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**FORTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(26–28 June 2018, Noumea, New Caledonia)

AGENDA ITEM No. 6: CROP COHESION AND COORDINATION

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

Summary

1. This paper provides an update on current initiatives to strengthen the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific's (CROP) cohesion and coordination, in response to the *2017 Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing* and subsequent 2017 Forum Leaders' decisions for the Leaders' agenda to be embedded across CROP and its member agencies.
2. On 3 April 2018, CROP executives met in Sydney, Australia, to discuss and agree on a set of actions in response to Leaders' decisions. Summarised at Annex A, these actions include committing to:
 - holding an annual meeting of CROP heads and Governing Council chairs, to progress a CROP strategic work programme;
 - Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's (PIFS) representation at annual CROP Governing Council meetings to strengthen understandings of the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* and regional priorities;
 - establishing a CROP Deputies Group, to support the implementation of regional priorities as directed by CROP Executives; and
 - developing a CROP communications strategy.
3. These actions will be taken forward, together with the finalisation of a revised CROP Charter (which CRGA has already been consulted on), and will form part of a broader implementation plan, in response to Leaders' decisions on the *Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing*.

Recommendations

4. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note the update on current initiatives to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination;
 - ii. ensure that SPC continue to embed the Pacific Leaders' agenda in its work programme and to work proactively to support CROP cohesion and coordination in pursuit of effective regionalism;
 - iii. request that the Secretariat provide out of session analysis and updates on the Pacific Leaders' agenda and its impact on the work programme of SPC;
 - iv. commend the Secretariat for its engagement with the CROP mechanism and urge it to continue to further enhance these processes.

CROP COHESION AND COORDINATION

Purpose

5. This paper provides an update on current initiatives to strengthen the cohesion and coordination of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), and particularly in response to Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders' decisions at their 48th Meeting in Samoa in 2017.

Background

About CROP

6. Pacific Island Leaders established CROP in 1988, with the primary purpose of improving cooperation, coordination and collaboration between Pacific inter-governmental organisations. The adoption, in 2014, of the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* requires that CROP organisations act together to collectively respond to regional priorities through policy advice, implementation and reporting on progress.
7. CROP is chaired by the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, and its current membership is: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), The Pacific Community (SPC), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Power Association (PPA), Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP).
8. In 2016 and 2017, in response to recommendations of the Pacific Plan Review and a related Leaders' directive, PIFS led an initiative – *Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing* (ARGF) – to look at opportunities to strengthen collective action on regional priorities. In particular, the ARGF looked at how CROP can be better organised and financed to deliver regional priorities. In undertaking the ARGF, PIFS was supported by a steering committee of CROP agencies and Governing Council chairs.

Leaders' decisions to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination

9. At the 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in 2017, Leaders considered, on the advice of the Forum Officials Committee, the *Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing*. In response, Leaders made the following statement and decisions as part of their 2017 Forum Communique:

“In considering the need for coherent implementation of the Forum Leaders' decisions, as well as the need to address the current fragmentation of actors in their support of the regional policy agenda, Leaders confirmed they are the apex of the regional architecture and the drive of regional priority setting and resource allocation.

Leaders committed to ensuring a whole of government engagement with the regionalism agenda to strengthen the regional architecture and maximise effective use of resources, regional actions and initiatives; embed the Forum agenda across the CROP and its member agencies, including at ministerial and

institutional governance levels; and commence a Member-driven process to converge regional meeting platforms and agenda setting processes.”

Members also:

“instructed CROP and its member agencies to ensure that meetings and their agendas are rationalised to take forward the Forum agenda in a synchronised way, and directed the CROP Chair to work closely with the Heads of CROP agencies and their respective Governing Boards to develop an implementation plan of the recommendations above and to report to Leaders on progress.”

