



SPREP

South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Report
of the
Work Programme and
Budget Sub-Committee
Meeting

Apia, Samoa
16–17 November 1999

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Report
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*Apia, Samoa
16-17 November 1999*

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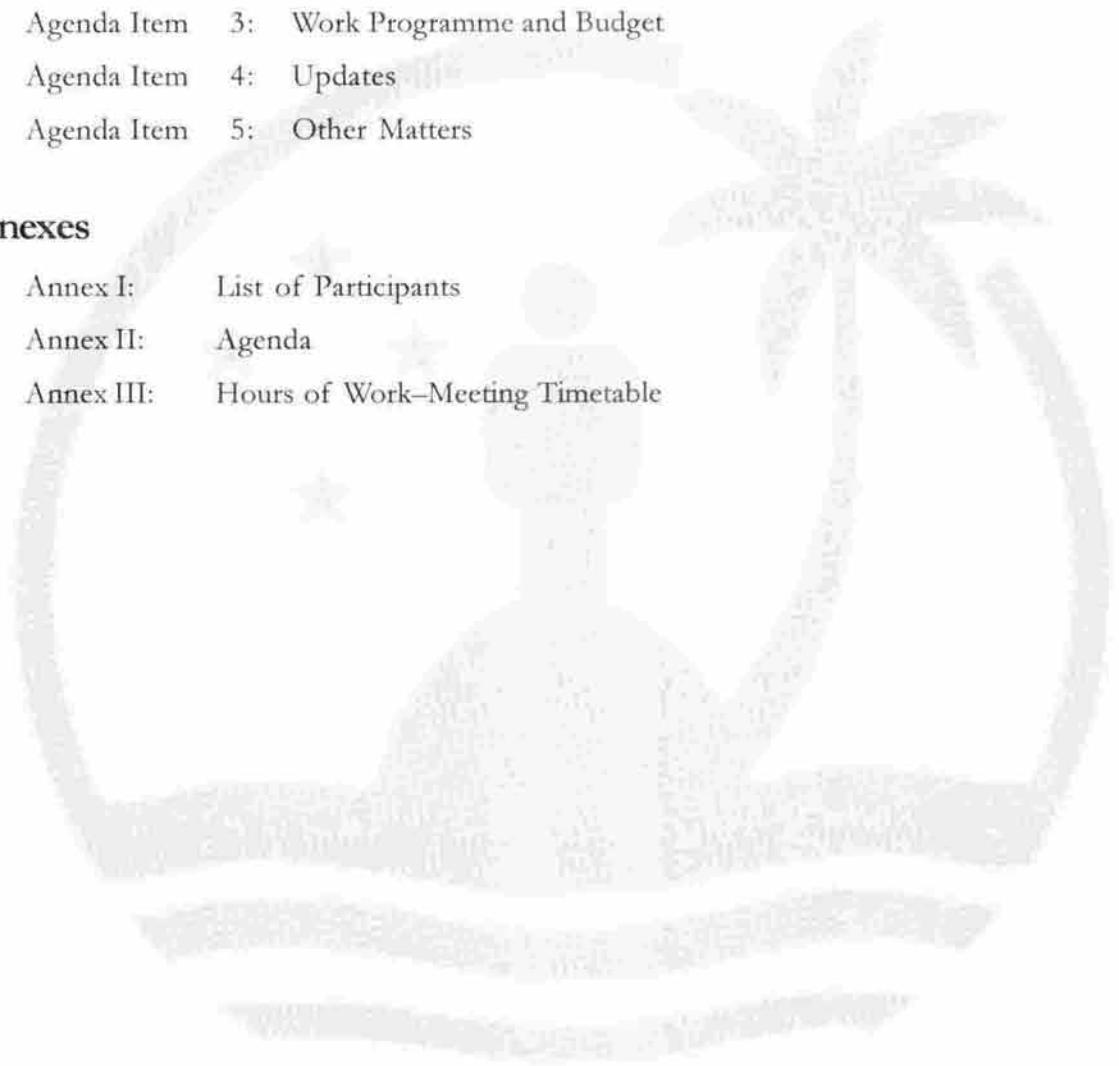
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Meeting Report

