

PACIFIC PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

2009



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PACIFIC PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING

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**UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PACIFIC PLAN –
2009 ANNUAL PACIFIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

Introduction:

1. This report provides PPAC with an update of progress made in implementing the Pacific Plan over 2009. It builds on the information provided in the 2009 six month report tabled at the 31 March – 1 April Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC) meeting. As with previous years, this report provides a higher strategic level assessment for Forum Leaders' consideration through the PPAC and more specifically highlights key achievements and issues of note requiring attention and action.

2. This report has been prepared as part of the reporting cycle assessing the implementation of the Pacific Plan and more specifically Forum Leaders' decisions on priority areas for implementation within the framework of the Pacific Plan. It has been prepared by the Forum Secretariat's Pacific Plan Office drawing on contributions from members, CROP and development partners as well as the Office's regular monitoring activities.

Key Achievements Over 2009:

3. A number of key achievements reached over the reporting period are presented below. An additional snap shot overview is provided at Attachment 'A.' PPAC should note that all CROP Reports will be available on the Forum Secretariat's website with details to follow via official circular.

Fisheries

4. Over 2009 we have continued to see both the FFA and SPC partner with members to address a number of key areas across the fisheries sector. Efforts have continued to

strengthen national tuna industries targeting improvements to their effectiveness and viability, focused on monitoring, control and surveillance of the high seas through the development of a regional strategy as directed by Forum Fisheries Ministers and addressed the importance of fisheries as a principle source of food security in the Pacific.

5. Of particular significance was the strong expression of regional solidarity in the 2008 Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) meeting which saw FFA members strongly influencing its outcomes. While still too early to assess impact, the ability to maintain a whole-of-region position through this forum to reduce over-fishing of Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna saw the adoption of measures that included:

- a. a cut of 10% in long-line fishing in 2009;
- b. closure of the high seas and Exclusive Economic Zones to fishing using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) for 2 months in 2009 and 3 months in 2010 (July-September);
- c. prohibition of purse seine fishing vessels from throwing juvenile fish back to sea;
- d. agreement to close 2 high seas pockets from January 2010 (details of which will be finalized, including consideration of closing all high seas pockets, by the WCPFC next year); and
- e. future 100% coverage of purse seine fishing vessels with observers.

6. This success was acknowledged by Forum Fisheries Ministers at this years annual Committee meeting in Niue. The Ministers recognised the commitment required to ensure the success of key WCPFC measures, and in particular, to develop observer capacity to reach the objective of 100% observer coverage of purse seine vessels by 2010. The FFA has commenced work on building this capacity.

Shipping

7. The reporting period saw significant success in two areas of particular interest to Forum members with regards to shipping, these being, strengthened ports and administration standards and improved shipping services to the region's small island states.

8. With preparations greatly assisted by SPC's Regional Maritime Programme, audits on member administrations and ports conducted across the Pacific have confirmed that maritime services, safety, security and international standards in shipping are currently being met around the region.

9. Similarly, small island states shipping services have greatly improved with Kiribati Shipping Services Limited (KSSL) commencing a regular feeder service from Suva to Nauru and Tuvalu. Facilitated by SPC and the Forum Secretariat, these services

commenced in June and are expected to complement existing services. Discussions on possibly expanding this service to include Wallis and Futuna will continue in the future.

10. The success of this initiative has not gone unnoticed at higher political levels with Small Islands State maritime Ministers at their third meeting in Tonga directing work to assess the possibilities of commencing a similar service on routes between Samoa, Tokelau, Cook Islands, Niue and American Samoa. These Ministers further directed work to continue assessing the possibilities and practicalities of a purpose built donor supplied ship, and the establishment a Central Pacific Shipping Commission comprising Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Tuvalu, and other interested states and territories such as Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Wallis and Futuna. To be modelled on the Micronesian Shipping Commission, the Ministers directed SPC and the Forum Secretariat to develop a draft framework for their consideration that would guide the establishment of such a Commission.

11. A broader meeting of Regional Ministers for Maritime Transport was convened on 14 May in Tonga. During the course of this meeting a range of issues were considered, among them, the effects of growing international piracy, seafarer employment, training requirements and international legal issues.

The Bulk Procurement of Petroleum

12. Following a number of years of slow progress, the reporting period saw a significant advancing of the bulk procurement of petroleum initiative. Greatly helped by the New Zealand funded Auckland 2008 October meeting of national petroleum authorities, CROP, sectors experts and industry, agreement was reached on a government-to-government memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining the central tenets of how this initiative will be implemented and the relationship of signatories to one another. This success was followed by support at the October 2008 Forum Economic Ministers' Meeting which saw three members, the Cook Islands, Nauru and Tuvalu sign the MOU. The MOU has since been signed by Niue at the 2009 Pacific Energy Ministers' meeting with the Governments of both Tonga and Solomon Islands having indicated to the Forum Secretariat that they intend to sign the MOU.

