

**REPORT OF THE 3rd MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF
THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**
(Suva, Fiji 10-11 November 2003)

including:

**REPORT OF THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS (CRGA)**
(Suva, Fiji 5-7 November 2003)

and:

**COMPENDIUM OF DECISIONS OF
THE 3rd MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**

**COMPENDIUM OF DECISIONS OF
THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**

Annexes to the Reports of proceedings have not been included in this printed document.

**A companion CD-ROM containing all the report annexes, conference and meeting papers,
Photos and Programme presentations is available on request from the Secretariat**

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COMPENDIUM OF DECISIONS OF THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS (CRGA)

**REPORT OF THE 3RD MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC
COMMUNITY**
(Suva, Fiji 10-11 November 2003)

Chairperson: Hon. Tomasi Vuetilovoni
Minister for Trade and Commerce
Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs
SUVA, Fiji

Vice-Chairperson: The Honourable Governor Togiola
Governor of American Samoa
Office of the Governor
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3RD MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY
(Suva, Fiji 10-11 November 2003)

AGENDA

1. Conference Opening
2. Report of the 33rd meeting of CRGA
3. Formula for Assessed Contributions
4. Donor Harmonisation
5. Harmonisation of new CROP Remuneration arrangements
6. The Year 2004 Budget (Statements by delegations on Member's Assessed and XB contributions for 2004)
7. Thematic discussion: "The Pacific's Response to Infectious Diseases"
8. Evaluation of SPC's Chief Executive (closed session)
9. The Year 2005 Conference: Venue and Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson
10. Other Business
11. Adoption of the Report

3RD MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

(Suva, Fiji 10-11 November 2003)

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

OFFICIAL OPENING

1. The official opening of the 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Pacific Community took place at the Tradewinds Convention Centre in Lami, Suva. The Conference was officially opened by His Excellency the Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Islands, in the presence of Conference delegations, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of regional and international organisations based in Fiji Islands.
2. The official opening started with Fijian traditional ceremonies and the presentation of a *tabua* (whale tooth) of welcome to the Prime Minister. It continued with ceremonial presentations of traditional mats (*vakamamaca*) accompanied by another *tabua*. After the presentation of a kava plant and ceremonial offerings of kava drink (*yaqona*) to the Prime Minister, the traditional ceremonies concluded with the gifts of *dalo* (taro) and pig.
3. In his official opening speech, the Honourable Prime Minister welcomed all the delegations to Fiji Islands. He alluded to the history and mandate of SPC as the oldest serving regional organisation, stating that Fiji Islands is proud to be part of this history. He emphasised the importance of the Conference theme on "The Pacific Islands Response to Infectious Diseases", referring in particular to the impact and spread of AIDS in the islands as being not so much a public health problem, but a national disaster and national security problem for countries. He wished delegates fruitful deliberations, as the outcomes of this meeting will have a direct impact on the health and livelihood of Pacific Islanders. The full text of his opening statement is appended to this report.

AGENDA ITEM 1 — OPENING/ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Adoption of the Agenda

4. The Chairperson welcomed the honourable representatives and delegates to the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community.
5. The Representative of Tonga gave the opening prayer.
6. Before starting on the agenda, the Chairperson paid tribute to two leaders in the region who had both given much support to the region and to the organisation of the Pacific Community: the late Tauese Sunia, who was Governor of American Samoa, and the late Savenaca Siwatibau, of Fiji Islands. The meeting observed a minute of silence in memory of these two outstanding men who had given so much to the region. The Chairperson apologised for the absence of the Fiji Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was overseas, and the Fiji Minister for Health, who was unwell, and said whilst that his own position was Minister for Commerce, Business Development and Investment he was currently Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs during the absence of the minister overseas.
7. The Conference adopted its agenda as attached to this report.

Election of the Drafting Committee

8. The Conference appointed a drafting committee composed of the Representatives of Australia, France, French Polynesia, Fiji Islands, Papua New Guinea and chaired by the Vice-Chairperson of the Conference, the Honourable Governor Togiola of American Samoa.

Hours of work

9. The Conference adopted its hours of work.

Statements

10. On behalf of the Secretariat, SPC's Director-General, Lourdes Pangelinan, welcomed all the members and observers to the 3rd meeting of the Conference of the Pacific Community. She thanked the government and people of Fiji Islands for the very warm hospitality extended to the Secretariat since their arrival. She said that SPC was an organisation that its members — as owners of the organisation — could be extremely proud of. She said that SPC's organisational goal was to improve its services to better respond to the needs of the Pacific region, and that SPC was a modern, practical and open organisation that applied best management practices. She said she believed the organisation was in a strong position to carry out the strategies laid down in its Corporate Plan over the next three years. She paid tribute to the staff of SPC, as a tremendous asset to the organisation and the region, and thanked them for their dedication and support. She said that 2003 had been an extremely productive and fruitful year, and added SPC had been running smoothly over the past few years. She emphasised the importance the Secretariat places on human resource development, and the organisation's focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the region, through working closely with donor partners as well as members. She alluded to the many areas where SPC could contribute to sustainable development through its work in programmes that focus on the region's land, ocean and peoples. She concluded by saying these were exciting times for the organisation, and that given the very positive achievements of CRGA 33, she looked forward to a fruitful outcome of this meeting of the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community.

11. The Representative of Fiji Islands reiterated the welcome to the Conference delegates extended by the Prime Minister. He said that this was the first Conference hosted by Fiji Islands, but Fiji had hosted the ministerial conference of the South Pacific Commission on four previous occasions. He said that the 33rd meeting of CRGA had concluded successfully, with the vital assistance of the staff of SPC ensuring that the meeting ran smoothly and the report was produced on time. He noted that the meeting ended on a high note with the Island Night hosted by SPC's Suva staff. On the Conference theme, focusing on infectious diseases, he said he looked forward to members returning home with a clear picture of the issues and able to begin formulating their respective country's or territory's strategies for responding to the threats posed by infectious diseases.

12. The Representative of France added his voice to that of the Director-General in thanking the government and the people of Fiji Islands for their high standard of welcome and the magnificent traditional welcome ceremony that morning. He said that France shared the aspirations of Pacific countries and territories for their future and was happy to see that SPC is responsive to the needs of the region in various ways, using as an example environmentally friendly and sustainable agriculture. He said that SPC was ahead of its time in bringing together states and territories irrespective of their constitutional status. He said that France was prepared to provide SPC with unfailing support, which will be agreed to with the organisation under the guidance of the Director-General. He said the theme for the Conference could not be more appropriate, in the context of the present times. He made the point that viruses are insensitive to administrative or political orders. He noted that the spread of HIV/AIDS, the occurrence of the SARS syndrome, the return of TB, and the toll taken by dengue outbreaks in the region require countries and territories of the region to act fast and capably together. He said that no country could act on its own, and that these threats require regional cooperation. He noted that France was pleased to join forces with Australia in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He announced that France is working with New Zealand to develop and fund a regional strategy in the SPC project, PREPARE, to strengthen regional responses and treatment of communicable diseases. He added that the recent meeting of Pacific Island ministers in Tonga expressed the wish that responses to infectious disease threats be made rapidly and effectively. He remarked that France wished to contribute as a regional partner to projects that meet the needs and aspirations of island members.

