



COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

Alofi, Niue, 3–5 November 2015

1. The Ninth Conference of the Pacific Community (SPC) met in Niue to advance the strategic direction and priorities of the organisation for the next five years. The Premier of Niue, the Hon. Toke Talagi, officially opened the biennial meeting, which was chaired by Niue with Kiribati as Vice-Chair, and attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga, Ministers from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue and Samoa, and representatives of American Samoa, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu – and by observers and partners, including the European Union, GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and the United Nations.
2. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Niue at the Millennium Hall, Alofi. SPC members expressed their deep gratitude to the Government and people of Niue for the excellent arrangements made in hosting the Ninth Conference and for the warm and generous hospitality extended to them during their stay on the ‘Rock’ of Polynesia.

Adoption of CRGA 45 decisions

3. Conference recognised the work done during the 45th meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), which took place at the Millennium Hall, from 31 October to 2 November 2015, under the able chairing of Nauru, and adopted the recommendations of the meeting (Annex 1 of this Communiqué).

Director-General’s overview

4. Conference commended the Director-General on the key activities undertaken in 2014 and 2015 to consolidate SPC’s position as the leading scientific and technical agency in the Pacific region supporting sustainable development in member states and territories, noting in particular the ‘Change Agenda’ initiated in 2014 to ensure SPC’s fitness for the future, including analysis of priorities informed by closer engagement with members, integrated programming approaches to regional cross-cutting issues, strengthened monitoring, evaluation and learning to underpin improvements in effectiveness, and retention and development of the scientific and technical capabilities that are the heart of SPC’s effectiveness.
5. Conference recognised that a sustainable and predictable financing regime is critical for addressing major regional challenges, with SPC’s current reliance on project funding and the imbalance between project and core funding bringing risks and constraining strategic allocation of resources. In this regard, Conference acknowledged the partnership agreements signed between SPC and Australia, New Zealand and the European Commission, which allow greater flexibility of resource use, and the important contributions from France and the United States of America in support of the Pacific Community.

6. Conference acknowledged the High-level dialogue on Climate Change between the President of France and Pacific Island leaders at SPC headquarters in Noumea in November 2014, noting in particular the President of France's decision to provide a high-level international technical expert to lead SPC's Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Programme in 2015. They also welcomed France's commitment to ensuring the success of COP21 and its recognition of the particular threat of climate change for the Pacific Island region.
7. Conference expressed its pleasure that the Pacific Community had been granted the status of Permanent Observer to the United Nations following the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly in December 2014, noting that the resolution enabling SPC to participate as an observer in the sessions and work of the General Assembly was submitted by the Fiji delegation. Conference also noted the Director-General's maiden speech at the UN General Assembly, which outlined how SPC will support its members' efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
8. Conference expressed gratitude for the outstanding work of the outgoing Chair of the Conference of the Pacific Community, the Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fiji, and welcomed the incoming Chair, the Hon. Toke Talagi, Premier of Niue.

Endorsement of the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020

9. Conference endorsed the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020, which sets out the Pacific Community's strategic direction and priorities for the next five years. Recognising that the Strategic Plan is the result of an extensive process of consultation with member countries and territories, development partners and staff, Conference affirmed the five objectives of the Strategic Plan, particularly its focus on strengthening engagement and collaboration with members and partners, prioritising services, and enhancing technical and scientific knowledge and expertise.
10. Conference recognised that the Strategic Plan adopts the vision of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders as a regional vision to demonstrate the value of a united regional approach, with the mission articulating how the Pacific Community will contribute to this shared vision.
11. Conference acknowledged with gratitude the excellent work of the CRGA Pacific Community Strategic Plan Subcommittee in 2015, noting in particular the inclusive approach to engaging members in developing a navigational chart for SPC and the leadership provided by the Chair, Mr Tregar Albons Ishoda of Marshall Islands.
12. Conference noted with approval that a CRGA subcommittee will be established to provide oversight and advice to the secretariat in implementing the Strategic Plan, and that the membership of this subcommittee will represent the composition of the Pacific Community, in particular by including the following constituencies: Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and French-speaking and metropolitan members.

Framework for Pacific Regionalism

13. Conference strongly supported SPC's commitment to implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, in areas within SPC's mandate, recognising it as a public priority setting process, but also recognising that not all its members are involved in the Framework process and that no new resources are currently available to address the priorities referred to it.

Strengthening coherence through the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP)

14. Conference urged CROP agencies, including SPC, to increase their efforts to improve cohesion with the aim of enhancing service delivery to member countries and territories.

Resilient Pacific people – turning the tide

15. Conference deliberated on the theme, 'Resilient Pacific people – turning the tide', which was selected by the Government of Niue after a national competition. The rich discussion of the theme highlighted inspiring national responses to challenges, with members describing efforts targeting reduced reliance on imports, increased renewable energy, improved technological capacity, improved education and training, and protection of natural resources. Members were also urged to recognise the role of the private sector in growing their economies and the value of adopting some of the private sector's practical concepts to increase their resilience. The Director-General clarified that a virtual knowledge hub would primarily involve information sharing and networking between relevant stakeholders and would not require additional resources. Conference also noted the importance of the upcoming France Oceania Summit as a platform for dialogue and action on the theme of climate change, resilience and other significant development challenges for the region.
16. Conference endorsed:
 - a focus on pursuing practical solutions to the challenges and vulnerabilities facing the Pacific region, building on opportunities presented by political agreements and best practice solutions, and embracing effective partnerships;
 - an approach of documenting experiences and success stories across key areas of sustainable development, with a view to scaling up and replicating these across the region;
 - the fostering of productive, results-oriented partnerships founded on mutual respect and accountability;
 - the inclusion of all stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalised groups in identifying development issues and formulating sustainable solutions;
 - SPC's role in contributing to a virtual knowledge hub, in cooperation with other CROP agencies and partners (including the private sector), for fostering the development and sharing of best-practice, sustainable development solutions.
17. Conference appreciated the announcement by the United States of America of the new USAID grant for the Institutional Strengthening in the Pacific Island Countries to Adapt to Climate Change (ISACC) initiative in partnership with SPC, PIFS and SPREP.

Observer statements

18. Conference noted with interest and appreciation the statements from the European Union, GIZ, PIFS, SPREP and UNICEF.

Tenth Conference of the Pacific Community

19. Conference acknowledged with appreciation the offers from New Caledonia and PNG to host the Tenth Conference of the Pacific Community in 2017. Following further discussion between New Caledonia and PNG, the secretariat will inform members of the decision. The hosting country will chair the Tenth Conference with the Vice-Chair to be confirmed at CRGA 46.
-