13. The Forum Secretariat having developed the MOU has continued to progress the initiative with the launching of the first phase of the Pacific Petroleum Project. This will see the establishment of a Project Implementation Unit (PIU). This Unit will be contracted following an internationally open and competitive tender process and tasked to deliver a range of milestones including a risk assessment, procurement strategy and ultimately a commercial contract for tender. As previously reported, this first phase will continue to take the initiative forward in advance of the formal establishment of the Project Committee. At the time of writing, the tender had been let. It is envisaged that the PIU will be in place by late August 2009.

Education

14. A notable development in the education sector was the completion of a comprehensive review and assessment of the *Forum Basic Education Action Plan* which revealed that its main delivery vehicle, PRIDE, has had greater impact at the national level since the 2007 Forum Education Ministers' Meeting. The findings of the Review were endorsed by Forum Education Ministers at their March 2009 meeting with Ministers further endorsing the newly developed *Pacific Education Development Framework* and work to harmonise regional standards. The new framework will replace the *Forum Basic Education Action Plan* and target two areas, education for all and training for employment to better assist economic growth. Work to harmonize regional standards will target teachers and eventually principals. This will be supported by ongoing efforts to develop regional standards for literacy, numeracy and life-skills with both utilising the expertise of organizations such as SPBEA, UNESCO, UNICEF and USP.

15. Efforts to harmonise regional standards continued with work on the Pacific Qualifications Register commencing. Funded by AusAID and led by SPBEA, once fully implemented, the Register will enable greater portability of qualifications and better facilitate labour mobility giving the initiative particular importance when viewed against regional trade initiatives such as PICTA.

16. Of interest during the reporting period were efforts to address technical and vocational education in the region which received a significant boost with the establishment of a working group among stakeholders. Led by SPC, it will among other tasks, develop a proposal to implement the recommendations of the ADB *Skilling the Pacific* study. If implemented successfully, this work will strongly support national-level activities and complement bilateral initiatives. In addition, technical and vocation needs continued to receive significant support from the Australia Pacific Technical College which consolidated itself with some 1140 students enrolled in its four campus countries. Scholarships have been awarded to students from 10 Forum Island Countries. As of 30 March 2009, 304 students had graduated from the College, which is itself currently undergoing a Mid-Term Review to assess its effectiveness and future possibilities beyond its current funding envelope.¹

Health

17. Over the reporting period significant progress was made in various areas of the health sector which benefited from ongoing efforts to strengthened collaboration and harmonise inputs, programmes and services to better support member countries.

18. In an effort to address the impacts of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) a Joint Management Committee was established by SPC and WHO to oversee the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases Framework. With activities initiated in five countries, this Committee comprises SPC, WHO, country representatives and donor partners. The importance of addressing the NCD epidemic should not be understated. NCDs are overwhelming the Pacific with some estimates attributing 3 out of every 4 deaths in the Pacific to lifestyle diseases.

19. The second cycle of the Pacific Regional HIV Strategy, its implementation plan and the Pacific HIV Response Fund were formally established and made operational during the reporting period with the disbursement of funding to governments, regional partners and civil society to support activity implementation having commenced. Only one other region in the world has such a groundbreaking strategy, this being the Caribbean. The strategy's implementation plan, endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Community, links multiple partners with 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

20. Following the approval and subsequent fund negotiations with the board of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Round 7 of the Pacific Islands multi-country proposals have commenced implementation with good progress being made to date in a range of activities across 11 participating countries and territories. Such activities have included the procurement of specialist medical supplies and equipment as well as training a range of health professionals. Technical assistance and support is being provided by SPC, WHO, UNFPA and UNAIDS.²

21. In addition, and in response to the H1N1 global pandemic, the *Pacific Regional Influenza Preparedness Project* continued to play a key role in preparing countries to deal with the possible spread of the H1N1 virus across the Pacific. This work has focused on countries' surveillance systems and their laboratory testing procedures to detect any suspected cases. Strongly supported by SPC, WHO, AusAID and NZAID, this work has also sought to position Pacific Island Countries and Territories to better respond to a range of other possible pandemics such as Avian Flu.

Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

22. Work to support ICTs in the region was given a significant boost over the reporting period with the hosting of a successful ministerial meeting in Tonga in February this year. Considering a range of issues, Ministers agreed to push on with:

- a. Ensuring affordable domestic and international connectivity in the Pacific;
- b. Continuing reforms to policy, regulatory and financial frameworks;
- c. Addressing cyber-security and ICT applications;
- d. making use of ICT technology to better respond to disasters; and
- e. prioritising Human Resource Development across the sector which saw agreement to establish a Regional Regulatory Resources Centre with assistance from the World Bank.³

23. Other key ICT initiatives supporting the ongoing implementation of the *Digital Strategy* have seen continuing and significant progress. The number of Pacific RICS sites continues to grow across the region with: 15 Pilots sites delivered; 10 activated; and 8 carrying traffic in addition to the 24 commercial sites having already been delivered. This is all in addition to the continuing roll out of the OLPC which over the reporting period

saw 5 sites commence operations and 1400 laptops delivered (out of a total of 5,000) to Solomon Islands, PNG, Vanuatu, Nauru and Niue. PNG committed to a national rollout of OPLC units with 10,000 to be disbursed over 2009 and a further commitment that every primary school child will have access to this technology by 2015. At the time of writing, 8 additional sites were ready for commissioning across the region in Micronesia, Marshal Islands, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu.

24. Finally, tenders were called over the reporting period to support the implementation of SPIN which six countries and territories have now signed up to. This follows a World Bank commissioned study which confirmed submarine cable technology was a viable option for most of the Pacific and the SPIN initiative represented a reasonable commercial proposal. To better facilitate access to this initiative, conditions for signing and access to various options under contract have been made more flexible.

Trade

25. The implementation of regional trade agreements continued at a positive, but slow pace. The lack of capacity among Pacific Island Countries to engage on a range of trade issues has been hampered by the ongoing challenge of developing national positions on various issues as well as the ability to translate regional commitment into supporting national legislation. With respect to engagements in PACER-Plus discussions, a series of informal meetings held over the last 12 months has seen solid progress. The outcomes of recent Forum Trade Ministers' Meeting held on 17 June, in Apia, suggest that we can expect the commencement of negotiations of a broader regional trade and economic cooperation arrangement over the coming months.

26. Ministers affirmed that PACER-Plus provides the Pacific with a significant opportunity to develop a truly innovative trade and economic agreement that takes account of the different stages of development of each Forum member. Ministers stressed the importance of progressing PACER-Plus as a means of underpinning the economic security of the region through capacity building, market liberalization and building resilience to shocks such as the current global economic crisis.

27. Australia and New Zealand have demonstrated considerable recognition of the challenges remaining and announced a funding contribution for the establishment of the Office of Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA) to be initially housed and supported by the Forum Secretariat prior to its long-term establishment in Vanuatu. Reflecting the strong engagement at Ministerial and Officials levels over the past 12 months, Trade Ministers have recommended to Forum Leaders that PACER-Plus negotiations commence after the conclusion of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Cairns in August 2009. This decision responds to the direction given by Leaders at Niue in 2008. Another Forum Trade Ministers Meeting is expected to be held later in 2009 to move forward discussions on regional trade issues.

Submissions to the United Nations for Extended Seabed Territories

28. With significant regional and international efforts coordinated through SOPAC and supported by organizations such as AusAID, eight Pacific Island Countries successfully lodged their submissions to the United Nations for approximately 1.8 million square kilometres of additional seabed territory prior to the 13 May 2009 deadline. Lodged where members have an extended continental shelf, these submissions seek to secure rights to claim additional seabed territory. Such claims are made under Article 76 of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea.

29. Over the last 22 months, SOPAC has coordinated five regional training workshops bringing together country teams and international and regional technical experts to develop joint and individual submissions. Pacific Island Countries who have lodged submissions with the United Nations in the past two months are Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu. The Executive Summaries of the claims of each of these countries are now publically available from the Secretariat of the United Nations Division on Law of the Sea.⁴

Issues of Note

30. In addition to the summary of key highlights a number of issues of note are presented for Forum Leaders through PPAC.

Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO)

31. PPAC will recall that the 2009 Six Month Progress Report highlighted discussions of a possible merger between PASO and SPC. Initiated by the General Manager of PASO, much of the impetus for these discussions resulted from significant cash-flow problems emanating from PASO's business model, one that saw the billing of its members for services in arrears. Following the warmly welcomed presentation of options by SPC to the PASO Council and subsequent discussion on possibilities, it now appears that the PASO Council have advocated a move towards a 'pay-up-front' model based on approved and appropriately costed work programmes. This has been further supported with ongoing resources provided by Australia and New Zealand. The turn around is a notable development. The Forum Secretariat understands that the PASO Council will however continue to assess ways to further refine its existing business model, and in particular, at its next Annual General Meeting. PASO's General Manager has indicated that this change in payment structure will alleviate previously experienced cash flow problems.