13. The Representative of Australia thanked the government and people of Fiji Islands for their warm and hospitable welcome. He said he had great pleasure in representing Australia and reinforcing friendships made at the meeting of the Conference in Papeete. He thanked the Secretariat for its programme strategic plans, and its demonstration of willingness to accept change and introduce innovative practices that better deliver services in an efficient and effective manner. He said that at CRGA 33, Australia noted improved transparency and reporting from the organisation. He noted that the programme of donor harmonisation

promoted by SPC would give donors such as Australia a better chance to contribute favourably to SPC's programmes. He said that Australia's contribution of about AUD 10 million per year covered most of SPC's programme areas. He concluded that Australia recognised the range of complex regional policies and transboundary issues and appreciated the role that SPC is taking in canvassing these issues with the international community and CROP regional agencies, given the importance of the role the regional agencies play in attracting donor funds.

14. The Representative of the United States expressed his appreciation for the work that SPC does in the areas of marine, land and social resources, and for the significant contribution made by the organisation to the well-being of Pacific Islanders. He referred to the timeliness and importance of the Conference theme, drawing delegates' attention to the recent SARS epidemic that had severe economic consequences for the countries most affected. Stating that it was impossible to know when and where SARS or other diseases might appear or reappear, he emphasised the need for international cooperation in fighting epidemics, indicating that no country could work in isolation and successfully defend itself. The representative noted that infectious disease burden weighs most heavily on developing countries, referring to spread of HIV/AIDS as an example of this. He referred to the number of HIV/AIDS cases worldwide, and to President Bush's USD 15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS relief. Last year, the United States pledged USD 1.6 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria—one third of the money pledged to the Global Fund to date. He noted the significant resources that SPC would be receiving from the Global Fund in the coming years. The representative also spoke of the importance of integrating health-related concerns and issues into as many of SPC's programmes as possible. He gave several examples of how this might occur:

- HIV/AIDS awareness could be incorporated into SPC's programmes targeting youth and the maritime sector; and
- Through a focus on sustainable forestry and agriculture, SPC's land resources division could reduce land disturbance in forested areas, and help control mosquito-borne diseases.

The representative endorsed the leadership provided by the present Director-General, and stated that the United States felt that she had earned the right to a third term. He stated that he was confident that she could find solutions to emerging challenges, while keeping SPC on a sound path.

15. The Representative of American Samoa expressed his appreciation to the Prime Minister and government of Fiji Islands for hosting the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community, and acknowledged with gratitude and appreciation the great hospitality that had been extended to all delegates and participants. He also expressed his thanks to the Director-General and her staff for their very effective work in handling the affairs of the Secretariat. He stated that his country actively supported and participated in the Pacific Community, and fully supported the work of the Secretariat. He indicated that American Samoa was nevertheless concerned about deterioration in the effectiveness of the organisation as a result of regional political agendas, which were taking precedence over the social and technical issues that have traditionally been the priority of SPC. He indicated that while it was only proper that PICT political leaders would wish to exert influence over the activities of SPC, he saw a lack of high-level participation by PICT governments. The representative suggested to the Conference that it come to an agreement, at the close of its deliberations, on a means by which to assess whether the direction of SPC was reflective of members' wishes. He also made reference to the fact that not all members were able to participate in the Pacific Islands Forum, but observed that the Forum's decisions affected non-members as well, and indicated that decisions taken by the Forum also influenced the direction of SPC. He acknowledged that the issue he was raising was a very sensitive one, and indicated that he was mindful of SPC's mandate, but stated that he felt it was important that SPC's technical agenda come together with the organisation's political agenda. He also made mention of the need to consider infectious diseases as a security issue, and suggested that doing so would enable members to combat the disease threat as effectively as it dealt with other security issues. He reiterated his country's support for the work performed by the Director-General and her staff, and acknowledged the Pacific Community's donor members for their continued support for SPC, on behalf of all Pacific peoples.

16. The Representative of Kiribati expressed his appreciation to the government of Fiji Islands for their warm welcome and hospitality, commended the Director-General for her leadership, and thanked the Director-General and her staff for their hard work in preparing for the Conference. He also noted with appreciation the work done by the organisation in support of CRGA 33. He highlighted several issues of special importance to his country, and mentioned the positive impact of several SPC programmes in the area of health, including the Pacific Action for Health project, the Adolescent Reproductive Health project, the

Tuberculosis, Section, and the HIV/AIDS programme. He also noted the work of the Pacific Women's Bureau and the Community Education Training Centre. He also made reference to the importance for Kiribati of the work done by the Marine Resources Division in the area of fisheries, and noted with concern the findings of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme with respect to yellowfin and bigeye tuna stocks. He said Kiribati would continue to rely on SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency for assistance in managing its fishery resources. The representative also noted the importance of the work of the Regional Maritime Programme for his country. He mentioned that agriculture and fisheries had recently been separated into two distinct ministries in Kiribati, and indicated his hope that this would help to facilitate the provision of assistance by SPC to his country in these areas. He also indicated that he would particularly welcome a focus by SPC on the issue of atoll agriculture. He closed with the observation that his government was new, but nonetheless wished to extend both its welcome and appreciation to all its colleagues and friends in the region.

17. The Representative of New Zealand expressed her appreciation to Fiji Islands for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the delegates, expressed her congratulations to CRGA 33 for their productive meeting, and acknowledged SPC's excellent preparatory work. She made reference to the longstanding relationship between SPC and New Zealand, which focused on poverty elimination and sustainable development, and observed that in her country's view SPC was one of the strongest Pacific regional organisations. She noted SPC's emphasis on quality service delivery, and said that New Zealand's many Pacific Island citizens had a special interest in seeing effective development take place in PICTs. She made special note of the emphasis SPC placed on strategic planning and programme evaluation, and indicated that the confidence New Zealand placed in SPC was reflected by the funding shift her country was making, from a project to a programme-based approach. She stated that New Zealand was committing to a three-year funding envelope, in the amount of NZD 18 million, which would fund both Core Budget and programme activities. She acknowledged that France and Australia had also made a similar shift in their funding for SPC, and said that she hoped this would give SPC greater flexibility in addressing issues, and enable a more strategic response to emerging regional problems. She said that although New Zealand's new aid organisation (NZ Aid) had been in existence for only 16 months, it was working hard to build on and improve relationships with Pacific partners. She stressed the fact that SPC was owned by the people of the Pacific, and said that the organisation made a tangible impact on the lives of Pacific Islanders.

