



SPC
Secretariat
of the Pacific
Community

COMMUNIQUÉ
OF THE
EIGHTH CONFERENCE
OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

SUVA, FIJI
18–19 NOVEMBER 2013

EIGHTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY
(Suva, Fiji, 18–19 November 2013)

1. The Eighth Conference of the Pacific Community was officially opened by the Prime Minister of Fiji, Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama. The meeting was chaired by Fiji with Guam as Vice-Chair and was attended by representatives of the following members of the Pacific Community – Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America (USA), Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna – and by observers and partners including Timor Leste, the European Commission, GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), University of the South Pacific, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the World Health Organization.
2. The meeting was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Fiji at Vale ni Bose, Suva. SPC members expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and people of Fiji for the excellent arrangements made in hosting the Eighth Conference and for the generous hospitality extended to them during their stay in Fiji.

ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PACIFIC COMMUNITIES – HELPING SHAPE THE POST-2015 AGENDA

3. The Conference deliberated on the theme, ‘Enhancing sustainable development in Pacific Communities – helping shape the post-2015 agenda’, noting the international processes taking place to formulate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are expected to replace the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire in 2015. In this regard, Conference acknowledged that 2013 and 2014 are important years for Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) internationally because in 2013 Fiji chairs the G77 and China grouping of countries; Nauru chairs the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS); Papua New Guinea chairs the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Pacific SIDS) group in New York; Palau, Nauru and PNG are participating in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Open Working Group; and in September 2014 Samoa is hosting the Third International Conference on SIDS.
4. Recognising that this involvement gives the Pacific region a unique opportunity to influence the global development agenda, Conference agreed that the region’s approach should be inclusive, in accordance with its values, and that it should emphasise a united approach, including developing and launching concrete partnerships to ensure lasting and meaningful outcomes that address priorities critical to the Pacific Islands region, such as climate change (adaptation and mitigation); oceans and forests; enhanced SIDS resilience; disaster risk reduction; renewable energy; and post-LDC (least developed country) graduation.
5. Conference noted the proposed goals resulting from the four international processes (the High Level Panel (HLP), the Open Working Group, the Pacific SIDS preparatory process and the SIDS priorities from the inter-regional preparatory meeting in Barbados in September 2013) and the intention to converge the post-MDG (HLP) and SDG processes at the 69th UN General Assembly

in September 2014, and agreed that culture and mental health should be added to the priorities to be considered in the post-2015 SDG process.

6. Conference welcomed SPC's commitment to assist all its island members to position themselves to engage strategically in the post-2015 development agenda and requested that it take a leadership role in helping them develop shared solutions; facilitating collaboration to ensure that the territories are informed and represented through partnerships with the independent states of the region; analysing and communicating information to brief Permanent Missions to the United Nations based in New York; and building the capacity of members to contribute effectively to the formulation of the SDGs.
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Director-General's overview

7. Conference commended the Director-General and his team for the key achievements of his eight-year tenure as Director-General. Conference noted in particular the significance of these achievements given that they occurred during a period of major change, including the reform of the regional institutional framework (RIF) and the implementation of the Pacific Plan, coupled with SPC's ongoing internal reform. Conference affirmed SPC's role as the region's principal scientific and technical agency and the advantages of its ability to take a cross-cutting approach across 20 sectors to challenges such as climate change, and endorsed the strengthening of the organisation's governance and accountability. Conference commended the Director-General for the secretariat's positive approach to accepting and implementing the recommendations of the 2012 independent external review (IER), noting that 37 out of 42 recommendations had been implemented in a very short period, with progress being made on three others and two being deferred to 2014. Conference also noted SPC's success in creating and fostering new and effective partnerships with regional and international development partners working in the Pacific Islands region.
 8. Conference recognised the major challenges in coming years that will need the continued attention of SPC's senior management team, including the need to further strengthen SPC's governance arrangements; ensure sustainable financing of its work; strengthen engagement in the post-2015 development agenda; ensure SPC's services remain relevant to the priorities of its island members; properly address membership issues; and deal with the secretariat's human resources challenges.
 9. Conference agreed to formally accord posthumous recognition of the contribution to SPC of Mr William Forsyth, its first Secretary General, who as a member of Australia's Department of External Affairs proposed the 'South Seas Commission' in 1943 to facilitate regional cooperation in the post-war period – a vision that became the first example of regional cooperation in the Pacific.
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Tribute to the Director-General

10. Noting that the Eighth Conference was the last meeting that the Director-General, Dr Jimmie Rodgers, would attend in his capacity of SPC CEO, Conference paid tribute to his inspirational

leadership of SPC from 2006 to 2013, and his commitment and vision in developing a dynamic and effective organisation that has the development needs of its Pacific Island members and their people at its centre.