Bulk Procurement of Petroleum

32. While significant progress has been made in implementing this initiative over the last 12 months, a number of concerns remain. Perhaps the most critical is the risk of complacency. As keen observers will note since the tabling of the 2009 six month report, world oil prices have once again begun to climb. At the time of writing, these prices were hovering between USD60 and USD70 a barrel.

33. Energy continues to feature as one of region's key priorities. Cross cutting in the truest sense, failure to address the vulnerability resulting from poorly secured energy supply, ill conceived commercial arrangements, or inefficient supply chain management do nothing but continue to place pressure on scarce national resources and in particular national budgets. The launch of Phase One of the Pacific Petroleum Project marks a positive step towards addressing this vulnerability. Of interest has been the reaction from some sectors of industry who have sought to place pressure on the Forum Secretariat to halt the initiative. While crudely expressed, the overtures should not go unnoticed by PPAC and merit mention to Forum Leaders as a way of highlighting the importance of maintaining a whole-of-region position on such matters.

Fisheries

34. While significant progress has been made in fisheries, challenges remain. Among the more difficult are how to sustain the political will to implement these commitments and how best to translate international commitments to the national context. The Pacific's fisheries resource continues to attract global attention, which will only grow. Commercial tuna fisheries are a major source of revenue for the region offering both present and future returns. While slowly changing, the Pacific has largely failed to capitalize on this potential. Domestic tuna industries account for less than 30% of the value of tuna harvested in the region's exclusive economic zones and a much smaller portion of the high seas catches. Fisheries is also an important component of the region's food security equation.

35. The 2008 annual WCPFC meeting produced largely very positive outcomes for members. Attention must now be drawn to how these outcomes will be implemented. One example is the decision on observers of the WCPFC purse-seine. While FFA members have utilized the WCPFC IUU listing process to great effect, there are currently not enough observers in the region to meet the requirements for full observer coverage of the WCPFC purse-seine measure, particularly for 2010, when 100% coverage will be required. This was acknowledged at the 2009 Forum Fisheries Committee which drew attention to the importance of increased compliance efforts and resources to achieve this coverage. Fisheries Ministers have called on the FFA for assistance with the Secretariat responding by developing and commencing the implementation of an Observer Training Programme. This will however require time and continued commitment from governments.

36. Leader's attention is drawn to ongoing and broader relationships in this sector such as those with the United States. The *Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries Between Certain Governments of the Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States of America*, commonly referred to as the 'US Treaty,' encapsulates a key and continuing relationship. While this year's annual consultations agreed on a range of outcomes, a number of issues still remain unresolved. These include, whether or not the Pacific Island Parties and US will agree on the application of the Vessel Day Scheme to the US fleet and the number of fishing days it will subsequently receive.⁵

Climate Change

37. Climate Change is one of the region's greatest threats. While a broad range of actions have been launched to address its impacts, a number of issues continue to present challenges, among them mitigation, adaptation and coordination.

38. The science of climate change has reached a much more definitive level. The urgency for strong international commitment is essential, as is a whole of region position, particularly in light of the upcoming Copenhagen MOP negotiations for a Post-Kyoto regime.

39. Pacific Island Countries have continued to advocate strong measures internationally calling for industrialized and developing countries respectively to reduce emissions significantly by 2020 utilising 1990 level emissions as a baseline. Pacific Island Countries themselves have set reductions targets on Green House Gas emissions from fossil fuels of 33% by 2015, some with even more ambitious targets.

40. Adaptation must remain a priority for the region. The *Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change* project is a regional intervention focusing on adaptation measures in the areas of food security, water resources, and coastal zone and infrastructure protection. Amongst other initiatives in the region, it is expected to identify Pacific-tailored approaches to adaptation as called for by Leaders in 2008.

41. Addressing mitigation and adaption in the region will require effective coordination. SPREP has been charged with much of this task. The extent of this however should not be underestimated and it will require the active assistance of both national and regional stakeholders. The reconvening of the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable in 2008 was a significant step towards facilitating stronger regional coordination. More work is however required to improve coordination with its success needing genuine stakeholder buy-in.

Trade

42. Despite the positive progress made in addressing the implementation of PACER-Plus, all three major regional trade initiatives require significant input from Members. As discussed in the previous section of this report, after a series of informal officials meetings in the first half of 2009, Forum Trade Minister in June 2009 considered developments to date and agreed to recommend to Forum Leaders that PACER-Plus negotiations commence after the conclusion of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Cairns in August.

43. Electronic exchanges of views on the remaining contentious issues in the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations continue between the Pacific ACP States (PACPS) and the European Commission with consideration being given to the early holding of a meeting of PACP and EC officials to deal with remaining issues in 2009. The PACPS hope to build on the flexibility promised by the EC Commissioner of Trade, Baroness Ashton, during the remainder of the negotiations.