Introduction

1. The SPREP Work Programme and Budget Sub-Committee met in Apia, Samoa from 16 – 17 November, 1999 as an interim sub-committee meeting between the 10SM (1998) and 11SM (2000), the primary purpose of which was to approve the Year 2000 Work Programme and Budget. Representatives of the following countries and territories attended: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, New Zealand, Samoa and the United States of America. The participants list appears as Annex I. This representation was in line with agreement at the 10SM that the Work Programme and Budget Sub-Committee would comprise those members with representation in Apia, including the representative of Samoa, plus one representative each from the geographical regions of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia and include a representative of France. The 10SM had also agreed that the Work Programme and Budget Sub-Committee should meet to approve the Work Programme and Budget in the intervening year between SPREP Meetings, since the SPREP meeting has now moved to a biennial meeting cycle.

Dedication of the new SPREP Centre and Official Meeting Opening

2. Following a prayer by the Reverend Utufua Naseri and welcoming remarks by Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, SPREP Director, the meeting was officially opened by the Hon. Tuala Sale Tagaloa, Minister of Lands, Surveys and Environment, Government of Samoa. The Official Meeting Opening took place on the site of the SPREP Centre, Vailima, Samoa as part of a dedication ceremony in line with the Samoan tradition of "taualuga", to recognise attainment of the roofing stage of the new SPREP Centre. Members of the Sub-Committee then departed for the UNESCO conference room, Apia for the commencement of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome Remarks

3. In his opening remarks Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, SPREP Director, referred to the role of the Work Programme and Budget Sub-Committee as delegated by the 10SM. He explained that the 10SM had given a mandate to the Sub-Committee to discuss matters relating to work programming and budgeting and, as its primary task, the approval of the Year 2000 Work Programme and Budget. He also explained the Secretariat's process of documentation since its move to a performance based Work Programme and Budget.

4. The SPREP Chairperson, Ms I'o Tuakeu-Lindsay, representative of the Cook Islands, welcomed delegates and thanked the Secretariat for its warm hospitality in true Pacific Island spirit and congratulated the Secretariat on the documentation prepared for this meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

5. The revised Provisional Agenda was adopted and is attached as Annex II. The hours of work as proposed were also adopted, a schedule of which appears as Annex III.

6. The meeting agreed that the Official Report of the SPREP Work Programme and Budget Sub-Committee be prepared by the Secretariat and tabled for formal approval at the end of the meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Work Programme and Budget

7. The representative of Australia commended the Secretariat for presentation of detailed reporting which clearly sets out what has been achieved in the Work Programme. However, he was disappointed at the late receipt of documentation which prevented detailed review and comments, for

example, by officials in Canberra. The Director explained that it has been a difficult process of documentation, with the recent move to performance-based output budgeting, but he expressed optimism that the situation would improve next year.

3.1 1999 Work Programme Review

3.1.1: Personnel

8. The Secretariat tabled its paper providing an outline of developments since the 10SM which pertain to Secretariat staff remuneration, the related Special SPREP Meeting and the progress of the Forum Officials Committee on related issues and which sought guidance of the Sub-Committee on action to be undertaken.

9. The Secretariat in its paper recommended that the Sub-Committee consider an 11.31% adjustment on Special Drawing Rights (SDR) salaries, effective from 1 January 1999 as an interim measure to harmonise SPREP salaries with those of other Regional Organisations. It was pointed out that SPREP was already 2.31% behind SPC, SOPAC and FORSEC at the time that the governing bodies of those Regional Organisations increased their staff salaries by 9%, as an interim measure, whilst awaiting the results of the Forum Secretariat job-sizing study. The proposed 11.31% (9% + 2.31%) adjustment comprised the 9% already awarded as an interim measure to other Regional Organisations as well as the 2.31% prior differential between SPREP salaries and those of other Regional Organisations.

10. In response to questions from the Sub-Committee, the Secretariat explained that budgetary provision for an 11.3% increase had already been made by the Secretariat in its 1999 and 2000 Budgets and therefore any proposed increase would not adversely affect the budget figures.

