

Revised Discussion Paper:

Implementation of ICR Recommendation 79 on strengthening SPREP governance

Background

1. ICR recommendation 79 suggested that the SPREP Meeting ‘consider establishing a SPREP Board, similar to a Corporation, to which the Secretariat reports and is accountable; the Board is in turn accountable to SPREP Members, through the SPREP Council.’ It outlined several potential benefits:

- a more continuous flow of high quality advice to the Director;
- increased accountability of the Director to the membership; and
- allowing the frequency of the SPREP Meeting to be reduced.

2. The 19th SPREP Meeting directed the Secretariat ‘to explore further options for strengthening the engagement between the Secretariat and Members, for consideration at SM20, noting the intent of recommendation 79.’

3. The Secretariat responded to this directive with a discussion paper tabled at the SPREP Special Meeting in July 2009, proposing a chair’s advisory committee or group. It also noted that the March 2009 European Commission compliance assessment had noted SPREP’s ‘very limited governance and oversight structure’ and recommended ‘the creation of an additional layer between the SPREP Meeting and management.’

4. In September 2009 the SPREP ICR task force asked the Secretariat to revise its proposal in light of task force members’ concerns. The task force recommended, *inter alia*, separating from this proposal the question of the merits of holding SPREP Meetings biennially rather than annually.

Revised proposal

5. The Secretariat invites Members to consider establishing a new governance mechanism, as a committee or group to advise the serving SPREP Chair on intersessional strategic, monitoring, advisory and reporting matters. This might:

- improve the accountability of the Secretariat to Members on key day-to-day decisions on work programme priorities and budgets, which are currently the sole responsibility of the Director and reported annually to Members;
- engage Members more closely in SPREP management and strategic direction, by providing a means of two-way supportive engagement between the Secretariat and a subset of the membership between SPREP Meetings; and
- provide regular feedback from Members on the performance of the Secretariat’s Director and management team.

6. It is envisaged that the advisory committee or group would need to meet at SPREP HQ at least once a year, mid-way between SPREP Meetings (e.g. March). This could be supplemented by electronic discussions and teleconferences as required. The meetings would focus on governance issues such as budget and work programme matters, and not impinge on the policy oversight mandate of the SPREP Meeting. The proposed terms of reference are modified versions of the terms proposed by the ICR:

Functions

The SPREP chair's advisory committee/group shall meet at least once between SPREP Meetings, in Apia, to:

1. Review progress and make recommendations to the Secretariat on the work programmes and budgets of the Secretariat, particularly:
 - a) the implementation of the SPREP Action Plan;
 - b) the implementation of SPREP Meeting decisions and recommendations; and
 - c) follow-up actions on the Secretariat's performance monitoring and evaluation.
2. Advise on donor relationships and assist the Secretariat to source and secure funding in support of environment activities in the region.
3. Assess the performance of the Director and report on this to the SPREP Meeting.
4. Review and comment on draft agendas for SPREP Meetings.
5. Undertake other tasks as directed from time to time by the SPREP Meeting.

Membership

The committee/group shall comprise four representatives serving 2-year terms:

1 representative from the Micronesian sub-region;

1 representative from the Melanesian sub-region;

1 representative from the Polynesian sub-region;

1 representative from Australia, France, New Zealand or the United States of America;

And two *ex officio* members:

the Serving SPREP Chair; and

the SPREP Director.

Options for strengthening the engagement between the Secretariat and Members

Thematic focal points

7. To ensure the Secretariat fully reflects Members' priorities, and to improve its country profiles, the Secretariat has given some thought to implementing a system of *thematic focal points*. Each focal point could be linked to senior advisory level positions within the SPREP staff structure, and could have primary responsibility for engaging with all countries, identifying priority issues and for communicating SPREP's programmatic response within that thematic area to members. This might help reflect Members' priorities more accurately in SPREP's strategic programmes, annual work plans and individual staff work plans, and ensure that country profiles include current information on the Secretariat's interactions with each country.

8. Suggested themes are: marine ecosystems; terrestrial ecosystems; climate change; pollution / waste management; and environmental governance. Thematic focal points would:

- use their teams to promote engagement with members in identifying member priorities and current status of issues in the thematic area within each country;
- document information relating to SPREP's country-specific past interventions, current and planned programme of activities in their thematic area, to update the Secretariat's country profiles directory and complement the virtual environment libraries; and
- engage in SPC Joint Country Strategy initiatives and integrate their outcomes into the country profiles.

External technical advisers or committees

9. The Secretariat would be interested in Members' views on the merits of the Secretariat developing a network or committee(s) of technical advisers to provide a sounding board and a peer review process for the technical aspects of the Secretariat's work. These are envisaged as comprising highly-regarded regional experts and consultants who can be asked, as required, to provide advice of a scientific, technical and possibly administrative nature.

10. Other CROP agencies benefit from comparable technical sounding boards, without the governance oversight role of the proposed chair's advisory group. The Secretariat would be willing to develop models along these lines, and to investigate the feasibility of tapping into the existing Science, Technology and Research Network (STAR) currently linked to SOPAC.