44. On PICTA, only six of the 14 Forum Island Countries have announced readiness to trade under the agreement. The third round of the PICTA trade in services negotiations

concluded in April 2009 with Forum Island Countries agreeing to engage further in their national consultations and continue to develop national positions in various sectors. This is in anticipation of the fourth round of negotiations scheduled for August 2009. It is fair to suggest that no real progress will be made until members choose to genuinely engage on these issues with concerted effort. Political will remains imperative to the success of these agreements both with regard to commitment and action.

Submissions to the United Nations for Extended Seabed Territories

45. Despite the submission of the claims for extended seabed territories prior to the 13 May deadline by eight Pacific Island Countries, much work remains and governments cannot afford to consider the matter closed.

46. Partial submissions will need to be completed and all claims must be successfully defended when reviewed by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. The defence of claims will rely heavily on a current and detailed understanding of Article 76 criteria for these submissions. This will need to be supported by a thorough understanding of the seafloor geology and geomorphology detailed in each country's claim under consideration.

47. The extended continental shelf territory does not include the water column. Rather these claims if successful, give countries sovereign rights to explore and possibly exploit non-living resources from the seabed, subsoil (for example, oil, gas and minerals) and associated sedentary living organisms (for example, bio-prospecting or research for new active compounds for medical and industrial use). Member must not forget, that successful claims will bring with them obligations to ensure the responsible management and governance of these new seafloor territories and their potential resources.

Health

48. The H1N1 pandemic has highlighted a range of important issues that will truly test the preparedness of the Pacific region to deal with a major health threat. Failing to address the broader social and economic impacts of the pandemic, should case numbers build across the region, can be ill-afforded. Members should carefully note the importance of a regional approach to dealing with this and other such health issues in the Pacific context. Respective health administrations remain stretched and pressure continues on health resources, both human and material, limiting the ability of individual members to respond independently with any great effect. The *Pacific Regional Influenza Preparedness Project* clearly demonstrates the benefits of collective action and planning. Importantly for members, it highlights the benefits of a regional approach to addressing a common challenge. Members should carefully note that this initiative is however scheduled to conclude in June 2010.

Implementation of Forum Leaders' Decisions on the Regional Institutional Framework

49. Progress to date in implementing Forum Leaders' decisions on this matter has varied significantly.

50. Work to facilitate the merger of SPBEA with SPC is well underway. The SPBEA Board considered the report by consultants on the merger. It agreed on a two phase process that will see SPBEA merge with SPC from January 2010. This will initially be as a 'stand alone' programme for the first six months before fully integrating into SPC's reformed division of Education, Training and Human Development by July 2010. This decision was made to ensure the director of the new division is in place before the full integration into the division. SPC CRGA will consider the consultants' report and the outcomes of the SPBEA Board meeting at its special session on 9 July. At this stage, we do not however foresee any particular problems that may stop the full implementation of this decision.

51. Implementing the Forum Leaders' decisions as they relate to SPC, SPREP and SOPAC has presented more difficulties. A range of issues continue to complicate discussions. Among them, how best to ensure the greatest utility of services for members in any new arrangements that are implemented and how these new arrangements are implemented in accordance with the direction of Forum Leaders.

52. The Secretary General continues to work with the CEOs in addressing these issues. While more work is required, we anticipate that the Joint Governing Council meeting scheduled for 7 and 8 July will be productive provided the three CEOs are able to maintain their momentum in developing practical strategies to ensure the implementation of the Forum Leaders' decisions on this matter.

Shipping

53. Recent increases in cruise ship visits to tropical destinations in Pacific Island ports coupled with the increases in cruise vessel size has led to positive economic impacts in the region. However, this increase in volume raises a range of safety, security and legal issues, among the more salient, capacities for mass rescue, hydrography and compliance with IMO requirements.

54. Mass rescues require immediate assistance to large numbers of people in distress. At present, regional capabilities are inadequate. A mass rescue operation involving a cruise ship disaster would require information, systems and most importantly coordination. Among such needs would be trained rescue personnel, rescue vehicles, surface pictures of vessels of opportunity and in close proximity, ready access to passenger and crew manifests, communications, designated operation control centres, reception facilities, media liaison, and medical assistance ranging from triage to systems and resources to transfer and track patients to designated hospitals for further treatment.

55. Hydrography remains important in ensuring safe passage for routes chosen through waters where navigational charts are old, inaccurate or not have been updated. Depths in harbours and alongside wharf berths determine the decisions of larger cruise liners to call into Pacific ports. Some vessels anchor offshore and use smaller boats to ferry passengers to shore. This in itself raises other safety and security concerns and the Pacific needs to be prepared for both eventualities. The long and expensive process of conducting hydrographic surveys and then using the results to produce and publish

accurate nautical charts is a specialised skill requiring scientific equipment currently not available among Pacific Island Countries and Territories. Important in ensuring compliance with international obligations, the region has had to rely heavily on assistance from countries such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. A commitment of substantial and enduring resources is required for the sustainable development of regional hydrography which will become particularly important with increases in shipping traffic.