11. Some delegates questioned whether the 10SM had given the Sub-Committee a mandate to determine this matter, especially with regard to actual percentage level of staff salary increase. Whilst other delegates felt that such a mandate did exist, the Sub-Committee agreed that it was

important to await the forthcoming FOC decision before any decision could be made.

12. The Sub-Committee reiterated the importance, as agreed at the 10SM, of harmonisation with other Regional Organisations. It noted SOPAC's decision to hold a special half day meeting immediately following FOC on Friday 26th November to address the issue, in light of deliberation by FOC of the recommendations of the Forum Secretariat Remuneration Strategy 1999-2000 and agreed that a special SPREP half day meeting, with a similar task, also be held on that day.

3.1.2: Six Monthly and Third Quarterly Reports

13. The status report of the Secretariat's achievements and performance of strategic and key outputs for the periods January to June 1999 and July to September 1999, as specified in the 1999 Work Programme and Budget adopted at the 10SM, was tabled.

14. The Sub-Committee noted the report complimenting the Secretariat on its documentation. The representative of Australia, whilst appreciating the Secretariat's efforts in providing a clearer presentation of outcomes, requested inclusion in future of qualitative and quantitative measures, where possible, to provide a more in-depth assessment of status and achievements and encouraged the Secretariat to adopt a sharper focus of staff time and resources in priority areas.

15. The representatives of Fiji, New Zealand and the United States, in seeking clarification on the relatively low levels of expenditure in some areas, urged the Secretariat to identify separately unsecured funding in future budget documentation.

3.1.3 Financial Reports

16. The Secretariat tabled its Consolidated Budget and Detailed Budget Analysis Reports for the six months (January – June 1999) and the third quarter (July – September 1999) as well as its Report on Primary and Project Management Cash Flow during 1998 and up to 30 September 1999.

17. The representative of New Zealand, in seeking clarification on levels of expenditure, thanked the Secretariat for circulating additional budgetary information which gave 'actual' levels of income and expenditure to mid-November 1999. This additional documentation served to highlight the high levels of unsecured funding which helped explain the relatively low levels of expenditure recorded in the Secretariat's financial reports.

18. The Sub-Committee requested information on unsecured funding in future budgets thus giving greater clarity.

19. The Sub-Committee also approved a change in the presentation of all the Consolidated budget tables to reduce the historical data columns to include two prior years only instead of three. This would allow the inclusion of the budgets and actual income and expenditures for two prior years only for comparison purposes.

20. In relation to Agenda items 3.1.2 (Secretariat's review of achievements and performance) and 3.1.3 (budget out-run reports) the representative of Samoa suggested that in the future these reports be condensed and incorporated into the work programme and budget document. This would save the Secretariat work and time in document reproduction and distribution. It would also result in a more comprehensive work programme and budget document and enable the governing body and meeting to address one document with its related aspects and then take a more meaningful decision.

3.2: Draft 2000 Work Programme and Budget

3.2.1: Amendments to Draft

3.2.2: Personnel

3.2.3: Comments from Member Countries (Fiji, New Zealand and United States of America)

21. The Secretariat introduced its paper on amendments to the Draft 2000 Work Programme and Budget. These amendments were subsequently adopted by the Sub-Committee.

22. The Director introduced the Draft Work Programme and Budget for Year 2000, explaining that the Secretariat had endeavoured to be more results-oriented, focusing on outputs/outcomes rather than on inputs as had previously been the case. The Director referred to the need, recognised by the Secretariat, to approach donors in a more coordinated manner. He stated that initial success with such coordination was already, to some degree, reflected in the Work Programme and Budget document.

23. The Director recalled a request at the 10SM from the representative of Fiji for staff to undertake contractual arrangements for providing specific outputs in any one year and he stated that, although there was still room for improvement, the Secretariat had nevertheless made significant progress with its new output approach. As well, he called upon countries to work actively with the Secretariat in evaluating progress and thus assisting in effective project delivery.