18. The Representative of the United Kingdom spoke of the importance of the Conference of the Pacific Community for his country, reiterated the importance of his country's relationship with PICTs and SPC, and spoke of the United Kingdom's strong commitment to SPC. He stated that the Conference gave members an important opportunity to review the work of the organisation. He commended the work of SPC, and made particular mention of efforts in the areas of poverty analysis, data collection, and donor harmonisation. He welcomed SPC's efforts to achieve its corporate goals, and its commitment to assisting PICTs achieve the MDGs. He closed by stating that the United Kingdom welcomed a continued engagement with the Secretariat.

19. The Representative of French Polynesia expressed her greetings to all participants, and expressed her appreciation to Fiji Islands, for receiving meeting delegates with such great hospitality. She stated that her country accepted its increased assessed contribution, and was happy to be able to offer that support to the organisation, for the benefit of the region. She said that because she was the Minister for Health, she was very receptive to the theme of the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community, and said that although the countries of the region have differing levels of resources, they share many common challenges. She indicated that she sought both a sharing of experience and concerted action. She expressed her thanks to the Director-General and the staff of SPC for their preparatory work, which she said would enable the Conference delegates to make rapid progress as they addressed the issues before them.

20. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna expressed his gratitude to the Fiji government and people for their hospitality and the warm welcome to members. He expressed gratitude to SPC through its Director-General for its fine work in supporting these important meetings of CRGA and Conference. He said that his country was very receptive to the efforts of SPC, mentioned that all programmes were very important, and especially noted the work on infectious diseases. He said that his country of only 15,000 people was small compared with others represented around the table, and as a consequence it particularly appreciated and benefited from SPC's activities. He said that, like American Samoa, Wallis and Futuna would like to take

part as an observer at meetings of other CROP organisations. He also apologised for the early departure of his delegation due to exigencies of travel arrangements.

21. The Representative of Guam thanked the Fiji government and people for their hospitality and for hosting the meeting, and also the assistance extended to enable her to participate as a member of the Guam delegation. She said she was attending the meeting on behalf of the Guam governor, but was also a member of the Guam legislature. She said her representation at the meeting was a recognition of the importance of the organisation, and that Guam appreciated the inclusion of the north Pacific countries and territories in the organisation. She said that the expertise and cooperation extended to Guam by other governments, including both island and metropolitan members, was of great value to her country. She said that her government held the Director-General in high esteem and that she was one of Guam's best and brightest people. Guam was honoured to have her serve the region, as she has a tremendous commitment to SPC and the Pacific. While hoping she would continue to serve the organisation for the next two years, Guam would like the Director-General to return home when she concludes her mission with SPC. She concluded by saying that SPC provided an opportunity to bring Guam's concerns to a wider world, and said that her country looked forward to continuing its involvement with the Pacific Community.

22. The Representative of Palau expressed appreciation to the people and Government of Fiji Islands for their warm hospitality. He congratulated the Chairperson for assuming the leadership at this meeting and expressed confidence in his skills and wisdom in leading the Conference to its successful conclusion. He noted that the CRGA Report was on the agenda of Conference and recommended its full endorsement by the Conference; he further expressed particular appreciation to the Chairperson of CRGA 33 for his able leadership for a very successful meeting. He expressed appreciation to SPC for the significant technical assistance and training provided to Palau in 2003 in the marine, land and social areas, based on the corporate strategies approved last year. He also thanked the traditional donors and friends for their continued financial support to the programmes of the Pacific Community for the improvement of the livelihood of island members. With respect to the Conference theme, the Representative of Palau stated that the deliberations are appropriate and timely, particularly with the impact of SARS. Although SARS had not affected the Pacific region as much as Asia, the lessons learned from the epidemic are of significance to the Pacific Islands, in order to develop long-term strategies for the future. He supported the reappointment of the current Director-General for a final two-year term. At this stage, he also formally expressed Palau's interest in hosting the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Pacific Community in 2005.

23. The Representative of Tuvalu presented apologies on behalf of his Prime Minister who had not been able to attend Conference as the Tuvalu government is currently in session. He placed on record his appreciation of Fiji Islands' warm hospitality at CRGA and Conference. He acknowledged the contributions by the five donor members of SPC, and conveyed Tuvalu's support and appreciation to the Secretariat for its assistance in enhancing the lives of Pacific Islanders. He indicated that Tuvalu has benefited from SPC programmes and hopes that this assistance will continue. Tuvalu has been through difficult times recently and greatly values programmes that can assist its people. He was therefore pleased at the theme of Conference and its relevance. He said his country also looked forward to development partnerships.

24. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia presented greetings on behalf of the president and people of the Federated States of Micronesia. He expressed the support and commitment of his country to SPC. He warmly thanked Fiji Islands for the beautiful Conference venue and support provided to his delegation, and gave thanks to SPC for the Conference arrangements. He welcomed the opportunity to discuss important issues at this Conference relating to the health of islanders and the impact of HIV/AIDS in the region, as well as matters such as donor harmonisation and member contributions. He stated that SPC serves a vital role in regional affairs. He expressed appreciation to SPC for valuable assistance provided to the Federated States of Micronesia, particularly in the areas of agriculture, plant protection, health, and capacity building. His government was particularly appreciative of the assistance provided by SPC's field offices. He commended the work of the Director-General and wished SPC continued strength and success in the coming year.

25. The Representative of Tonga thanked the Director-General and the Secretariat for their work in developing and implementing a Corporate Plan and Programme Strategic Plans that have enabled SPC to be a more forward-looking organisation. He looked forward to keynote presentations on the Conference theme.

He acknowledged the presentations by the Divisions and the assistance rendered to Tonga, particularly in the area of statistics and by the Community Education Training Centre. He agreed with the comments made by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Islands at the official opening, that programmes need to be relevant and focused. He commended the members for their hard work and expressed gratitude to the donor members and other donors for their support to SPC. He also took the opportunity to thank the people and Government of Fiji for their very warm welcome.

26. The Representative of Vanuatu offered the apologies of his Government, since parliamentary sessions had not enabled Vanuatu to be represented at ministerial level at this Conference. He took note of the concerns by the Representative of American Samoa on the lack of high-level participation by PICTs, but said that this does not affect Vanuatu's commitment to SPC and to regional programmes. He said that Vanuatu is happy to take part in the Conference as this governing body has the responsibility to ensure that upcoming projects and their funding allocations concur with the priority needs of member countries. He stated that the choice of this year's Conference theme was particularly appropriate to today's context, as infectious diseases present a high risk for small island countries. He congratulated the Government of Fiji on their choice. He expressed concern that, while resources are being mobilised to combat terrorism around the world, priority socio-economic development programmes may lose some of their funding as a result. He encouraged all development partners to redirect resources towards priority development areas in the region, particularly the needs of rural communities. Without this valued assistance, countries cannot fully implement their national development programmes. He therefore encouraged all members and partners to continue to work with the Secretariat to ensure that SPC becomes even more attuned to the needs of the Island countries.