56. Changes to international conventions and codes to cater for evolving global climates in shipping mean that Pacific Island Countries and Territories' legislation requires constant review and amendment to ensure compliance with international standards and laws. Yet there are obstacles faced by government agencies to enacting legislation, this often being the difficulties of ratifying international conventions into national laws. More problematically, updates to IMO amendments require ongoing action and must be implemented by maritime administrations and training institutes so as to ensure continued compliance.

Energy

57. The 2009 Pacific Energy Ministers Meeting held on 23-24 April in Tonga has brought to broader attention a range of issues that will have a significant bearing on the way members are supported in their efforts to address questions of energy.

58. In noting progress in the implementation of Forum Leaders' decisions on the region's institutional framework and the implications on energy support services, Energy Ministers recommended and agreed that the delivery and coordination of regional and donor energy services to Pacific Island Countries be done so through one energy agency utilizing one programme and that in this context there was a need to ensure that energy policy and climate change policy remained separate where environmental aspects are managed by SPREP and energy sector activities by SPC so as to ensure that the socio-economic aspects of energy were adequately addressed.

59. The implementation of this decision may however not be as straight forward as first thought. Energy remains a very broad sector claiming a range of activities. Perhaps most problematically, it is difficult to see donors committing to this call fully. That said, the decision is one that offers an opportunity to consolidate and harmonise activities and support in this sector and it should be brought to the attention for Forum Leaders for their consideration and possible commitment.

The Growing Importance of Supporting Pacific Peoples with Disabilities

60. Attention must be turned to the region's most disadvantaged group - people with disabilities. There is growing recognition that people with disability are among the poorest and most vulnerable in the world. The United Nations estimates that approximately 10% of the world's population, or approximately 650 million people, have a disability with approximately 80% of this group living in developing countries.⁶ People

with disability face many barriers to full participation in society. This is no exception in the Pacific.

61. In an effort to commence addressing this, the Forum Secretariat with the support of the Australian Government will seek to convene a Forum meeting for Ministers who have responsibility for persons with disabilities in October 2009. Among its responsibilities will be to consider a Regional Disability Strategy with an associated plan of action for future implementation. It is hoped that this initiative will focus attention on the need to address the issues facing persons with disabilities in the Pacific and build greater awareness on the importance of allowing those with disabilities access to greater and more equitable opportunities to enhance their quality of life and fully enjoy all inalienable human rights.

National Level Reporting on Member Implementation of the Pacific Plan

62. As PPAC is aware, national level reporting of Pacific Plan initiatives has been generally poor. This has stood in stark contrast to the reporting provided by the region's technical agencies.

63. PPAC will recall the proposal by the Government of Kiribati that the Forum Secretariat, in its efforts to prepare reports on the progress made in the implementation of the Pacific Plan, collate reporting submitted by CROP and forward this reporting to members for consideration and input, something in effect already done through the tabling of Pacific Plan reports. The request has now been formally submitted to the Forum Secretariat through the Government of Kiribati's Pacific Plan Desk Officer. Noting the difficulties faced and the strain on resources, in particular, on the Forum Secretariat to collect and collate these national reports, the Forum Secretariat will propose to the PPAC at its forthcoming meeting that it consider the future role of member reporting. This will need to be done in the context of Forum Leaders directions to provide national reports on progress in implementing the Pacific Plan and seek clarification from PPAC on how best to proceed for future reporting to support PPAC's own oversight of the Pacific Plan.

Review of Pacific Plan Desk Officers Scheme

64. As PPAC will be aware, the Forum Secretariat has funded a number of Pacific Plan Desk Officers over the last three years. To date, these desk officers have been responsible for a range of tasks under contract. These tasks have included supporting members in their efforts to implement Pacific Plan initiatives and providing reports to the Forum Secretariat on the progress made in national-level implementation of the Pacific Plan.

65. While the scheme has generally been quite successful, as with all initiatives, it is now considered timely by the Forum Secretariat to review the nature of these positions and seek ways in which the terms of reference for these positions might be amended to better support members in their efforts to engage regionalism in support of national development. The Forum Secretariat intends to commence this review sometime in the

last quarter of 2009 where these positions continue to receive funding from the Forum Secretariat.

Moving Forward

66. The reporting period has seen various degrees of progress in the implementation of the Pacific Plan. Particularly pleasing has been progress made in implementing the 2008 Forum Leaders' decisions on priority areas under the Pacific Plan for 2009.

