Pacific Environment Ministers' Declaration

Alofi Communiqué

At the Twenty-seventh SPREP Meeting Ministerial segment held on 22 September 2016 in Alofi, Niue, Environment Ministers and Ministerial Representatives adopted the following Declaration.

We, the Environment Ministers, and Ministerial Representatives:

Affirming that the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is a concerted effort by the world community to overcome intractable global problems, including environmental sustainability and the existential threat to Pacific island countries and territories caused by climate change and the acute pressures confronting our region's ocean;

Recognising that urgent measures are needed to increase Pacific island countries and territories' resilience to withstand these threats and to achieve environmental sustainability so as to collectively build resilient Pacific communities;

1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ACKNOWLEDGE SPREP's past and current work on sustainable development, oceans, climate change, biodiversity, waste, and resilience building;

NOTE SPREP's participation in the development of a draft Outline of the Pacific SDGs Roadmap for joint regional reporting and implementation on the sustainable development goals (SDGs), the SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, noting that the final Roadmap will be submitted to Leaders for approval in September 2017;

NOTE that SPREP will assist Pacific Members in the delivery of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including Goal 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts", Goal 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" and Goal 15 "Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss";

URGE SPREP Members to incorporate relevant SDG targets within national planning and monitoring documents and national development plans;

2. *Climate Change*

WELCOME the Paris Agreement and emphasise the importance of achieving the Paris Agreement's commitment to pursuing efforts to limit the global temperature increase to

1.5°C above pre-industrialised levels, and **RECOGNISE** that climate change is an existential threat for many SPREP Members which must be addressed with urgency;

APPRECIATE the Forum Leaders' endorsement of the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP): An Integrated Approach to Addressing Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and agree for it to be fully elaborated and operationalised upon the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and TASK the Secretariat to continue working in close collaboration with Members, CROP agencies and relevant partners in the implementation of the FRDP to ensure integrated good governance of the FRDP, and the best use of the region's technical and political resources to build Pacific resilience to climate change and disaster risk reduction;

AGREE our common understanding of resilience as the ability of a system, community or society exposed to natural hazards or climate change, to resist, absorb, accommodate, recover and transfer the consequences of a hazard event or of climate change in a timely and efficient manner;

ACKNOWLEDGE that to build effective resilience, proactive responses to climate change and disasters must include consideration of political, economic, social, and environmental factors and be inclusive of all stakeholders;

ENCOURAGE capacity to be built into national weather services for better forecasting, prediction and long term projections;

EXPRESS our deep concern and commitment to address climate change impacts and other hazards as a development priority in the Pacific region and reiterate the call for SPREP to renew efforts to secure strategic partnerships towards achieving sustainable outcomes for resilience in the region;

ACKNOWLEDGING the breadth of responsibilities associated with addressing climate change impacts and other hazards, **CALL** upon SPREP to work with other CROP agencies in order to build consensus among partners leading to practical adaptation and mitigation interventions for Members;

EXPRESS appreciation for the joint partnership by SPREP, the Government of Samoa and the Government of Japan to establish the Pacific Climate Change Centre as a regional hub and centre of excellence for coordinating strategic and effective Pacific solutions on climate change, and supporting implementation of high level agreements such as the Paris Agreement, the SAMOA Pathway, the SDGs, and the FRDP;

RECOGNISING the constraints of least developed countries and small island states in the Pacific region **CALL** on all development partners to collaborate effectively towards a quick, timely and effective delivery of climate change financing to Pacific island Members;

ACKNOWLEDGE the critical role of SPREP, working in close collaboration with other partners, to assist Members to access climate financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and other sources of funding that Members are eligible to receive for addressing impacts of climate change and natural hazards;

COMMEND SPREP's success in attaining accredited entity status with both the GCF and the AF, and note its work towards accreditation with the GEF, and ENCOURAGE the Secretariat to strengthen its capacity to facilitate Members access to these funds, including through available readiness funding;

CONFIRM that with the threat of climate change we commit ourselves to continue to work to address this challenge, with the support of SPREP, at the international level;

3. ***Oceans***

REAFFIRM that the Pacific region's most important natural resource is the ocean which underpins our identity and community livelihoods, as reaffirmed by the Leaders in their Pohnpei Ocean Statement, and **ENDORSE** integrated ocean management as a crucial policy approach of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, to ensure that multi-sectoral, multi-jurisdictional and multi-level governance systems lead to sustainable blue economies, noting that many Members are now progressing with EEZ-scale ocean policies and marine spatial planning, to guide their way to a sustainable future;

APPRECIATE the Leaders' reaffirmation of support to the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner given its central role with respect to ocean governance and integrated ocean management in the region, under the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape.

CONGRATULATE the United States of America on its announcement to greatly expand the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, now the largest marine protected area in the world, and also **CONGRATULATE** the United Kingdom on the establishment of the Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve and **NOTE** that these initiatives add to the existing commitments by Pacific island countries and territories to protect the Pacific Ocean, including establishment of large-scale reserves and sanctuaries by Palau, Cook Islands and New Caledonia;

NOTE that the UN Conference on Oceans and Seas to support the implementation of SDG14, 5 – 9 June 2017, will now be held in New York, co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden. The Conference will provide the Pacific with another opportunity to lead the way and demonstrate its collective interest in the sustainable development, management and conservation of the Pacific Ocean and its resources;

NOTE with concern the predicted threats from ocean acidification and rising sea temperatures, especially in conjunction with El Niño events, including impacts on coral reefs and fish resources that support the livelihoods of Pacific island people;

CALL on SPREP and its partners to strengthen their efforts to build capacity in Pacific island Members to design and implement programmes to protect and sustainably manage coral reefs, lagoons, nearshore waters, mangroves and seagrass to mitigate the impacts of warming waters and adapt to climate change impacts and ocean acidification;

NOTE that ocean health is also critically dependent on reducing the impact of pollutants from both marine and land-based sources and **CALL** on SPREP to work with Members and partners to develop integrated approaches to address this critical issue, including marine debris;

NOTE with concern the rapid decline in populations of many shark species and the decrease in other iconic marine species that are part of Pacific natural and cultural heritage.

CONGRATULATE Fiji for being a regional and global leader in championing conservation measures for sharks and rays at the forthcoming CITES Conference of the Parties, in addition to Palau and Samoa for co-sponsoring the proposals;

SUPPORT resolution of issues relating to Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction and **NOTE** with appreciation SPREP technical support to Pacific island Members engaged in the Development of an International Legally Binding Instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

SINCERELY THANK the Government and People of Niue for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us during our stay in Niue, and **THANK** the Secretariat for its efforts in organising this successful meeting.

Alofi, Niue
22 September 2016