Adoption of CRGA 43 decisions

11. Conference recognised the in-depth work done during the 43rd meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), which took place at Vale ni Bose in Suva, Fiji, from 12 to 15 November 2013, and adopted the recommendations of the meeting (Annex 1 of this communique).
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Programmes Directorate

12. Conference welcomed the establishment in 2013 of the Programmes Directorate, in which SPC's seven technical divisions will work together to leverage their multi-sector capacities and enhance programme effectiveness, and noted the following highlights of divisional work in 2013:
 - **Applied Geoscience and Technology Division** – Support for the development of a joint regional disaster risk management/climate change strategy by 2015; delineation of maritime boundaries for several countries; building of emergency operations centres (for example, in FSM and Solomon Islands); overseeing the construction of a sand and gravel barge for Kiribati; completion of water catchment studies for Samoa; and roll-out of the world's first template for a legal framework covering deep sea minerals.
 - **Economic Development Division** – Provision of technical, legal and policy advice on energy issues; implementation of the North-Rep project, bringing reliable renewable energy services to thousands of people in more remote areas of RMI and FSM; provision of petroleum advisory services to island countries and territories, saving some members millions of dollars in 2013; support for compliance with international maritime obligations and building capacity to meet international transport safety and security requirements.
 - **Education, Training and Human Development Division** – Support for legislative change addressing gender equality and violence against women; convening of the successful 5th Pacific Women's Ministerial Meeting and the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women; and the Community Education Training Centre's (CETC) celebration of its 50th Jubilee in 2013, noting that CETC will close in December 2013 with its programmes to transfer to the University of the South Pacific (USP) in January 2014. In this regard, Conference commended the work of CETC over the past 50 years in empowering women in the region and acknowledged the commitment by USP to continued and improved delivery of CETC's programmes. Conference noted the recommendations of the review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), acknowledged the importance of expanding the mandate of SPBEA to encompass education quality, and agreed to establish a joint working group of members and the secretariat to further assess the optimum approach and resources required to take the recommendations forward.

- **Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division** – Continued provision of scientific services to support the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission; completion of the third and final phase of large-scale tagging operations in PNG waters, with National Fisheries Authority staff taking on increasing responsibility for the tagging cruises; work with partners in member countries to establish viable new aquaculture enterprises; and roll-out of the findings of the study on the vulnerability of Pacific fisheries to climate change.
- **Land Resources Division** – Support for agricultural and forest resource enterprises through the Increasing Agricultural Commodity Trade (IACT) project; biosecurity support through pest and disease surveys and pest management, including of invasive species; training of para-veterinarians to help combat zoonotic diseases; conservation of agrobiodiversity through the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees; and provision of advice on sustainable forest management.
- **Public Health Division** – Support for changes to the governance and leadership of regional health developments in association with the Quintilateral Partners; support for PICTs to continue to implement non-communicable disease (NCD) plans and strategies; preparation of a submission to the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) on the cost of NCDs in the Pacific region on behalf of the Quintilateral Partners; support for 12 PICTs to implement rapid testing and diagnosis for HIV; and public health surveillance and response preparedness for the 2013 Pacific Mini Games held in Wallis and Futuna.
- **Statistics for Development Division** – Support for national counterparts to improve administrative databases and information management systems in economics, education and vital statistics; improvements in data dissemination; updating the National Minimum Development Indicators database, including expanding coverage to French and US territories; and integration of recent census results in various national Population Geographical Information System (PopGIS) systems, giving planners and policy analysts ready access to spatially referenced demographic, economic and social statistics.

Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility

13. Conference welcomed SPC's new Corporate Strategic Plan (2012–2015), which was developed under the leadership of the Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility (SEPPF), and its emphasis on integrated, cross-sectoral services and a new approach to mobilising additional flexible long-term sustainable funding for SPC.
14. Conference also acknowledged the work led by SEPPF to improve the joint country strategy process and supported the formation of a Joint Country Strategy (JCS) Working Group, comprising CRGA members and SPC divisions to develop a proposal for the new JCS process. Conference welcomed expressions of interest from Australia, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia and RMI in participating in this working group, which is expected to begin work in early 2014.

15. Conference acknowledged SPC's continued efforts to strengthen its monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and ability to report results. Conference also welcomed the country profiles developed by SEPPF, which detail SPC's technical assistance to each island member, and the regional report, which outlines the services that SPC provides at regional level, as examples of improved reporting of results to members.
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Operations and Management Directorate

16. Conference welcomed the significant steps taken by the Operations and Management Directorate in 2013 to ensure that its services (administration, human resources, finance, ICT, library, publications and translation/interpretation) meet the needs of an expanded organisation, including the appointment of a new Director of Human Resources, as recommended by the 2012 independent external review.
 17. Recognising the challenges faced by the secretariat in recruitment, as well as anomalies in the salaries of CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) CEOs, Conference approved the establishment of a CRGA Working Group to look at these issues, in particular the appropriate salary band for the position of SPC Director-General, based on the size and scope of the role relative to CEO roles in the smaller CROP organisations, and welcomed the expressions of interest from Australia, FSM, France (former Chair of CRGA), Guam, Kiribati (Chair), New Caledonia, RMI (incoming Chair) and USA in participating in the Working Group.
 18. Conference called for a post-RIF job-sizing exercise to be considered, and for the reconvening of the CROP Harmonisation Working Group (comprising member PICTs) to address anomalies in the application of remuneration harmonisation practices between participating CROP agencies and to share the findings of the CRGA Working Group.
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Financial year 2014 budget

19. Conference approved a forward looking budget of 95,357,400 CFP units, comprising a core budget of 26,762,600 CFP units and project funding of 68,594,800 CFP units for financial year 2014, which reflects shifting priorities due to the 2012 independent external review.
 20. Conference acknowledged the secretariat's proactive approach to building its reserve with the aim of increasing it to a level sufficient to cover 60–90 days of operation, as is the practice in similar organisations.
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Audit and Risk Committee Report

21. Conference noted the report of SPC's Audit and Risk Committee and its three-year work plan (2013–2015). It further noted that the committee has appointed an international accounting firm to undertake the internal audit work described in the three-year plan.

22. Conference also acknowledged SPC's financial health as evidenced by its achievement of a clean audit report for the 17th successive year.
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Updating the Canberra Agreement to confirm the legal effect of previous Conference decisions and introduce provisions for other membership categories

23. Conference approved the resolutions that would confirm the legal effect of the 1997 Conference resolution to change SPC's name from the 'South Pacific Commission' to the 'Pacific Community', and the 1983 Conference resolution granting full and equal membership to all current members of SPC.

Pacific Community membership policy

24. Conference approved the resolution on extending the territorial scope of the Pacific Community to include Timor Leste to accommodate a probable request for full membership by Timor Leste.
25. Conference acknowledged the statement made by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Timor Leste, and welcomed Timor Leste's expression of interest in full membership of the Pacific Community.
26. Conference approved in principle the creation of new membership categories such as 'associate member' and 'observer' as an excellent means of enhancing engagement and organisational outreach and contributing to furthering the work of SPC on behalf of members. Conference directed the secretariat and the expanded Working Group on Membership – comprising Australia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the United States – to further analyse a proposed 'Pacific Community membership policy' over the course of the coming year, with the results and recommendations to be presented to CRGA 44 in 2014.

SPC governance arrangements

27. Conference acknowledged the importance of further strengthening SPC's governance processes, and agreed to commission a review of these processes in 2014, funded from SPC's existing budgetary resources, with the findings and recommendations of the review to be presented to CRGA 44.

Review of assessed contributions and host grants

28. Conference agreed to (i) the grouping of SPC's 22 island members into five categories with associated levels of membership contributions (noting the request from Guam to be given until after 2015 to fully consider the increase); and (ii) the target for membership contributions for SPC's founding members (noting the United States is unlikely to meet this target in the foreseeable future). Conference welcomed the confirmation by France, Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia of their agreement to the proposed levels of their respective contributions.

29. Conference agreed to the target of 3 million CFP units for the country host grants and directed the secretariat to consult further with the four host countries in 2014 to agree on the distribution formula for the grants, and to share with all members the findings of the study it commissioned on economic benefits to host countries. Conference welcomed the confirmation by Solomon Islands of its agreement to a proposed host grant of 50,000 CFP units beginning in 2014.

Risk-resilient development: an integrated approach to managing climate, disaster and human security risks

30. Conference acknowledged the importance of integrating the separate regional frameworks for climate change and disaster risk management (DRM) into a single regional strategy and endorsed the secretariat's efforts to support the 'roadmap' process for the development of the joint Strategy for Disaster and Climate Resilient Development in the Pacific by 2015.

Findings of the Pacific Plan review and possible implications for SPC

31. Conference welcomed the secretariat's initiative in presenting a preliminary assessment of the review of the Pacific Plan, noting the report is yet to be considered and adopted. Conference noted that when it has been considered, the secretariat will further assess the possible implications of the review's recommendations for SPC's work and bring this assessment to the attention of CRGA 44, recognising that not all members of SPC are members of the Pacific Islands Forum or associated directly with the Pacific Plan.

Appointment of the Director-General

32. Conference appointed Dr Colin Tukuitonga to the position of Director-General of SPC. He will take up the position on January 23, 2014.

Ninth Conference of the Pacific Community

33. Conference accepted with thanks the offer from Niue to host the Ninth Conference of the Pacific Community in November 2015. As host, Niue will chair the Ninth Conference with the Vice-Chair to be confirmed at CRGA 44.