27. The Representative of New Caledonia brought his country's greetings to all members and expressed his delegation's appreciation to Fiji Islands for the warm hospitality and welcome. He reiterated New Caledonia's support to SPC and to its role in the development of the region. He informed Conference that New Caledonia's contribution to SPC would be included in the budget before the end of the year. He stressed that the position of Director-General also carried considerable responsibility, and thanked her and her team for their work in implementing the organisation's programmes. He agreed that the choice of the Conference theme was particularly appropriate and noted that New Caledonia had experienced problems recently with dengue fever. He stressed in particular the area of prevention and education in dealing with some of these infectious diseases such as AIDS.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – REPORT OF THE 33RD MEETING OF CRGA

28. The Chairperson of CRGA 33 drew the Conference's attention to key issues that were discussed at the meeting, particularly those issues that required the approval of Conference. He noted that these issues also appear on the agenda for the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community. The letter by the Chairperson of CRGA 33 is appended to this report.

29. The Conference adopted the report of CRGA 33 with the exception of those items that are listed separately in the agenda of Conference.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – FORMULA FOR ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS

30. The Director-General introduced the agenda item and drew the Conference's attention to the revised formula for assessed contributions agreed on by CRGA 33, and presented to Conference for adoption. Referring to the issue of members' arrears, she informed Conference that CRGA had discussed various measures, but had finally agreed to request that Conference formally ask members to settle their commitments.

31. The Representative of Cook Islands stated his country is in agreement with the new formula for assessed contributions and with the re-categorisation of Cook Islands to a higher contribution level.

32. The Representative of Fiji Islands congratulated the Chairperson of CRGA 33 for his thorough and informative report. He noted that the contributions of Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and

French Polynesia had increased and would help to compensate for the fact that Guam had fallen to the next lower category. He noted concerns raised by the Secretariat about arrears, and encouraged countries with outstanding arrears to make every effort to settle those as soon as possible.

33. The Representative of Guam noted that her country had the greatest arrears, and that this issue had been discussed with the governor and the Speaker to the legislature prior to Conference. She apologised for her country's arrears on behalf of the current governor of Guam, and thanked the members for allowing Guam to continue to participate in the Pacific Community. She noted that one of her priorities was to renew Guam's commitment with the Pacific Community. She was particularly appreciative of the new contribution arrangements that set Guam in a lower category. She reported that Guam's economy, particularly tourism has been adversely affected in recent years, and that Guam's internal political challenges were the cause of its arrears. She said that Guam would work with the Director-General on a payment programme to settle their arrears, acknowledging with gratitude the efforts of other PICTs who regularly pay each year. She recognised the value to Guam of its membership of the Pacific Community.

34. The Representative of Papua New Guinea, speaking for the first time, congratulated Fiji Islands on hosting Conference and thanked the government for its warm hospitality. He also extended thanks to SPC for the excellent arrangements. He apologised for the absence of his Minister of Foreign Affairs. He said his country agrees to the new formula for assessed contributions, and was willing to help other members by paying a bit more, in the spirit of Pacific cooperation. He encouraged members who were in arrears to settle their commitments as soon as possible.

35. The Representative of Australia expressed his country's appreciation to the Chairperson of CRGA 33 for his thorough report, and said Australia accepted the recommendations of CRGA 33 regarding members' assessed contributions. In the interest of ownership and in the interest of better financial management of SPC, he encouraged members in arrears to make every effort to settle their commitment in a timely manner.

36. The Representative of American Samoa congratulated the Chairperson for CRGA 33 for his excellent job in chairing the committee. He said that American Samoa endorsed the work of CRGA and endorses the new formula for assessed contributions, in the spirit of cooperation. He noted that American Samoa is up to date on its contributions, and encouraged members in arrears to settle their commitments quickly. In this regard, he suggested that countries could consider obtaining assistance from corporate sponsors and companies with interests in the development sectors that SPC works in. He offered this suggestion as "food for thought".

37. The Representative of Tokelau expressed deep appreciation to Fiji Islands for its warm hospitality towards himself and his delegation, and thanked the Director-General and the staff of SPC for meeting arrangements. He also thanked the donor countries for their continued assistance and support by paying 90.6% of the total contributions, and thanked Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Fiji Islands and Cook Islands for agreeing to pay an increased share of member contribution. He expressed the hope that those members of the Pacific Community with arrears will be able to fulfil their commitment to the organisation and will continue to take an active role. He reiterated his country's commitment to the Pacific Community.

38. The Representative of Solomon Islands thanked the Secretariat and the SPC membership for their support and understanding with regards to the issue of arrears. He assured Conference that it was not his country's intention to fall behind in its contribution, but that it was a function of the political and economic difficulties in Solomon Islands. He noted his country was in the process of halving its arrears by the end of the week, and that Solomon Islands Fiji-based mission would continue to address this issue in 2004. He was glad that Solomon Islands would continue to be a productive member of SPC.

39. The Conference endorsed the recommendations of CRGA 33 with regards to members' assessed contributions (See Annex 1 to this report). Conference also welcomed statements by members regarding their arrears and formally requested member countries and territories with arrears to settle their commitments.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – DONOR HARMONISATION

40. The Conference witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Arrangement (MOA) between SPC and the Government of New Zealand, represented by the Honourable Marian Hobbs, Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Official Development Assistance). This arrangement relates to NZAID support to SPC to the amount of 18 million NZD for the three-year period 2004 to 2006.

41. The Director-General stressed that this MOA was important not purely because of the large amount involved but also because it represents a critical step towards donor harmonisation. The amount involved clearly demonstrates the trust and understanding between SPC and NZAID. In addition, the shift from project-based funding to programme-based support is important as it provides the Secretariat with more flexibility in planning and implementing programmes, together with longer-term funding assurance. She indicated that the Secretariat also has similar arrangements with Australia and France.

42. The Honourable Minister stressed the importance of these arrangements in reducing the administrative burden and delivering services faster to the communities served. She stressed that this had been made possible through the trust that New Zealand had in SPC and in knowing that the organisation was ably led. She concluded by saying that New Zealand was delighted to sign this arrangement.

43. The Representative of Australia congratulated New Zealand and SPC on the occasion of this historic signing. He stated that Australia was pleased with the outcome of the donor harmonisation process and encouraged other donors to do the same. He encouraged PICTs to be strategic in their approach to SPC and to try and seek assistance with regard to issues of a transborder and regional nature.

44. The Representative of the United States of America indicated that his Government would continue to follow a project-based approach. This, he stressed, was not due to any lack of faith in SPC, as the USA had tremendous confidence in the organisation, but was simply dictated by his country's budget cycles.

45. The Representative of France expressed his Government's commitment to donor harmonisation and to the programme-based approach, even though France continued to support a few individual projects. France had adopted this programme-based approach because of its obvious benefits to everyone, donors, donor members and development agencies.

46. The Chairperson expressed the appreciation of Conference to the Government of New Zealand and the Honourable Marian Hobbs for this valued commitment.

