



CIRCULAR

FILE: SPREP 2/9/1 **TO:** SPREP National Focal Points
Partners and CROP

DATE: 29 April 2020

CIRCULAR: 20/33

SUBJECT: SPREP Update on Preventative Measures for the Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Pandemic and Plans for Business Continuity

Dear Members and Partners,

Further to Circular 20/22 dated 20 March 2020, this serves to provide a brief update from the Secretariat on our medium-term plans working under these uncertain times of COVID-19. As many of you are aware there are strict health and travel advisories in place including border closures due to COVID-19, which restrict movement of SPREP staff within and across the Pacific region. The State of Emergency in Samoa, the host Government of SPREP remains in effect until 2 May 2020.

We envisage that all key SPREP meetings will be held online and delivery on Leaders decisions will for the time being, be confined to remote online technical advice in collaboration with CROP. The importance of CROP coordination and delivering on the Leaders decisions remains paramount and we are continuing input through the CROP Heads, Deputy CROP Heads, CROP Taskforce on Nuclear Issues, Forum Officials Committee (FOC) Sub-Committee for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, CROP Communications mechanisms, as well as the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for COVID-19.

We wish to assure our Members and Partners that SPREP will continue, as it has been since 20 March to deliver services remotely, noting:

- The importance of evidential change in the COVID-19 situation in the region particularly in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea where there are COVID-19 cases
- Until borders in the Pacific are reopened.
- Samoa and other Pacific countries continue to remain COVID-19 free.

While there has been an impact on in-country programme and project delivery, our staff have been redesigning planned activities, revising associated budgets and adjusting timelines accordingly. A few examples of what SPREP has offered and/or provided through remote technical support, assistance, coordination and advice include:

- Governments of Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Harold.
- Government of Tonga in respect of COVID-19 on incinerators.



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme



10th Pacific Islands Conference

NATURE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREAS

Nature Conservation Action for a Resilient Pacific

- Climate services through the Van-KIRAP Project and Pacific Met Desk.
- Pacific Resilience Partnership Taskforce support and communications work on the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.
- Remote consultations for the review of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2013-2017 and action plans (RMSAPs) and development of the new plans for the period 2020-2025. (Refer to Circular 20/24)
- Coordination for the Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) Membership Agreement. (Refer to Circular 20/23)

Other examples that demonstrate remote delivery include:

- The Pacific Meteorological Council's expert working group, the Pacific Island Climate Service (PICS) panel, hosted the 6th Pacific Island Climate Outlook Forum (PICOF-6) on 21 April. More than 40 participants from Pacific National Meteorological and Hydrological Services linked to the virtual meeting, which served as a pilot for future online meetings and workshops organised by SPREP.
- The Marshall Islands Green Climate Fund Readiness Programme workshop delivered through the Climate Change Directorate in Majuro and the Inform Project. The aim of the workshop to help revitalise, re-engage and encourage national stakeholders to use the existing Marshall Islands Environmental Data Portal in an effort to streamline, manage and centralise environmental data.

This example of work instrumental to not only support our role as an accredited entity of the GCF but also to complement the state of the environment reporting. Recently the Papua New Guinea State of Environment Report was approved, an initiative led by the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA) with the assistance of the Inform Project and the Environmental Monitoring and Governance programme.

Key regional meetings co-hosted or facilitated by SPREP that have been postponed to the latter part of 2020 or to 2021 with revised dates yet to be confirmed include the:

- 10th Pacific Islands Conference Nature Conservation and Protected Areas
- Pacific Ocean Pacific Climate Change Conference
- 3rd Cleaner Pacific Roundtable
- 6th Pacific Meteorological Council Meeting and Ministerial Meeting

There is also a high likelihood that other regional meetings, upon confirmation of the host government will also be postponed. The Secretariat will continue to keep all informed through official circulars, our SPREP website and official social media platforms including Facebook.

For now – the SPREP office is still open for business on a reduced capacity to ensure that essential services are maintained. I want to reassure all of our Members and Partners given the uncertainty of COVID-19 we will continue to deliver services remotely through technical



advice and support, until such time that borders re-open and it is safe for our Members and staff to conduct in-country consultations, programme and project work.

Our Pacific region like our people and our environment, remains resilient and we will continue to work collectively to serve and protect our region for present and future generations.

Yours sincerely

Kosi Latu
Director General