24. The representative of Australia sought clarification relating to non-payment of management fees by some donors and was advised by the Secretariat that, in the case of the forthcoming International Waters Project, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had committed to pay 'actual' management costs which the Secretariat believed would be a feasible process given its move to output budgeting.

25. In response to an enquiry by the representative of New Zealand on the issue of consolidation of Secretariat staff and project ceilings, the Director advised that the Secretariat would be guided by its members on prioritisation of those activities best carried out by SPREP over those more appropriately addressed bilaterally. The forthcoming SPREP Action Plan Review would provide a valuable opportunity for such member country guidance and advice.

26. The representative of Australia reiterated the Secretariat's view that the Action Plan would provide useful guidance to the Secretariat in prioritisation of Work Programme activities. He stated that there is scope in the present Work Programme format for the Secretariat to present recommendations on what the priorities should be. He called for donors and members, as well as the Secretariat to be more

focused on prioritisation, identifying with the concern earlier expressed by the representative of Fiji over the gap between expected and actual funding levels. The representative of Australia called upon Programme Managers to say "no" if the capacity and resources to implement certain activities is not there. There is scope, he said, for greater definition and clarity of the Secretariat's roles as technical adviser/implementer/policy adviser, suggesting also that managers should filter proposed activities and not expand their realm to areas which are not necessarily of high priority for SPREP.

27. The representatives of Australia and Samoa expressed appreciation of the vastly improved presentation of the Work Programme and Budget and looked forward to its further fine tuning.

28. The representative of Samoa stated that while he initially had the same concerns as that of Fiji in noting that while the actual expenditures for the last two years for project management and project implementation had been about US\$5 million a year, the Secretariat was now seeking a US\$9.5 million expenditure for 2000. He had noted on page 77 of the document that the funding for this US\$9.5 million was all assured. The only question remaining therefore was whether SPREP's staff establishment and support structure have the absorptive capacity to execute this much work in one year. Only time will tell.

29. In respect of Members' Funds which were being used by the Secretariat as both a reserve fund and as a balancing item for its budget proposals, the representative of Samoa said that in his view both on experience with SPREP and with other regional organisations there was a need for a Reserve Fund to be established and maintained for financial emergencies. Such a Reserve Fund should have clearly set out rules for its use. He suggested that the Secretariat reflect on this and perhaps propose at the next SPREP Meeting the establishment of such a fund and an appropriate level. Once a Reserve Fund is established then annual surpluses should continue to be revoted to the following years income as provided for in the Financial Regulations.

30. The representative of Samoa also expressed grave concern at the continuing high level of previous years contributions in arrears which was

seriously affecting the ability of SPREP to operate effectively. He also felt that it was also time for the members to review the level of current contributions to the organisation which had remained frozen for some years now.

31. The representative of Fiji sought assurance, which was subsequently given by the Secretariat, that sufficient resources were available to enable the new SPREP Centre building to be adequately outfitted/equipped. [Refer to later discussion under Agenda Item 4.3].

32. The representative of Australia tabled documentation on a South Pacific Comparative Whale Sightings Project and South Pacific Whale Sanctuary Proposal and stated that Australia looks forward to working closely with SPREP on these activities in the Year 2000. He also encouraged SPREP to work productively with the SPC through the forthcoming Biosafety Workshop to be held in Nadi in December this year. The representative of Australia also tabled corrections to the Year 2000 Work Programme activities to streamline activities in association with regional participation in the Rotterdam (Prior Informed Consent) Convention.

33. The Year 2000 Work Programme and Budget was adopted as amended.

Agenda Item 4: Updates

4.1 Action and Corporate Plans Review

34. The Secretariat tabled its paper outlining its proposed process for reviewing the Action and Corporate Plans which contained details of an interactive approach to be undertaken in conjunction with member countries, to provide future guidance to SPREP's activities.

35. The Sub-Committee saw benefit in adopting different approaches for the reviews of the Corporate and Action Plans. It encouraged the Secretariat to itself proceed with the review of the Corporate Plan, recognising the importance of the Secretariat being very familiar and comfortable with the arrangements outlined in such a Plan.

