



Agenda Item 6.1: ICR Update

Purpose

1. To outline steps taken to progress key recommendations of the Independent Corporate Review (ICR) since the SPREP Special Meeting in July 2009.

Background

2. In September 2008, the 19th SPREP Meeting adopted, with some amendments, the ICR recommendations. The ICR report had been completed by an international team, under terms of reference endorsed by the 18th SPREP Meeting, and submitted to the SPREP Council Chair in June 2008. The 19th SPREP Meeting also directed the Secretariat to develop an implementation plan and to report annually on progress; and to consult Members on recommendations 59, 60 and 61 (on core business activities).
3. In July 2009, the SPREP Special Meeting considered an implementation progress report and agreed to provide feedback before the 20th SPREP Meeting on two discussion papers prepared by the Secretariat, addressing:
 - ICR recommendations 59, 60 and 61 (on core business); and
 - ICR recommendation 79 (on SPREP's governance arrangements).
4. The SPREP Special Meeting also endorsed the establishment of a task force and an electronic bulletin board to discuss core functions and related ICR recommendations.
5. In September 2009, the task force (comprising representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Tokelau, United States and the Secretariat) met in Apia and:
 - Developed a proposed definition of *SPREP's core business*, for Members' consideration in the lead-up to the 20th SPREP Meeting. The task force agreed that while it was the role of Members to define SPREP's core business, they would depend on the Secretariat to report back to Members on how the Secretariat could be structured to focus on this;
 - Neither rejected nor endorsed the proposal to establish a *chair's advisory committee or group*, but registered considerable concerns. The task force invited the Secretariat to revise its proposal.

6. The task force report and suggested core business elements were made available to Members for their feedback in October 2009.

Topics for discussion

a. The ‘core business’ of SPREP

7. The ICR task force adopted the following text, to promote discussion between Members in the lead-up to the 20th SPREP Meeting, which might adopt an agreed definition of the ‘core business’ of the Secretariat. It acknowledged that Members’ discussion may well continue beyond the 20th SPREP Meeting. Members may also wish to refer to the attached outline the Secretariat has prepared of existing obligations arising from, *inter alia*, MoUs and SPREP meeting decisions, with a commentary on proposed key essentials.

The task force began to develop a possible definition of core business:

*The minimum set of capabilities SPREP **must** provide to Members [on a regional basis], in accordance with its mandate as the regional environment organisation, where SPREP’s role is unique and irreplaceable, and which should be permanently funded through members’ contributions.¹*

The meeting considered various formulations of core business, which might boil down to what it takes to:

- 1. maintain essential secretariat services, such as: circulating information, convening meetings, framing decisions for members, managing institutional and human resources, overseeing follow-up work; and*
- 2. support activities that address priority regional environmental challenges and opportunities, and which **require** a regionally coordinated response, and for which SPREP is best positioned to deliver;*

all of which should be permanently funded through members’ contributions.

Explanatory note:

... It is essential first to clarify what the Secretariat **must** do because it is obliged to or because its services are indispensable to the region. The core business is that which will require permanent funding from Members. However, the task force was conscious that there will remain the question of what else the Secretariat **should** do – to draw on its comparative advantage or because it is uniquely placed to add value, e.g. by applying expertise or by bringing in partners and stakeholders.

It is understood that the Secretariat will retain the flexibility to undertake project related activities that contribute to the core, particularly when funding is obtained from sources other than member contributions, and to address other emerging regional environmental challenges and opportunities.

¹ This definition may need to be reflected in the revised version of SPREP’s financial regulations.

b. Strengthening SPREP's governance and engagement with Members

8. The task force acknowledged that the Secretariat's initiative in proposing a chair's advisory committee or group responded to the 19th SPREP Meeting's directive for the Secretariat to explore further options for strengthening its engagement with Members. However, it registered concerns about the breadth of the terms of reference and doubts about the likelihood that such an entity would improve communications between Members and the Secretariat. The task force asked the Secretariat to revise its proposal, to specify that an advisory group's terms of reference should focus on providing advice on budget and work programme matters.

9. The Secretariat's revised proposal on a chair's advisory group and other options for strengthening Member engagement (thematic focal points) and improving the quality of advice to the Secretariat (technical advisory committees) is attached.

Recommendations

10. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the steps the Secretariat has taken to implement ICR recommendations to date;
- **agree** to define core business as *'The minimum set of capabilities SPREP must provide to Members on a regional basis, in accordance with its mandate as the regional environment organisation, where SPREP's role is unique and irreplaceable, and which should be permanently funded through members' contributions.'*
- **agree** to engage in further discussions to define the activities comprising the Secretariat's core business under two heads:
 1. *Maintaining essential secretariat services, such as: circulating information, convening meetings, framing decisions for members, managing institutional and human resources, overseeing follow-up work; and*
 2. *Supporting activities that address priority regional environmental challenges and opportunities, and which require a regionally coordinated response, and for which SPREP is best positioned to deliver;*
- **agree** in principle that the core business of the Secretariat should be permanently funded by Members' contributions;
- **decide** to extend the term of the ICR task force to finalise its work up to, but not beyond, the 21st SPREP Meeting; and
- **agree** to establish a chair's advisory committee or group **and/or** to **direct** the Secretariat to develop further proposals for thematic focal points and technical advisory committees to achieve the objectives of ICR recommendation 79.