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PROTECT PACIFIC WHALES – OCEAN VOYAGERS

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

CIRCULAR

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TO: SPREP National Focal Points (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Palau Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu)

SUBJECT: **Biodiversity and Protected Area Management (BIOPAMA) programme: Country engagement and support**

Dear SPREP National Focal Points,

This circular serves to inform you of the Biodiversity and Protected Area Management (BIOPAMA) programme which is currently being implemented by SPREP. By way of this circular, we would also like to gauge your interest in engaging in national level activities that will be implemented under BIOPAMA.

For your information, the BIOPAMA programme is a four-year initiative funded by the European Commission through IUCN and it aims at assisting Asia, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to develop a framework for improving technical and institutional approaches to conserve biodiversity, particularly in protected areas through regional cooperation and capacity building. To achieve this aim, the BIOPAMA programme has established in each ACP region regionally centered Observatories for biodiversity and protected area management. For the Pacific region, SPREP has been identified as the Observatory which hosts a node for a Regional Reference Information System (RRIS) - a platform for the exchange of data and information and implementation of relevant capacity building initiatives for the region among decision makers and managers of protected areas.

Since SPREP has already established the Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal (PIPAP) it was therefore decided that PIPAP would serve as the RRIS for the Pacific (http://pipap.sprep.org/). On-going work is still in progress to further develop and refine the PIPAP to ensure it has all the essential elements that it requires to better meet the needs of the region. Key functionality of the PIPAP includes:

- A centralized storage location for data and information on protected areas
- Visualization of spatial information at both the site and national levels
- Provides access to a regional forum for protected area practitioners and experts
- Inclusive of traditional/cultural area-based management arrangements (i.e., not limited by the IUCN protected area categories)

The BIOPAMA programme complements SPREPs existing work on protected areas in the region; it will assist countries to meet global protected area targets and it is well placed to deliver on Pacific

island protected area data management priorities which were conveyed at a recent regional workshop of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Fiji in July, 2016.

In order for the PIPAP to be fully functional and operational, there is a need to collate key protected area data and information that are available and exist within countries. A key part of this process involves working closely with agencies, organizations and individuals that are involved in protected area management at national, provincial and local levels. We would like to build on the work that has taken place already under POWPA Action Plans and the review of NBSAPs to ensure linkages to these processes are well established in a more coherent and cohesive manner.

To assist us in planning for BIOPAMA related country level engagement activities, please advise us of your interest to take part and provide the name and contact details of the responsible officer in your Department/Ministry, preferably someone who is involved directly with protected area management/administration and/or related work. From our end, the main contact person on BIOPAMA activities is Mr. Vainuupo Jungblut vainuupoj@sprep.org. Vainuupo will provide additional information and liaise with national contacts to organize country level activities as soon as you confirm your interest to participate.

We strongly believe that your participation and engagement in this initiative will provide lasting benefits for your country in relation to the management of your national protected area information.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Chape
Officer-in-Charge

SC/VJ/ma