SPREP Circular

File: AP 6/5/5

Date: 13 May 2011

Circular: 11/40

To: National Focal Points
SPC, USP, AusAID, NZAID, EU (Fiji), JICA, WHO (Fiji), AFD

Subject: **Regional Asbestos Strategy and Action Plan: An Asbestos Free Pacific: Request for review**

Secretariat of the
Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

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Background

1. The management and disposal of asbestos containing materials are currently a cause of concern in the Pacific region.

2. Construction materials such as AC sheeting and roofing which contain potentially dangerous asbestos fibres have been used in Pacific island countries for housing and building construction.

3. As the Pacific is subject to periodic catastrophic weather and geological events such as tsunamis and cyclones which are highly destructive to built infrastructure, asbestos containing materials are, or may become a significant waste and human health issue in many Pacific countries.

4. Therefore, proper management and disposal of asbestos in the Pacific is critical to the maintenance of long-term community health.

A regional approach to Asbestos Management

5. SPREP in partnership with WHO has developed a regional asbestos management strategy and action plan in response to Member requests to investigate the options for regional asbestos management at the 2010 SPREP Meeting. The draft strategy:

- *Provides background information on the health risks associated with asbestos exposure;*
- *Provides guidance on best practice in asbestos handling and disposal options;*
- *Describes an integrated framework to progressively assess, stabilize, collect and dispose of asbestos containing materials in the Pacific; and*

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Comments on the draft strategy and action plan sought

6. The draft strategy is supported by an action plan (2011-2016) which presents a five year timeframe and framework in which to improve regional asbestos management.

7. SPREP would welcome comment and review of this draft startegy prior to its submission for endorsement at the 2011 SPREP Meeting in September 2011.

8. Please return any comments by email to SPREP at email address davidh@sprep.org no later than 20th June 2011.

Key Contacts

9. We look forward to continuing to work together with you to ensure the minimisation of environmental damage to the Region from hazardous wastes. If you require further information or clarification please contact Dr. David Haynes at davidh@sprep.org

Yours sincerely,

Kosi Latu
Acting Director

Attachment:

- Regional asbestos strategy and action plan

KL/DH/jt