36. With regard to the Action Plan review, delegates called for a forward-looking approach, with in-depth member country consultation and input, as a crucial aspect of the review, to ensure strong country ownership of the 2000 – 2004 Action Plan. The representative of Australia expressed his government's willingness to assist in the review process.

37. Whilst appreciating the value of the Secretariat's proposed visits to member countries by Management and Senior staff, the Sub-Committee (following a suggestion by the representative of Fiji) saw specific benefit in convening a regional workshop. This would assist in ensuring consistency of benchmarks and resolution of any potential differences. The Sub-Committee therefore agreed that the Secretariat seek funding to convene a Regional Workshop in the first half of 2000 (at a date to be determined by the Secretariat) to provide in-depth country feedback on the draft 2000 – 2004 Action Plan, prior to submission to the IISM.

4.2 Long Term Funding – Nature Conservation

38. The Secretariat tabled its paper on progress to date with the establishment of the Pacific Conservation Trust Fund. It was noted that much of SPREP's work on nature conservation is funded under the SPBCP, existing funding for which will end in 2001. It was also noted that all staff and activities of the CNR Division are funded from XB sources. Should these sources dry up, SPREP will not have the capacity to deal with nature conservation issues and concerns.

39. In response to the Sub-Committee's request for additional information on the mechanism and sources of funding for the Conservation Trust Fund, the Secretariat advised that participants to the Trust Fund Workshop, (Apia, 27-28 October 1999) proposed an Endowment Fund, with capital of US\$25 million, to generate interest of approximately US\$1 million per annum, which is equivalent to existing average yearly expenditure by SPREP on conservation area activities.

40. The Secretariat also advised that the Government of New Zealand had allocated NZ\$400,000 to assist in development of the Trust

Fund, details of which were outlined for the Sub-Committee, by the representative of New Zealand.

41. The Sub-Committee recognised the importance of the Trust Fund in ensuring sustainability of ongoing nature conservation activities, especially within the Small Island Developing States. The Sub-Committee therefore encouraged the Secretariat to actively pursue its efforts to develop this Fund and suggested that an indication of commitment by Small Island Developing States themselves, could help in attracting additional donor funds.

4.3 SPREP Headquarters

42. The Secretariat tabled its paper on the present status of the SPREP Centre building project at Vailima, Samoa.

43. The Sub-Committee noted the considerable progress that had been made following the initial years of struggle to obtain sufficient funds.

44. The representative of Australia (Chair of the SPREP Headquarters Task Force) sought assurance that pledges made by the Governments of France and the United States of America, would urgently be forthcoming. The Secretariat advised that the Government of France had, on 15 November 1999, reconfirmed its commitment in writing and assured the Secretariat that funds would soon be forthcoming. Similarly, the representative of the United States of America apologised for the slow progress in firming up its pledge and explained that a new process had been instigated whereby SPREP has been designated as a Public International Organisation, thus making it eligible for direct grants.

45. The representatives of New Zealand and Fiji called upon the Secretariat to table a project completion report to the IISM on the SPREP Headquarters project and requested that in such a report, funding be indicated in a consistent currency to ensure clarity for member countries.

46. In response to further concerns about level of funding for furniture and equipment, the Secretariat advised that on current indications, the US\$120,000 provided by the Government of the

Peoples' Republic of China, together with existing SPREP furniture/equipment, would be sufficient to address the Secretariat's needs.

4.4 Audit Report for the 1998 Accounts

47. The Secretariat tabled the annual audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 1998; the Auditors report on the 1998 financial operations of SPREP; correspondence submitted to Management by the Auditors on their findings; and the Secretariat's comments.

48. The Sub-Committee considered the Agenda item in two parts:

- 1998 financial statements and the Director's comments on the accounts; and
- Letters to Management, subsequent to the Audit and the Secretariat's response to the letters.

49. The Sub-Committee requested that future financial statements be sent out earlier and requested that, for future Meetings, Agenda papers, such as the accounts, financial issues and country contributions, be considered before the Work Programme and Budget.

50. The Secretariat clarified that the balances in the Reserve funds are shown in the Accounts and further details of the Reserves are given in the "Notes to the Accounts".

