could be carried out in future at the local and national level. The high-level cross-sectoral framework nature of the Policy has caught the imagination of several donors and is likely to attract major funding that would otherwise be unavailable to single-sector proposals.

SCOR/IOC International Symposium on Quantitative Ecosystem Indicators for Fisheries Management, Paris, 31st March – 3rd April, 2004

This symposium, at UNESCO headquarters, is likely to be a significant signpost on the path to defining the parameters by which the "ecosystem approach" to fisheries management will be implemented at the international level. Most of the international meetings on the topic so far have been on establishing the need to apply the ecosystem approach, and so far there is little agreement about how to actually go about it. SPC hopes to be able to make several presentations here, both on oceanic and reef fisheries, and would also be hoping to identify one or two island member fishery scientists to take part. The deadline for registration and abstract submission is 14th November, and further details can be had from “www.ecosystemindicators.org”.

4th World Fisheries Congress, Vancouver, 2-6 May, 2004

Although this is essentially a scientific conference, with most of the dialogue on fisheries occurring through the medium of paper and poster presentations (many of them very specific) rather than by immediate verbal exchange, the quadrennial World Fisheries Conference often has a significant influence on the direction of global fisheries policy. The next Congress, in Canada, will be on the theme "Reconciling Fisheries with Conservation", which, although it may be obvious to many Pacific Islanders, has caused considerable debate and acrimony at the global level in recent years.

Major presentations are by invitation only, and the deadline for submission of abstracts of minor papers has already expired, so opportunities for presentation of Pacific Island regional fisheries scientific and policy analyses are now somewhat limited. Further information can be obtained from "www.worldfisheries2004.org"

UNICPOLOS 5, New York, June 2004

The United National Informal Consultation on Oceans and Law of the Sea is a process that started 5 years ago to provide an overview of marine issues to the UN General Assembly, and to draw the attention of the international community to the main issues and priorities in this sector. In contrast to the *modus operandi* of many other UN processes it is not primarily a meeting of countries to negotiate a text, but a meeting to discuss issues based on a series of presentations by experts in various fields of ocean management.

This is a forum where the Pacific Islands region has a relatively strong presence, not only because it is generally recognised that the ocean issues are important to small island developing states, but because the region has generally been able to bring a series of experts and issues to the panel discussions and because one of the two co-chairs of the consultation has always been from the region (for the first three years, Ambassador Neroni Slade of Samoa, and this year Phil Burgess of Australia). It is a forum where the region can make itself heard, particularly as it directly advises the UN General Assembly.

The issues to be discussed at next year's meeting will have to be decided before long, and the Pacific Island Forum missions to the UN in New York, currently headed by Ambassador Savua of Fiji, have expressed an interest in the views of Heads of Fisheries as to what is the biggest "burning issue" in Pacific Island fisheries, or indeed any other aspect of ocean management, that might be usefully drawn to the attention of the UN General Assembly and the world. At UNICPOLOS 2, two years ago, the Director of SOPAC made a very successful presentation on the need to extend the time required to develop scientifically valid cases for continental shelf extension, and this year a regional representative talked about vulnerable coastal ecosystems. Next year another Pacific Islands agency or member country expert could provide specialist input on a subject of regional interest, if the UN General Assembly agrees to put it on the agenda.

More information on the UNICPOLOS process can be gained from your national diplomatic missions in New York and the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS) website at "http://www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm"