

SPC/CONF 12 (2022)

Outcomes  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**OUTCOMES OF THE SPECIAL THEMATIC SESSION OF THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC  
COMMUNITY**

(24–25 November 2022, Port Vila, Vanuatu)

**OUTCOMES****AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: OPENING CEREMONY**

1. The Special Thematic Session of the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community (CONF 12) opened on 24 November 2022 at Saralana Park in Port Vila, Vanuatu.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following SPC members: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), New Caledonia, New Zealand (NZ), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Pitcairn, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna. The European Union attended as the Permanent Observer. It was also attended by the following partners and ad-hoc observers: SPC's Audit and Risk Committee Chair; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Gravitas Pasifika; Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG); Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO); Pacific Fusion Centre; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS); SPREP; United Nations (UN); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and UN Resident Coordinator Office Fiji.
3. Mr Ambong Thompson of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre gave the opening prayer.
4. The meeting was opened by the Prime Minister (PM) of Vanuatu, Hon. Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau Maau'koro. He offered welcoming remarks and a warm welcome to distinguished delegates, members, the Permanent Observer, partners and the people of Vanuatu. He spoke to Vanuatu's desire to steer the Pacific Community forward, to be the most effective and fit-for-purpose organisation that it could be in the face of the region's challenges. He also drew on the staff (walking stick) to speak to the importance of leaning on one another and the resilience of the coconut tree—the tree of life—as a metaphor for Pacific peoples'

willingness to fight for their way of life and for seeking out and identifying new pathways to thrive.

5. The PM then invited the Director-General (D-G), Heads of Delegation, the Permanent Observer, SPC's Executive, panelists and delegates to join him in a kava ceremony before entering the Chief's nakamal.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: CHAIR'S OPENING STATEMENT**

6. The Chair of Conference and Vanuatu Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Jotham Napat, gave his opening statement and warmly welcomed distinguished guests and SPC members to the Conference on behalf of the government and people of Vanuatu.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: FEATURED SESSION – 75 YEARS**

7. This session provided an opportunity for members to reflect on the value add that SPC had brought to the region over its 75-year history and was facilitated by Ms. Dorosday Kenneth Watson, former Director-General for the Ministry of Justice and Community Services of the Government of Vanuatu.
8. The Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, spoke to the Blue Pacific narrative and the need for Pacific leadership on climate change issues. Progress required a collective effort and a strong regional architecture, and she encouraged members to think about the sharing and coordination of critical resources to enable a quantum leap forward in its development ambitions.
9. The Minister of Culture for New Caledonia, Hon. Mickaël Forrest, noted great geopolitical interest in the Pacific, and he encouraged SPC to strengthen cooperation at a regional level to ensure that the organisation was well positioned to work for the benefit of all Pacific Island communities.
10. Former President of Vanuatu and former D-G of SPC, Ati George Sokomanu, commented on the gradual identity shift, from an organisation founded by colonising states to one that was vested in Island states' capacity building and collective well-being.
11. Former D-G of SPC, Sir Collin Tukuitonga KNZM, commended SPC's legacy, the oldest and largest such organisation in the region, which since his tenure as D-G was now on firmer financial ground, and he hoped SPC would continue delivering high-quality scientific and technical advice to the region, regardless of political developments.

12. In response, NZ's Minister of Pacific Peoples, Minister of Courts and Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hon. Aupito William Sio, noted the significance of SPC reaching 75 years and he encouraged members to think about how it could move forward and enhance its capacity, capability and coordination to address the complex challenges that the region faced. USA's USAID Deputy Mission Director for the Pacific Islands, Ms. Betty Chung, reaffirmed USA's commitment to partnership with Pacific Islands and felt the meeting was an excellent opportunity to reflect on the immense legacy of SPC over the last 75 years.
13. The D-G thanked the PM of Vanuatu, ministers, the Chair, facilitators and members for their insightful reflections on the unique institution that SPC had evolved into over the past 75 years. He highlighted several milestones in his almost-three years of service, including the design of the new Strategic Plan and the opportunity to define new Pacific values for the organisation; the assistance SPC had provided members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and the work of the Centre for Pacific Trees and Crops (CePACT), which had assured continued food security in the region through the pandemic. He emphasised that the post-COVID period was an opportunity to re-engage, rebuild and re-connect with each other—the Secretariat stood ready to support members in this.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA, ELECTION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS' OPENING STATEMENTS**

14. The D-G led the Conference through the agenda.
15. Following the D-G's summary of the agenda, the Chairperson requested a motion for its adoption. FSM moved that the agenda be adopted and NZ seconded. The Chair declared the agenda adopted.
16. The Secretariat noted the drafting committee nominees: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, New Caledonia, Niue, RMI, Vanuatu and USA. As per the Rules of Procedure of Conference, Niue, as Vice-Chair of Conference, assumed the Chair of the Drafting Committee.
17. Vanuatu's Head of Delegation and Minister of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology and Geohazards, Energy, Environment and Disaster Risk Management, Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, led the meeting in the opening prayer.
18. The Chair encouraged delegates to show their support for 16 days of activism against gender-based violence by wearing an orange ribbon throughout the meeting.
19. Members expressed their sincere gratitude for the warm and gracious hospitality of the Government of Vanuatu in hosting the meeting. They congratulated the Chair for his able leadership and acknowledged the arrangements made by the Secretariat to facilitate this meeting as well as the leadership of the Executive. They also warmly welcomed the Secretary-General of PIFS, Hon. Henry Puna, to the Conference.

20. In the aftermath of the earthquake in the Solomon Islands on 22 November 2022, members extended their deep sympathy and support for the government and people of Solomon Islands. Fiji noted that an event that impacts one member impacted all members.
21. Despite the ongoing challenges in the region, particularly in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, members reaffirmed their support for SPC's technical and scientific work in the region and the firm foundation this would provide in achieving the ambitious 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The universality of each Pacific member was one of the purposes leaders had gathered to establish what became the Pacific Community 75 years ago, and this was a precious hallmark worth celebrating. Representatives affirmed that SPC remained a significant platform for active and inclusive dialogues around the Pacific.
22. Members thanked Vanuatu for highlighting the theme, Blue Pacific Prosperity and Well-Being, and for its timely review of SPC on its 75th anniversary and within the context of the upcoming Review of the Regional Architecture (RRA). It was important that SPC continued to be an impactful, member-driven organisation that provided adequate sub-regional representation to navigate the complex issues faced by the region. The Review was an opportunity to define the direction of the *vaka* over the next 75 years and beyond. Representatives emphasised the importance of CROP coordination and called on CROP heads to ensure continuous dialogue—*he waka eke noa*—we are all in this canoe together, and partnerships and collective action were critical to addressing the complex and varied challenges faced by members. Members also called on partners to provide untagged, flexible funding to ensure that SPC could continue to meet and address members' needs.
23. Metropolitan members and donor partners, including Australia, France, NZ, UK and USA, reconfirmed their support for the Pacific region and highlighted their active ongoing engagement in the work of SPC and beyond. France also emphasised that common solutions, involving public, private and philanthropic sectors, would need to be shared to tackle the challenges faced.
24. Members commended SPC for its service to the region over the last 75 years and wished the organisation well in its work going forward.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 THEMATIC DISCUSSION: THE PACIFIC IN 2050 – DRIVING  
DEVELOPMENT FOR BLUE PACIFIC PROSPERITY AND WELL-BEING**

25. The session was moderated by two Early Career Ocean Science Professionals and accompanied by a Vanuatu sand artist, who illustrated the reflections of the panelists.
26. The panel focused on the theme as proposed by Vanuatu: Blue Pacific Prosperity and Well-Being. The Chair noted that Vanuatu had begun collecting data in 2010 to develop alternative well-being indicators that reflected Melanesian values and gave a truer picture of well-being in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan (the People's

Plan) had been based on the needs of the people of Vanuatu—their desire for sustainable development, their well-being and happiness were all reflected in that plan. The Chair encouraged members to consider well-being-centred indicators, and how the Pacific could serve as an example to the world on how to live long and happy lives without destroying the environment.

27. Panelists spoke to the efforts they were undertaking to ensure Prosperity and Well-Being across the Blue Pacific. The 2050 Strategy served as a guide for the region and representatives stressed the importance of partnerships for conservation and sustainable development efforts. Tonga highlighted its work in the oceans space and the development of one of the first Ocean Management Plans for its Exclusive Economic Zone in the region, among other initiatives. Palau reflected on increasing the value of its fisheries, while ensuring fish protein remained affordable and accessible for all Palauans. The Representative deliberated on the challenging balance to be struck between protection and production, but felt that SPC's science had been critical in underpinning Palau's policy development in the fisheries sector. NZ emphasised the importance of the blue economy and the role of *kaitiakitanga* in protecting the region's natural resources. Partnerships across funding, regional frameworks and regional organisations, as well as a high degree of coordination and trust, was required to unlock the blue economy and ensure support was as accessible, streamlined and effective as possible.
28. In response, members reaffirmed their support for SPC's work in the oceans space. Australia was keen to work with regional organisations and the Pacific family on how to integrate traditional knowledge into initiatives, such as green-house gas reduction initiatives and carbon offsetting. French Polynesia was vocal in the need to ensure that Pacific leaders were making decisions that protected natural resources, in particular tuna fisheries, while maximising economic returns through locally-led resource management.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: LETTER FROM CHAIR OF CRGA 52 TO CHAIR OF SPECIAL  
THEMATIC SESSION OF 12TH CONFERENCE ON CRGA 52'S DECISIONS**

29. The Chairperson of the 52nd Meeting of CRGA, Peseta Noumea Simi, was invited to speak to the matters discussed by members at CRGA 52 and to present the resolutions and highlights from CRGA 52 to Conference. She thanked members for the great honour and privilege in chairing the 52nd session of the CRGA and that its success could be attributed to the active participation of member countries and territories as well as the Secretariat. She also thanked Mr Cornelius Walegerea of Solomon Islands for his excellent leadership of the drafting committee, which allowed for the rapid adoption of all recommendations. She highlighted a summary of CRGA's recommendations that were communicated in the *Letter to the Chair of the Special Thematic Session of 12th Conference for Conference's consideration*:

30. Members welcomed with appreciation the D-G's report, which updated on SPC's progress in 2022.
31. Members noted progress towards establishing a Polynesia Regional Office (PRO) and approved that the PRO be hosted by the Kingdom of Tonga. They acknowledged the bid put forward by French Polynesia as well as the work of the Polynesian Members Committee (PMC) in defining the process and reaching an accord in the spirit of talanoa;
32. The Secretariat provided an update on its contributions to the finalisation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and reiterated its commitment to providing technical support to develop the 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan and inform the RRA.
33. Members noted progress towards the implementation for the Strategic Plan 2022-2031 and approved the updated Strategic Results Framework (SRF). They also welcomed the new Co-Chairs of the CRGA Subcommittee for the Strategic Plan, PNG and Samoa.
34. Members noted the report from the Chair of the SPC Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and commended the unqualified audit opinion received by SPC in 2021.
35. SPC's 2021 Financial Statements were noted and members recognised that the timely payment of assessed contributions and host country grants was critical to SPC's financial sustainability. It was agreed that an urgent review of assessed contributions and host country grants should be initiated. The 2023 proposed budget was approved inclusive of adjustments in remuneration for positions advertised locally and the conduct of a full review of remuneration by April 2023. Members also encouraged all development partners to consider adopting multi-year restricted programme funding.
36. CRGA endorsed the Committee's assessment that the D-G had, over the past year, been performing in the 'adding value zone' and formally recognised the D-G's excellent stewardship of SPC during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
37. Members decided that 13th Conference, and thus CRGA 53, would be hosted in Tuvalu. For 13th Conference, Tuvalu would provide the Chair and New Caledonia the Vice-Chair. In accordance with the rules of procedure, Solomon Islands would provide the Chair and Tokelau the Vice-Chair of CRGA 53.
38. Finally, CRGA noted several papers, including the Human Resources Report, the Pacific Board of Educational Quality Report, an update on CRGA 51 and out-of-session decisions and implementation.
39. Conference:
  - i. discussed and endorsed the decisions and recommendations of CRGA 52 as communicated in the *Letter from the Chair of CRGA 52 to the Chair of the Special*