51. The Sub-Committee accepted the Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for 1998.

52. The Sub-Committee in considering the letters to Management, noted the use of the Staff Development Fund, and the Secretariat's discomfort at having a fund without full disclosure and transparency. The Secretariat advised that income in this fund comes from commissions from insurance companies and airline travel agents. Expenditures from the fund were all for staff development such as training of local staff, programme development and planning sessions, drinking water, air conditioning and first aid. This fund is closely monitored by the Director.

53. The Sub-Committee decided that income from insurance commissions, paid to the Secretariat for collecting premiums etc. from staff, should be treated as Miscellaneous Income; that all commissions/rebates from airline bookings should go back to the Project budget lines which funded the airfares; and that the Secretariat should include a specific provision for expenditures, in future core budgets, to cover relevant expenditures such as those now being financed from the above proceeds.

54. On the issue of Interest Income, the Auditors noted that this income is primarily generated from donor funds placed on term deposits. Historically, interest income has been attributed to primary function income but, in view of the nexus between this income and donor funds, the Auditors suggested the need for a policy decision on where interest income should be reflected in the accounts. The Sub-Committee agreed that the Secretariat should maintain the present structure of including Interest Income under the Primary Function budget.

55. The Sub-Committee discussed the audit observation on the absence of receipts, in Samoa, in respect of Programme Funds spent on in-country programmes outside of Samoa. The Sub-Committee was satisfied that the procedures adopted by SPREP for disbursement of such funds, through Member government agencies, with regular checks on such disbursement expenditures, was satisfactory and sufficient and did not warrant an additional in-country audit.

4.5 Members' Contribution

56. The Secretariat tabled, in accordance with Regulation 13, its report on the present status of receipt of Members' contributions, highlighting the implications on the Primary Function Budget of current shortfalls.

57. The representative of Australia expressed concern that a consistent pattern of non-payment by Members could give a negative message to donors.

58. The representatives of Australia and Samoa referred to the need for serious action to address the issue of non-payment, especially to make meaningful any discussions of proposed increase in country contributions. Possible options mooted for addressing non-payment of member contributions included restriction of participatory rights, restriction of decision-making rights, and disqualification of eligibility for technical support.

59. The Sub-Committee called upon the Director to write, at the highest political level, to member countries on the issue of timely receipt of members' contributions and agreed that a possible increase in members' contributions and proposed level of such an increase, be left to the discretion of the Director and be reflected in the Secretariat's documentation to the 11SM. Such documentation should also address the range of issues involved with the "assessed" and "voluntary" nature of these contributions.

60. The representative of the United States of America agreed that he would review with his government the question of "assessed" contribution and report back to the Secretariat on this matter as early as possible.

4.6 PACPLAN

61. The Secretariat tabled a briefing paper and made a visual presentation on the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN) and called on the Sub-Committee for guidance on future implementation of activities.

62. The Sub-Committee recognised the importance of addressing Marine Pollution through PACPLAN. The representative of Samoa undertook to follow through with his government its response and he endorsed the PACPLAN programme which he understood would be submitted to the 11SM for approval.

63. The representative of Guam referred to the Marine Pollution Response Plan currently in place in Guam and offered assistance to the Secretariat through provision of an experienced instructor. He expressed disappointment that insufficient funds

had been available to enable Guam's representation at the recent PACPOL Workshop held in Apia in October 1999.

64. The representative of the United States of America requested, and the Secretariat agreed, to list in future documentation, countries and territories as SPREP members.

65. The Sub-Committee thanked the Secretariat for its presentation, noted the objectives of PACPLAN and agreed to the proposed timeline for approval of PACPLAN at the 11SM.

Agenda Item 5: Other Matters

5.1 Member Country Evaluation of Secretariat Performance

66. The Secretariat tabled its paper outlining the process being developed for assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Secretariat by member countries.

67. The Sub-Committee congratulated the Secretariat on the development of this process. The representative of Australia referred to it as an interesting development providing greater transparency, ownership and quality assurance, especially from Australia's perspective as a donor government.