Taking forward Leaders’ decisions

10. PIFS, in collaboration with CROP, is coordinating work to take forward the Leaders’ decisions on the ARGF, including the development of an overall implementation plan.
11. CROP Executives met in Sydney on 3 April 2018 to discuss and agree on a set of actions to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination (summarised at Attachment A), to take forward Leaders’ decisions on CROP. Actions of particular relevance to CRGA include the following commitments:
 - Hold an annual meeting of CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs. The objective of the Annual Meeting is to promote stronger regional governance, coherence and action by providing a platform to: (1) consider the broader policy and operational context of CROP; and (2) confirm CROP’s strategic operational agenda for the coming year, based on Leaders’ priorities and decisions relevant to CROP. While the specifics of the Annual Meeting are still to be worked out, it is likely to be held in October/November each year to support planning for the following year.
 - A commitment to PIFS’ representation at the annual Governing Council meetings of CROP agencies, to promote the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, the Forum Leaders’ Communique, and the relevant priorities and decisions of the Framework and Communique.
 - Establish a CROP Deputies Group. Under the directive of CROP Executives, the objective of the CROP Deputies Group is to support implementation of CROP Executives by: (1) providing management oversight and support to operationalise Executives’ decisions across CROP organisations and mechanisms; and (2) providing guidance and advice to further enhance and strengthen CROP coordination, coherence and collaboration. The CROP Deputies Group held its first meeting on 16 April 2018.
 - Develop a CROP communications strategy, to ensure a strategic communications approach to promoting Pacific priorities globally and regionally, based on the *Blue Pacific*¹ narrative, as well as to promote CROP’s collective work and impact.
12. As well as taking forward these actions, PIFS will be working with CROP agencies to finalise the revised CROP Charter for approval by Pacific Island Forum Leaders at their September 2018 meeting in Nauru. As already shared with CRGA, the revised CROP Charter was

¹ As referenced in the 2017 Forum Communique, the Blue Pacific was agreed by Forum Leaders as a new narrative and collective identity for advancing a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous region. The Blue Pacific reasserts our shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and emphasises our ocean identity, geography and resources. It calls for inspired leadership and a long-term policy commitment to act on issues vital to our development as a region.

developed following an in-depth review in 2017. The revised CROP Charter will support greater CROP cohesion and coordination by ensuring the purpose and mandate of CROP aligns with the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, simplifying the CROP guiding principles, and providing greater clarity on CROP membership, meeting and reporting arrangements.

Conclusion

13. CROP is a vital partnership and mechanism for providing advice on, and driving the implementation of, the Pacific Island Forum's regional agenda. As highlighted in the *Analysis of Regional Governance and Financing*, and as called for by Forum Leaders, there are opportunities to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination. Such opportunities are being pursued, including stronger engagement with CROP Governing Councils to support a synchronised approach to taking forward the Pacific Leaders' agenda. This work will continue to be central to collaboration between CROP agencies over the coming years.

Recommendations

14. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note the update on current initiatives to strengthen CROP cohesion and coordination;
 - ii. ensure that SPC continue to embed the Pacific Leaders' agenda in its work programme and to work proactively to support CROP cohesion and coordination in pursuit of effective regionalism;
 - iii. request that the Secretariat provide out of session analysis and updates on the Pacific Leaders' agenda and its impact on the work programme of SPC;
 - iv. commend the Secretariat for its engagement with the CROP mechanism and urge it to continue to further enhance these processes.

Annex A

CROP Executives Retreat and Meeting – Summary of Actions to Strengthen CROP Cohesion and Coordination1. CROP Executive meetings

Decision	Lead
A meeting of CROP Executives to be held no less than six weeks after the annual Leaders' meeting to discuss and agree on taking forward Forum Leaders decisions.	PIFS
Hold an annual meeting of CROP Heads and Governing Council Chairs.	PIFS
Commitment to PIFS' representation at the annual governing council meetings of CROP agencies to further socialise the <i>Framework for Pacific Regionalism</i> , Forum Leaders' Communique and their relevant priorities and decisions.	PIFS, PASO, SPTO, PPA.

2. Strengthening CROP operational structures

Establish the CROP Deputies Group to take forward CROP joint- strategic and operational work, as decided and directed by CROP CEOs.	PIFS (first meeting on 16 April)
Strengthen CROP communications and collaboration by establishing a CROP Operational Support Team to support PIFS role as CROP secretariat.	PIFS

3. Building understanding of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Ensure a renewed push on socialising the Framework for Pacific Regionalism across CROP agencies and other stakeholders, to build greater understanding and engagement, for effective implementation.	PIFS
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4. Enhancing CROP communications and engagement

Develop a CROP communications strategy, to further ingrain the <i>Blue Pacific</i> narrative across CROP agencies.	CROP Comms Group.
Ensure the CROP communications strategy provides for marketing a strategic and coherent CROP into the 49 th PIFL Meeting in Nauru, which builds on the Blue Pacific narrative and makes a case for whole-of-government coherence and support to Leaders priorities across the region's architecture (refer recommendations of the regional governance and financing).	CROP Comms Group.
Develop a collective paper to report to pre-Forum FOC and the 49 th PIF Leaders meeting on CROP progress, against Leaders' priorities	PIFS with input from CROP agencies