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PROTECT PACIFIC WHALES – OCEAN VOYAGERS

The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

CIRCULAR

FILE: AP 2/17/6/3

DATE: 20 April 2016

CIRCULAR: 16/26

TO: SPREP National Focal Points

SUBJECT: **Protect Pacific Whales – Ocean Voyagers Campaign**

Greetings from the SPREP Campus in Samoa,

The Pacific Island region is home to over half the world's species of cetaceans, whales and dolphins, including some of the least known, and as such members of SPREP agreed to focus their activities in 2016 and 2017 on a targeted regional campaign on whales at the 2015 SPREP Annual Meeting.

It is my pleasure to advise you that SPREP's 'Protect Pacific Whales – Ocean Voyagers' Campaign was officially launched on 14 April, 2016 by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Samoa, Hon. Fiame Mata'afa during a special evening event.

The 'Protect Pacific Whales – Ocean Voyagers' Campaign provides an opportunity for SPREP and all its Members and partners to celebrate these magnificent creatures, raise awareness on whale conservation as well as ocean conservation. What happens in the ocean will inevitably impact whales. The campaign will also address the problems whales face as ocean-dwellers. Ultimately the problems facing whales in a changing environment will impact all Pacific islands people, because of their dependence on the resources and ecosystem services provided by the oceans.

The programme of work that is envisaged for the Protect Pacific Whales Campaign is an ambitious combination of scientific research, training and capacity-building, exchange of information, and cultural and artistic celebration.

At the national level, it is envisioned that SPREP national focal points or relevant coordinators will develop nationally-relevant programmes that reinforce the overall campaign objectives – assistance will be provided by the Secretariat available upon request. We kindly seek your support in submitting to SPREP the relevant national contact point who we can touch base with in order to provide further information. We will work with this contact point to implement the Protect Pacific Whales Campaign both at national and regional level.

The Secretariat will schedule special activities in the context of the special commemorative days such as the World Environment Day and World Ocean Day in June. Also scheduled are several key events:

- Regional art exhibition on whales and oceans at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in 2017
- Whales in a Changing Ocean-International conference in Tonga

- Ecotourism as a tool for conservation of iconic marine species - workshop to be held during the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September
- Important Marine Mammals Areas in the Pacific workshop in early 2017

A range of communication and outreach activities will be implemented, including the Protect Pacific Whales – Ocean Voyagers webpage in English and in French (www.sprep.org/yearofthewhale), the development of the logo now available for use, and a range of competitions and activities held over the full duration of the campaign, using both social media and other communications tools.

For further information on any of the above please contact sprep@sprep.org, and we look forward to receiving your Protect Pacific Whales National Contact Point with whom we can continue working with to successfully implement this campaign across our region.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Chape
Officer-in-Charge

SC/MD/ma