47. The Conference noted the benefits of donor harmonisation to all partners as outlined at CRGA 33 and endorsed the process. In doing so, the Conference expressed particular appreciation to the Governments of Australia, France and New Zealand for their commitment to donor harmonisation and encouraged other donors to adopt the same process.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – HARMONISATION OF NEW CROP REMUNERATION ARRANGEMENTS

48. The Director-General summarised the outcome of the recent triennial review of remuneration arrangements for professional staff of participating CROP agencies (Mercer Review), carried out as part of the CROP harmonisation exercise approved three years ago. She indicated that two issues stand out in the Mercer Report. The reviewers found a large difference between CROP salaries and those of the comparator agreed by CRGA three years ago, the Australian Public Service, with SPC professional salaries being 5 to 32 % lower. In addition, the link of CROP salaries to the SDR has emerged as a major concern, with the downward trend of the SDR having a direct impact on professional staff salaries. Noting that the Mercer Review had been distributed late to CRGA 33, CRGA recommended to Conference that the CROP Working Group on remuneration (consisting of the Suva-based missions with assistance from CROP agencies) be reconvened, to enable adequate time to fully consider the findings of the Mercer Report. With the exception of the Representatives of Australia, Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom and the United States of America who did not support this recommendation as they had not been provided with enough time to fully

consider the report, CRGA 33 also recommended that Conference approve a one-off payment for professional staff salaries of 5% for 2004, pending the outcome of the Working Group Report. She believed that CRGA's recommendations were reasonable.

49. The Representative of Papua New Guinea expressed satisfaction at the completion of the Mercer Review as part of the approved CROP harmonisation process. He regretted, however, that the Mercer Report had been distributed late at CRGA. He concurred with the recommendation to reconvene the Working Group on remuneration as proposed by CRGA, with a view to reporting back to CRGA 34 in 2004. He also supported the 5% interim pay adjustment, pending the outcome of the Working Group Report.

50. The Representative of Kiribati reiterated the reservation made by his delegation at CRGA 33 relating to the 5% interim pay adjustment for 2004, as his Government has not yet had time to fully consider the Mercer Report. He stated that there was yet no evidence that CROP agencies were being adversely affected by the current remuneration scheme and his delegation therefore preferred to wait for the report of the Working Group.

51. The Representative of Samoa joined the previous speakers in expressing his delegations's appreciation to the people and Government of Fiji Islands for their warm hospitality and welcome. He thanked the Chairperson of CRGA 33 for his presentation of the issues contained in the CRGA Report. He stressed that, in adopting the recommendation relating to the adoption of the 5% interim pay adjustment for 2004, CRGA had agreed that this would be pending the outcome of the Working Group Report and that it would be funded from savings within Budget and that there would be no increase in contributions from members.

52. The Representative of Australia reiterated the reservation made by his delegation at CRGA 33 relating to the 5% interim pay adjustment for 2004. He re-emphasised that the Mercer Report had been distributed too late to enable full consideration by CRGA. Although he respected the views of the majority of CRGA members in the matter, he noted that these were complex issues with financial implications that required adequate time for full consideration. He expressed, however, Australia's support for the recommendation to reconvene the Working Group on remuneration as proposed by CRGA 33.

53. The Conference noted the completion of the surveys of support staff terms and conditions and that no adjustments with material financial impact are necessary in either New Caledonia or Fiji Islands, but that maternity leave will be lengthened at SPC headquarters to bring this entitlement in line with local regulations.

54. The Conference also noted the completion of the Mercer review of Professional staff remuneration as part of the CROP harmonisation exercise. Noting that the Mercer review had been distributed late, the Conference:

1. Endorsed the formal reconvening of the CROP Working Group on remuneration (consisting of the Suva-based missions with assistance from CROP agencies) to consider fully the findings of the Mercer report, paying particular attention to:
 - a. Appropriate future benchmarks such as a basket of comparators and not solely the Australian Public Service as comparator,
 - b. Remunerations that will attract and retain qualified professionals, using information and statistics on staff recruitment and retention to be provided by the Secretariat and other CROP organisations;
2. Requested the Working Group to prepare a report for consideration by CROP governing bodies, including CRGA, in 2004.

55. The Conference, with the exception of Australia, Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, approved a one-off payment for professional staff salaries of 5% for 2004, pending the outcome of the Working Group report. In approving this, the Conference noted that it would be

funded from savings within Budget and that there would be no increase in contributions from members as a result.

56. The Conference noted the reservations expressed by the Representatives of Australia, Kiribati, Niue, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, who did not support the recommendation relating to the interim pay adjustment, as they had not been provided with enough time to fully consider the report at this stage.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – YEAR 2004 BUDGET

57. The Director-General introduced the agenda item, noting a number of budget highlights. She drew the Conference's attention to the significant increase in some work areas, especially in the Public Health Programme, but also the Agriculture Programme and the Cultural Affairs Programme. She noted, however, a decrease in other programme areas such as Statistics, Demography and Youth. She noted that SPC's Non-core Budget has grown significantly, which indicates donor confidence in the organisation. She pointed out to Conference that the 2004 budget is balanced and that members' assessed contributions remain at the same level. She highlighted that the administration budget, which comprises only 8.7% of SPC total budget, is well below the target of 10%. She noted the shift to a programme funding approach by donor countries, which provides the organisation with greater flexibility and enables SPC to better respond to regional needs. She also welcomed new donors such as the Global Fund. She concluded by saying that the 2004 budget addresses basic funding requirements of the organisation, takes into account the priorities of members and that the budget has been prepared in accordance with the directions of Conference.

58. The Representative of Australia said his country supported the recommendations of CRGA 33 to approve the 2004 budget, and congratulated SPC on securing other donor funding, particularly the Global Fund. He said Australia appreciated SPC's revised budget format noting that it resulted in greater transparency.

59. The Representative of Tuvalu stated that his country endorsed the 2004 budget.

60. The Representative of New Zealand congratulated SPC on keeping the administrative budget to a low of 8.7%, noting that other organisations should work towards this.

61. The Conference adopted the Year 2004 Budget as recommended by CRGA 33.

62. The Chairperson of Conference requested countries to reconfirm their contributions to the 2004 Budget.

63. The Representative of American Samoa offered his country's unrelenting support of SPC and confirmed its continued contribution on the current basis. He associated with the comments made by New Zealand in relation to administrative costs

64. The Representative of Australia said his country was pleased to endorse the Year 2004 Budget and reaffirmed Australia's support of SPC.

65. The Representative of Cook Islands said his country supports the 2004 budget and will meet its obligations.

66. The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia said he confirmed his country's support.

67. The Representative of Fiji Islands confirmed his country's commitment to SPC.

68. The Representative of France said his country confirms its assessed contribution, together with an increase of 3% to its non-core contribution to programmes to a total of 2.3 million Euros. In addition, France will contribute additional funds to specific projects that it has agreed to support jointly with other donors. France's contribution to the French/Australian HIV/AIDS project will be 1.08 million Euros over 5 years

starting in July 2003. France will also provide 300,000 Euros over 3 years to the French/New Zealand PREPARE PPHSN project scheduled to begin in January 2004.

69. The Representative of Guam concurred on the budget and would make arrangements to pay its contribution early in 2004. She added that her country will endeavour to work on a payment plan for arrears with the Secretariat.

70. The Representative of Kiribati confirmed his country's commitments, and noted that SPC should soon receive its outstanding contributions.

71. The Representative of the Marshall Islands said his country would endeavour to meet its assessed contribution, and expressed thanks to SPC for preparing a transparent budget.

72. The Representative of Nauru conveyed her government's commitment to membership and said Nauru would continue to look at ways of improving its arrears situation. She congratulated the Secretariat on its transparent budget and stated her country's endorsement.

73. The Representative of New Caledonia confirmed his country's contribution, noting that his country had made provisions in its 2004 budget to account for its assessed contribution at the same level, together with a non-core contribution of 10,000,000 CFP which is to be shared by the women's, cultural and fisheries programmes.

74. The Representative of New Zealand noted New Zealand's contribution of NZD 6,000,000 as part of its three-year NZD 18,000,000 funding contribution.

75. The Representative of Niue supported the 2004 Budget and their assessed contribution. She said that Niue would settle its outstanding contributions.

76. The Representative of Palau conveyed his government's support of the assessed contribution formula, and stated that Palau would settle its arrears by the end of 2003.

77. The Representative of Papua New Guinea supported the assessed contribution formula with the proposed category increase for his country and stated that Papua New Guinea will meet its assessed obligations for 2004.

78. The Representative of French Polynesia endorsed SPC's 2004 budget and assessed contributions with the proposed category increase for her country, and said she was pleased to see good management in SPC's finances.

79. The Representative of Samoa said his country will meet its assessed contribution, but stated he was not in a position to make non-core contributions for 2004.

80. The Representative of Tokelau pledged Tokelau's 2004 assessed contribution.

81. The Representative of Tonga supported the assessed contribution levels.

82. The Representative of Tuvalu supported and commended SPC in the preparation of its 2004 budget.

83. The Representative of the United Kingdom noted his country's support for SPC's 2004 budget and welcomed the transparency. He said the United Kingdom would meet its assessed contribution.

84. The Representative of the United States of America noted his country's support for the 2004 budget and for the work of SPC.

85. The Representative of Vanuatu congratulated the Director-General and her team for the professional presentation of the 2004 budget. He stated his country's commitment to meet its assessed obligation.

86. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna supported SPC's "clean and honest" 2004 budget. He indicated that Wallis and Futuna would pay its arrears at CRG. He noted that SPC must ensure that salary costs do not reach a critical threshold, exceeding 50% of SPC's budget.

87. The Representative of Australia pledged that Australia will provide about AUD 10 million, comprising: 3.4 million for its assessed contribution, 4.8 million for programme support and 1.3 million for project support, including the PAHP, the HIV/AIDS Project and the AusAID secondment to SPC.

Conference considered and approved the Year 2004 Budget as recommended by CRGA 33. The Budget was prepared in accordance with members' expressed priorities for SPC's work programme and is balanced. The total amount of this budget is 32,113,120 CFP units, of which 8.6 million CFP units is for the Core part of the budget, and 23.4 for the Non-Core Budget. The budget meets the funding requirements for the coming year. It reflects an overall increase in most programme areas, particularly in the Public Health Programme. The administrative budget accounts for 8.7%, which is well below the target of 10% that SPC sets for the organisation. 168,000 CFP units will be transferred from the general reserve to the 2004 Budget, to be allocated to the three divisions for increased programme services, which will enable the Secretariat to better respond to unforeseen needs of island members. *(The full budget document is included on the CD-Rom that accompanies this report.)*

Conference noted the statements by members re-affirming their assessed and extra-budgetary contributions for 2004. Members' total assessed contributions will remain at the current level.

Conference also welcomed the statements by members regarding their arrears.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – THEMATIC DISCUSSION: THE PACIFIC'S RESPONSE TO INFECTIOUS DISEASES

(The PowerPoint presentations made to the meeting are included on the CD-Rom that accompanies this report.)

Sub-Theme 1: Setting the Scene

88. The Senior Deputy Director-General introduced the thematic discussion, outlining the five sub-themes. He said it was his hope that Conference would agree on an outcome statement at the close of the discussion.

89. SPC's Public Health Manager gave an overview of infectious diseases in the Pacific. He stated that although PICTs are at various stages of the "health transition", the recent SARS epidemic served to stress that all countries continue to face a significant threat from communicable diseases. He outlined the major threats to the region from communicable diseases under six categories:

- Epidemic diseases (e.g. cholera and typhoid)
- Vector-borne diseases (e.g. malaria and dengue)
- Respiratory infections (e.g. tuberculosis, especially multi-drug resistant TB, influenza and SARS)
- Vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g. measles, rubella and hepatitis B)
- Zoonotic infections (diseases transmitted to humans from animals, e.g. leptospirosis)
- HIV/AIDS and other STIs

He stated that communicable diseases continue to pose a major threat to the health of PICT communities, and that a commitment to effective planning and preparation was vital if disease outbreaks were to be prevented.

Sub-Theme 2: Global and Regional Threats to PICTs

90. The Regional Medical Epidemiologist for the Pacific Island Health Officer's Association (PIHOA)/Centers for Disease Control, Dr M. O'Leary, gave a presentation addressing the global and regional epidemiology of HIV/AIDS. He stated there were 42 million cases worldwide, the majority of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. He outlined the differing status of the disease in different regions,

indicating that much of Asia and Papua New Guinea were experiencing an exponential rise in the number of cases. He summarised the number of cases in various PICTs, dividing the region into four categories: Niue and Tokelau have no reported cases; Cook Islands, Nauru, Palau, Wallis and Futuna, American Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu each have less than five reported cases; Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, CNMI, Tonga, FSM and Samoa all have between 5 and 99 reported cases; French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia and Fiji Islands have between 100 and 300 reported cases, with Papua New Guinea having over 7000 reported cases. He described various HIV/AIDS epidemic levels, and indicated that all PICTs were in the “low level” category, except for Papua New Guinea, where up to 2-3% of all pregnant women are HIV positive. He said the Pacific was vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because of its high level of STI infection, indicating that behaviours that spread HIV are the same as those that spread STIs, and the presence of another STI can facilitate the spread of HIV. He pointed to research that indicated that over one-third of all pregnant women in PICT urban areas had at least one STI. He noted several requirements with regards to reducing HIV transmission:

- Prevent, treat and cure other STIs
- Provide support (education, condoms, treatment) to all vulnerable groups, especially youth, infants of infected mothers, sex workers, mobile populations, and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)
- Reduce risk taking (decrease number of partners and increase use of condoms).

He mentioned several impractical and inefficient measures that did not assist in reducing HIV prevalence:

- Mandatory testing
- Public release of names
- Isolation of individuals with HIV.

In closing he stressed that although HIV/AIDS is not a widely prevalent disease at present in the region (other than in Papua New Guinea), it could increase rapidly, and political support for action combined with good technical tools were critical in preventing an epidemic.

91. The WHO Epidemiologist-Suva, Dr Rob Condon, presented the global/regional epidemiology of SARS. He highlighted how quickly the epidemic had spread, and stressed the “almost incalculable” economic impact of the disease. He outlined WHO’s response, which included rapid assessment, provision of training and guidelines, and procurement of personal protective equipment. He contrasted the response to the epidemic by the governments of Singapore and Canada (Toronto), explaining that the political commitment shown in Singapore was instrumental in helping to control the outbreak. He stressed the need for PICTs to use the lessons provided by SARS to prepare for future outbreaks of infectious disease, noting the need for better infection and border control, and upgraded facilities.

Sub-Theme 3: The Pacific Islands Response to Infectious Disease Epidemics

92. The SPC Epidemiologist gave an overview of the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN), a voluntary network of countries, institutions, and organisations that focuses on communicable diseases, particularly those responsible for epidemics. PPHSN works to improve public health in PICTs. He outlined the three main networks maintained by PPHSN and explained the way they functioned during the SARS crisis:

:

- PacNet, a network of health professionals that provides early warning on epidemiological threats;
- LabNet, a linked network of laboratories at the national, regional and reference levels that provides access to diagnostic facilities;
- EpiNet, a network of response teams that facilitates immediate response to emerging disease outbreaks.

He stressed the importance of commitment by PICTs to preparedness, highlighted the significance of early information sharing and the need for appropriate legislative frameworks to facilitate the public health response to epidemic, emerging and re-emerging diseases, noted the importance of sustained funding for both in-country and regional response, the existence of the PPHSN strategic framework developed by senior PICT health professionals as common reference for the region, emphasized the necessity of a multisectoral approach in communicable disease control, stressed the importance of e-mail and Internet access for health professionals and highlighted the need for a dedicated and stable public health workforce. He closed by thanking the donors for supporting PPHSN developments, in particular France and New Zealand (especially with the new project PREPARE), as well as Australia, Taiwan/ROC and the United States.

93. In response to a query from the Representative of New Zealand, the SPC Epidemiologist indicated that PPHSN targets six outbreak-prone communicable diseases, i.e. cholera, dengue, influenza, leptospirosis, measles and typhoid fever, plus SARS, and that PPHSN plans to include diseases such as HIV/AIDS and STIs, plus some others of international public health importance which are easy to incorporate given their commonalities with the current priority diseases.

94. The Representative of the United States of America made reference to a recent East-West Center paper on the response to HIV/AIDS, which made a forceful argument in favour of early intervention. The Regional Medical Epidemiologist (PIHOA/CDC), affirmed that delays in responding to the HIV epidemic could cause huge problems for countries. He said that many countries failed to take action until the disease was an actual problem, at which point they faced a crisis. He stressed that PICTs could benefit from international experience, saying, “we know what works”. He emphasised the need for commitment and political will.

95. The Representative of France noted that a network similar to PPHSN was currently being established in Europe, and observed that this helped validate the choices that SPC made in establishing PPHSN in the Pacific. He asked for clarification regarding LabNet, asking if there was a Level 3 lab in the Pacific. SPC’s Epidemiologist responded by saying that the levels were, in fact, functional levels, which for ease of understanding were referred to as national, regional and reference labs. He said that regional labs were being established in PICTs, and indicated one lab (in New Caledonia) was providing some reference level services. He hoped other laboratories would develop their capacity to provide services to the region.

96. The Representative of American Samoa asked for clarification from the WHO Epidemiologist about how politicians in various countries were engaged to address the SARS epidemic. The WHO Epidemiologist responded that fortunately political leaders were well briefed through the media and that by engaging immediately with ministers of health, WHO was able to bring the issue directly to the cabinet level in countries concerned. He stressed that countries that lacked high-level political commitment to addressing SARS failed to adequately respond to the epidemic, while those that had high-level task forces in place responded very well.

97. The Representative of Samoa expressed his thanks to the presenters. He asked how SPC would respond if SARS or a similar epidemic emerged in the near future. He noted the various networks, but asked for clarification on how these would operate in the face of an epidemic. SPC’s Epidemiologist stated that SPC had developed guidelines in conjunction with WHO, which PICTS can use to evaluate their preparedness. He said that if an epidemic occurred and SPC’s assistance was requested, his programme would either send a staff member, or call on PPHSN to send a qualified individual to assist in responding to the problem, as SPC has done in the past.

98. The Representative of Solomon Islands thanked the panel for their presentations, and inquired whether the focus on SARS had led to a lessening of attention to HIV/AIDS. The Regional Medical Epidemiologist (PIHOA/CDC) agreed that massive campaigns such as the one that targeted SARS could draw attention away from other diseases, but stressed that not all diseases would respond to an intensive effort. He spoke of the danger of “donor burnout”, indicating this happened in past decades with malaria. He emphasised the need to show progress over time, but also to be realistic, noting that while malaria or HIV would not be eradicated in the foreseeable future, a sustained effort to tackle these diseases was still needed.

99. The Representative of Wallis and Futuna asked how his territory would be served by the regional laboratory in New Caledonia (Pasteur Institute), and asked if a response network could be established in Wallis and Futuna. SPC’s Epidemiologist said that the availability of laboratory services was dependent in part on good airline connections, which was not an issue between Wallis and Futuna and New Caledonia. He noted that funding could be a problem, however. He said that PPHSN was working to develop a network of local response teams, the EpiNet teams.

100. The Senior Deputy Director-General stressed the importance of the PPHSN networks for information sharing and said that even though the Pacific region was relatively poorly resourced, these networks allowed for an effective response to disease outbreaks.

101. Dr Kabwea Tiban from the Kiribati Ministry of Health gave a presentation on Kiribati's response to the HIV/AIDS outbreak in his country. He said that Kiribati already had a high level of political commitment to addressing the issue. He highlighted that the majority of cases involved seamen and their spouses, and stressed that figures relating to cases might not reflect the real situation. He outlined Kiribati's response, which he said was based on several elements, including a multisectoral response, political commitment, and strategic planning. He emphasised that Kiribati's strategy was to prevent HIV transmission through:

- the control of STIs
- working with adolescents on behaviour change
- voluntary counseling and treatment for patients
- prevention of mother-to-child transmission
- support for PLWHA.

102. The Representative of the United States of America inquired about the cooperation that Kiribati received from shipping companies and seamen's board in testing seamen on their return to Kiribati. Dr Tiban stressed the excellent cooperation they received from shipping companies, explaining that almost all sailors were tested before and after their voyages.