67. As PPAC will be aware, the Three Year Review of the Pacific Plan has taken place over the reporting period with a draft report to be tabled at the forthcoming PPAC meeting for comment and discussion. Following this discussion, the report will be finalised incorporating Member and Stakeholder comments and presented formally to Forum Leaders by the Secretary General at the 2009 Forum Leaders meeting in Cairns.

68. As with previous years, the CROP Executive will again, at the forth coming PPAC meeting, table a range of priorities through the framework of the Pacific Plan for consideration by PPAC for possible onward transmission to Forum Leaders. Having commenced in 2006, the prioritization process has been successively refined over the last three years. In doing so, the work of members and CROP to better harmonize programmes, actions and key regional ministerial processes through the Forum Leaders' Communiqué should be commended. The 2008 Niue Decisions demonstrate the value of a 'whole-of-region' approach to addressing key challenges. Work however remains and we expect this to continue over 2010.

ATTACHMENT A – SNAP SHOT OF PROGRESS OVER 2009 IN IMPLEMENTING THE FORUM LEADERS’ 2008 NIUE DECISIONS

(Note: The following matrix provides a snapshot overview of progress made in implementing the Forum Leaders’ 2008 Niue Decisions on Pacific Plan priorities. Full CROP and national reports are available on the Forum Secretariat’s website).

Sector	Overview of Progress
Food Security	In response to Forum Leaders’ calls to address the issue of food security, a number of initiatives have been launched. These have included, support for Pacific Governments through SPC on assessing the impacts of climate change on food security and in particular on fisheries and aquaculture, work on trade issues conducted by the Forum Secretariat, and planning for a Food Summit scheduled to take place later this year.
Fisheries	In the fisheries sector work continued to: · target national-level institutional strengthening; · assess and build the viability of domestic fishing operations; · strengthen national policies and in particular rolling out the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management model; · progress scientific work assessing the health and population sizes of key oceanic tuna species led by SPC; · improve regional monitoring, control and surveillance efforts with multi-lateral surveillance programmes continuing · provide training in various technical areas; and · sub-regionally implement strengthened and innovative management measures such the third implementing arrangement under the <i>Parties to the Nauru Agreement</i>. Members have been greatly assisted in these areas by the FFA and SPC.
Energy	In the energy sector work continued to strengthen and implement:

Sector	Overview of Progress
	• robust national energy policies with efforts to integrate energy into economic planning; • the development of Strategic Energy Work Plans under respective national energy policies; • efforts to achieve greater supply-side and demand-side energy efficiency through training and national assessment and audits of energy use; • greater support of power utilities to better manage the data that links into national energy balances; • innovative incentive models such as that in Palau which has seen home owners receive subsidies for the number of energy efficiency measures they incorporate in their homes from the National Development Bank of Palau; • work continue in the implementation of various renewable energy activities among them, the <i>Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project</i> (PIGGAREP) • the launch of the first phase of the Pacific Petroleum Project under the Pacific Plan's Bulk Procurement of Petroleum initiative; and • the convening of a successful Pacific Energy Ministers Meeting. Members have been greatly assisted in these areas by SOPAC, SPREP, the PPA and the Forum Secretariat.
Economic Integration and Trade	Economic integration and trade was supported over the reporting period with: • Australia announcing a Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme. This scheme is expected to create more economic opportunities for those Forum Island Countries included in the pilot scheme; • work continue on advancing PICTA seeing the Forum Secretariat provide technical assistance and advice to a number of members regarding ratification and discussions held to consider the agreement extended to include trade in services and the temporary movement of natural persons; • PACER-Plus receiving a significant boost with Form Trade Ministers agreeing to commence negotiations after this years Leaders' Forum and commitment to support the establishment of the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser to coordinate and support Forum Island Countries in these negotiations;

Sector	Overview of Progress
	- the strengthening of the private sector in the region with PIPSO working closely with national private sector organizations; and - in one of the region's key economic drivers, tourism, south-pacific.travel continue its efforts to build the capacity of small and medium enterprises in the sector and working with stakeholders to address ways to overcome a number of current constraints in the aviation sector that will better facilitate access to the region.
Climate Change	In support of climate change the reporting period saw: - work continue on implementing mitigation and adaptation measures. These were greatly assisted with the SPREP managed <i>Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change</i> (PACC) project approved by the GEF with access offered to USD13.125 million for adaptation work in the region; - continued implementation of climate change adaptation and vulnerability assessment action research and training among rural communities through USP; - discussions on linking disaster risk management with climate change work commence at the Pacific Climate Change Roundtable. The Roundtable agreed on developing a climate change portal that would incorporate a matrix of past, present and planned climate change activities in the region; - work continue on improving the capacity of countries in the region to engage in the ongoing United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations for a post 2012 global climate change agreement. This included a range of work shops and technical assistance provided to Pacific Government delegations during FCCC negotiations. SPREP continued to act as regional information coordinator between the AOSIS Chairman and climate change focal points in Pacific Island Countries; - the adoption of a climate change declaration during the Forum-EU Ministerial troika meeting; and - the Pacific Environment Community initiative agreed at PALM 5.
Transport	Over the reporting period in the transport sector: maritime services, safety, security and international standards were met as proved by audits conducted on