*Thematic Session of the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community together with its decisions attached to the Letter, and as circulated separately to all delegations.*

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 FRIENDS OF THE CHAIR REPORT ON THE TECHNICAL REVIEW OF SPC**

40. On behalf of the Friends of the Chair Group (FCG), H.E. Anote Tong, introduced the Technical Review Report initiated by the Chair of 12th Conference. He contextualised the report by highlighting three key issues impacting the region: its post-COVID-19 response, climate change and oceans management, including fisheries and resource management. He expressed a desire to see 'Pacific-grown' solutions and believed that SPC, with its scientific and technical competence and expertise, could play an integral role in addressing those issues.
41. The Chair led the meeting through the decisions of CRGA 52, which had considered the findings of the FCG report and noted the recommendations; determined that a full independent review of the SPC should be undertaken; recommended the Terms of Reference for the review should be determined by CRGA 53 and that the findings of the FCG report should inform the full independent review; and requested that the Secretariat consider issues raised in the Review when planning and programming its activities, including its flagship programmes.
42. Members thanked the FCG group for the succinct and timely report as initiated by the Chair of 12th Conference and acknowledged the hard work and effort that had gone into the recommendations of the report. Members welcomed the findings of the report and endorsed the decisions of CRGA 52 on this item. Concerns around CROP competition were noted by members in their discussion and they hoped that the RRA would serve to ensure CROP agencies' mandates as well as their financing, efficiency and harmonisation were fit for purpose, with the ultimate goal of ensuring more finance reached countries to implement national programmes.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 8 FEATURED SESSION – SPC OCEAN SCIENCE IN ACTION**

43. Delegates were invited to several live demonstrations of the Ocean Science work being done by SPC in the region.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 ENDORSEMENT OF CONF 12 DECISIONS**

44. Conference endorsed its outcomes.

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

45. Members offered closing remarks and expressed their gratitude to the D-G and the Secretariat for its facilitation and organisation of the meeting as well as the drafting committee for its well-articulated meeting outcomes. Members also reiterated that SPC was theirs and they were SPC. It was their responsibility to ensure that the organisation continued to meet members' needs, especially when it came to making policy decisions underpinned by science.
46. The Chair thanked members and the Secretariat for their confidence and expressed Vanuatu's pleasure at being able to host the first face-to-face Conference after the COVID-19 pandemic.
47. The D-G thanked Vanuatu for their generous hosting and commended their wisdom and guidance of members' discussions throughout the meeting. He reemphasised that this was the Pacific Community's members' organisation and that the Secretariat stood ready to serve the members as they saw fit.
48. The Deputy Director-General expressed thanks and gave recognition to Mr Roy Benyon, who had served as an SPC interpreter for 30 years and had become a regular figure at CRGA and Conference. The meeting warmly thanked Roy for his service to SPC.
49. NZ's Hon. Aupito William Sio led the meeting in a celebratory Happy Birthday to mark SPC's 75th anniversary and then delivered the closing prayer.
50. The Chair declared the Special Thematic Session of the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community closed.
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