68. Delegates were unanimous in their appreciation of the approach put forward by the Secretariat. However, considerable discussion ensued with relation to methodology, especially regarding how best to assess qualitatively and quantitatively, while reflecting tangible results and, at the same time, ensuring that the process did not place undue burden on member countries and did not unduly hamper the Secretariat in its project implementation.

69. The Sub-Committee agreed that the Secretariat should refine its proposed evaluation process and that it be held at the same time as the Action Plan Review. It was further agreed that evaluation should be undertaken on an annual basis.

5.2 Eleventh SPREP Meeting

70. The Director informed the Sub-Committee of discussions held with officials of the Government of Guam (host of the 11SM) regarding arrangements for the 11SM.

71. The representative of Guam then elaborated on preparations to date. He indicated that the dates, as discussed with the Secretariat, would be 9 – 13 October 2000. He stated that time would be set aside in the meeting programme to enable delegates to visit various activities to be organised by the Government of Guam. These activities include coral spawning, demonstration on brown tree snake control activities, solid waste and wetlands enhancement projects.

72. It was agreed that during the Meeting Programme, there should be provision for an Officials Meeting, Ministerial Meeting and the Apia and SPREP Convention Meetings.

73. The Secretariat also suggested holding informal meetings of officials prior to the Ministerial Meeting to clarify technical issues and details of the budget and other submissions by the Secretariat.

74. The representative of Guam also indicated that there are two problems which he is trying to resolve. These relate to the cost of bringing outside interpreters and translators (these services are also available on island) and the cost of travel of Small Island Countries.

75. The representative of the United States informed the Sub-Committee that he will be advising all US Embassies in the region to help facilitate issuance of entry visas to country delegates. He will also work out with officials in Guam security arrangements if necessary.

76. The Chairperson thanked the representative of Guam for his progress report and for arrangements underway in preparation for the 11SM.

Adoption of the Report

77. The Meeting Report was adopted by the Sub-Committee.

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Agenda

1. Welcome remarks

1.1 SPREP Director

1.2 Chairperson

2. Adoption of Agenda and Working Procedures

2.1 Revised Provisional Agenda

2.2 Proposed Hours of Work – Meeting Timetable

2.3 Meeting Report

3. Work Programme and Budget

3.1 1999 Work Programme Review

3.1.1 Personnel

3.1.2 Six monthly and Third Quarterly Reports

3.1.3 Financial Reports

- Consolidated and detailed Budget Analysis
- Cash Flow
- Donor Project Summary

3.2 Draft 2000 Work Programme and Budget

3.2.1 Amendments to Draft

3.2.2 Personnel

3.2.3 Comments from Member Countries
(Fiji, New Zealand and United States of America)

4. Updates

4.1 Action and Corporate Plans Review

4.2 Long Term Funding – Nature Conservation

4.3 SPREP Headquarters

4.4 Audit Report for 1998

4.5 Members Contributions

4.6 PACPLAN

5. Other Matters

5.1 Member Countries Evaluation of Secretariat Performance

5.2 Eleventh SPREP Meeting

6. Adoption of Report

Hours of Work - Meeting Timetable

Tuesday, 16 November 1999

9.00 am	-	9.30 am	Official Opening, SPREP Centre Site, Vailima
9.30 am	-	10.00 am	Morning Tea, Official Photograph
10.00 am	-	12.00 noon	Meeting in Session, UNESCO Conference Room, Matautu-Uta
12.00 noon	-	1.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	-	3.00 pm	Meeting in Session
3.00 pm	-	3.30 pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30 pm	-	5.00 pm	Meeting in Session
6.30 pm	-	8.30 pm	Reception hosted by Director of SPREP, Hotel Kitano Tusitala

Wednesday, 17 November 1999

8.30 am	-	10.00 am	Meeting in Session
10.00 am	-	10.30 am	Morning Tea
10.30 am	-	12.00 noon	Meeting in Session
12.00 noon	-	1.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	-	3.00 pm	Meeting in Session
3.00 pm	-	3.30 pm	Afternoon Tea
3.30 pm	-	5.00 pm	Adoption of Meeting Report Close of Meeting



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