Sector	Overview of Progress
	administrations and ports across the region through SPC's Regional Maritime Programme; • PASO continue to provide technical support and deliver on its schedule of audits and assistance; • the region's smaller island states enjoy more reliable maritime services with the commencement of a sub-regional shipping service utilizing Kiribati Shipping Service Limited (KSSL) ships for a limited service to Nauru and Tuvalu; • a broader commodities study continue to support the ongoing analysis of shipping issues and in particular the types of commodities traded and moved to, from and between the region's smaller island states; and • work continue on the completion of the smaller islands states purpose-built ship study by SPC's Regional Maritime Programme.
Information and Communications Technology	In efforts to better support improvements in ICT: • a range of activities continued under the framework of the <i>Digital Strategy</i>. Led by SPC, this saw significant and continuing roll out of the <i>Rural Internet Connectivity Scheme</i> (RICS) in PNG, Tonga and Kiribati and of the <i>One Laptop per Child</i> (OPLC) initiative in Niue, Cook Islands, PNG and Solomon Islands; • tenders were called to support the implementation of SPIN seeing six countries and territories sign up. This follows a World Bank commissioned study which confirmed submarine cable technology was a viable option for most of the Pacific as was the SPIN initiative; and • construction commenced on the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at the USP's Laucala Campus in January 2009. This Centre will place the University at the forefront of ICT related research, teaching and training in the region.
Land	With regards to the issue of land, efforts continued to develop a regional initiative to address land management and conflict minimization for economic and social development following the drafting of a terms of reference by the Forum Secretariat and SPC. This followed the direction of Pacific Islands Country and Territory Agricultural Ministers in September 2008.

Sector	Overview of Progress
Health	Work continued with a focus on the implementation of the Region's Health Ministers' <i>2007 Vanuatu Commitment</i>. This saw: • efforts to mitigate non-communicable and communicable diseases including HIV and sexually transmitted infections with a the second cycle of the Pacific Regional HIV Strategy and its implementation commencing; • the Pacific HIV Response Fund formally established and made operational; • a Joint Management Committee established by SPC and WHO to oversee the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases Framework. The Committee comprises SPC, WHO, country representatives and donor partners; • work to address the H1N1 pandemic through PRIPPP; and • the Round 7 Pacific multi-county projects of the Global Fund initiated which covers 11 countries (including 2 new members: Nauru and RMI).
Education and Human Resource Development	In support of education and human resource development: • work continued on improving educational standards through greater harmonisation, improving educational quality and addressing technical and vocational training needs; • PATVET with the support of SPC, continued its advocacy work and support of the <i>Technical and Vocational Education and Training Inventory Project</i>. The inventory project is aligned with the SPBEA Regional Qualifications Register project, which is a Pacific Plan initiative and part of the <i>Forum Basic Education Action Plan</i> (FBEAP); • work continued under PRIDE across the region; and • the regional Education Development Framework was adopted by Forum Education Ministers.
Governance	In support of achieving stronger governance the reporting period saw: • efforts to improve standards of accountability and integrity continue with ongoing work to strengthen the PASAI Secretariat. This Secretariat is responsible for supporting the sub-regional audit support programme

Sector	Overview of Progress
	being implemented in Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu; · work to strengthen Ombudsman functions through the Pacific Ombudsman's Alliance, including the assessment of possible sub-regional models for complaints handling in smaller island states; and · raising the awareness of the importance of Freedom of Information and the ongoing efforts to fully consider the development of draft legislation to support this, including supporting infrastructure such as records keeping and records management.

END NOTES

¹ Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

² See www.spc.int for full country progress reports on implementation.

³ This will be collocated with the ITU/EU ICT training facility in Bangkok and charges the ICT Task force with developing governance arrangements for the centre.

⁴ See http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm for further details.

⁵ The Treaty is due to end on 14 June 2013 when a new Treaty or other kind of arrangement will have to be negotiated for the US to fish in Pacific Islands' waters. Renegotiation of the Treaty and discussions about the new scenarios are expected to start in late 2009.

⁶ See UN Secretariat Disability Paper E/CN.5/2008/6 available at www.ods.un.org for further details.