103. SPC's HIV/AIDS Adviser gave a presentation on the Pacific region's response to infectious diseases. He noted that since the first HIV⁺ case in the region in 1984, there have been a variety of responses; some that work and some that don't. He noted that currently, the key responses and initiatives in the region are the:

- SPC HIV/AIDS capacity strengthening
- Regional HIV/AIDS AusAID-funded initiative
- Regional HIV/AIDS AusAID-French-funded initiative
- Global Fund to Fight Tuberculosis and AIDS
- UNAIDS

104. The main themes of the regional response to HIV/AIDS are the:

1. development and implementation a regional strategic plan to combat HIV/AIDS to complement national responses;
2. development of a regional coordinating mechanism that would streamline assistance to PICTs;
3. mobilisation of resources and expertise; and
4. enhancement of surveillance systems to support public health action.
5. direct assistance to countries in their national response

SPC HIV/AIDS capacity strengthening initiative

105. The main initiative to achieve this was to establish and core fund an HIV/AIDS Adviser position (which has been done). Other key positions will be funded under new regional initiatives. Work carried out through this initiative include, coordination, surveillance, conducting and analysing studies and surveys, and providing training to PICTs. He noted that the outcome of the HIV/AIDS Regional Coordination Meeting (22 October 2003) was the establishment of two focal points —SPC for PICTs, NGOs, non-UN regional organisations and donors, and UNAIDS for the UN organisations.

Australia-French-funded initiative

106. SPC's HIV/AIDS/STI Adviser described this joint 5 year project. The first component, an integrated project supported jointly by Australia and France, will provide assistance in the areas of regional HIV/AIDS/STI strategy redevelopment and implementation, behaviour change communication, HIV/AIDS/STI surveillance, involvement of territories in regional training and other activities. It will be overseen by SPC's Public Health Programme. Component 2, funded only by Australia, will provide support to PICTs for the development and implementation of national HIV/AIDS/STI plans. It will be overseen by an Australian Management Consultant.

Global Fund

107. The Global Fund initiative is a five-year, USD 14.2 million project, targeting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with funding for the first two years secured. The main objectives of this initiative in

relation to the HIV/AIDS component, are to conduct targeted surveillance activities, expand laboratory facilities and support, improve STI clinic facilities in countries; provide STI syndromic management training for health staff; procure drugs for treatment; and reduce risk of HIV transmission by targeted interventions, such as the development and distribution of IEC materials, encouraging use of condoms through social marketing, development of life skills training programme, and the coordination and strengthening of NGOs working on STI/HIV/AIDS, and implementing rights strategy.

UNAIDS (Pacific)

108. There are two offices in the region: one in PNG and the other in Fiji Islands, which covers 10 countries. A third office is being considered in Samoa. The goal of the UNAIDS initiative is to provide flexibility and ownership by partner organisations at the country level by targeting NGOs. UNAIDS is also implementing an HIV/AIDS development programme, providing six to nine-month grants between USD 2000-6000. Current Fiji-based UNAIDS activities include:

- coordination and management oversight of funded project implemented through co-sponsoring UN agencies;
- Asia Pacific Leadership Forum;
- provision of technical support and information services;
- coordination support
- provision of feedback to the global level at the UN
- advocacy role.

109. SPC's HIV/AIDS Adviser concluded by saying there were five key themes for the response to HIV/AIDS/STI in the region:

- Regional strategy which complements country strategies
- Regional coordination
- Resource mobilization and expertise
- STI/HIV/AIDS surveillance to obtain information and direct assistance
- Direct assistance to countries

He said there must be complementarity between regional and national initiatives, and that the outcome of HIV/AIDS/STI should be seen as a sum product of all efforts.

110. Dr Tuiketeki gave a presentation of a national response to HIV/AIDS, on behalf of the government of Fiji Islands. She began the situation update of Fiji by saying that Fiji's first HIV⁺ case in 1989 prompted the formation of the National Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS. She noted that between 1989 and 2000 there were multiple short-term and mid-term plans by the Ministry of Health to address HIV/AIDS. She noted there was now a National Multisectoral HIV strategic plan for 2004 to 2006. She said that from 1989 to September 2003 there had been 129 confirmed cases of HIV, and noted that the primary method of transmission was by heterosexual contact (84%). She remarked on the alarming rise in children contracting HIV from their mothers during the prenatal period, and also pointed out that nearly 80% of all HIV⁺ cases in Fiji include people between the ages of 20 and 39, which constitute the majority of the country's workforce. She further broke down the statistics by ethnic group and by gender, stating that 85% of all cases were ethnic Fijians and that 63% were men. She noted that 10 years after the first case, the number of cases increased slowly, but that there has been an increasing trend since 2000. She noted that there were 18 new reported cases of HIV in Fiji this year. The estimates indicate there will be approximately 6500 HIV⁺ cases in Fiji Islands by the year 2015.

She outlined Fiji's multisectoral response, citing eight priority areas:

- Prevention of people from becoming infected,
- Prevention of HIV/AIDS in young people;
- People living with HIV/AIDS
- Voluntary counseling and HIV testing
- Clinical management and treatment
- Surveillance and research
- Human rights and HIV/AIDS
- Coordinating multisectoral response

She highlighted that Fiji is now considering that this not so much a public health concern but rather a national security matter, which is a new direction for Fiji as it involves the Prime Minister's Office as well as

the Home Affairs Ministry. She concluded that the HIV/AIDS situation will continue to escalate in Fiji and that in the absence of a cure and vaccination, education will remain the primary weapon. This threat is compounded by a variety of factors. She stressed the importance of abstinence as the healthiest choice for young unmarried people and teenagers. She reiterated that the Fiji Islands government is fully committed all levels from the Prime Minister to the Great Council of Chiefs.

111. Dr Ninkana Moiya from Papua New Guinea presented his country's unique situation with regards to HIV/AIDS. He stressed that AIDS is currently the leading cause of death in the medical ward of the general hospital (PMGH), and that there has been a steep rise in the number of cases from 1995 onwards. As of March 2003, there were 7036 cases, and it is estimated that over 20,000 people are infected, with an estimated 100 new cases per month. Men and women are affected equally, and females are affected earlier in life. He outlined the initial health response in his country, with the establishment of the National AIDS Council (NAC) in 1986, the development of a safe blood supply, and the passing of the National AIDS Council Act in 1997. PNG is now developing new national strategic plans as well as a multisectoral comprehensive approach to complement national and provincial responses. He highlighted in particular that provincial AIDS committees have been established and are being integrated in provincial councils, that NAC is the main advocate for national action, government agencies must be more proactive and also support provincial programmes to implement innovative and appropriate responses. He stressed the impact of HIV/AIDS on households, the labour force, economic growth, resulting in increased public spending. He listed a number of positive achievements, including that a national multisectoral response is underway, that national and provincial responses are positive, that donors are willing to provide support, that an HIV/AIDS management prevention act is in place, with policies approved, that there is good NGO and private sector response, with the involvement of trade unions and private companies. He concluded by saying that future challenges include advocacy and commitment from top-level political leadership, strengthening provincial responses, and negotiation and coordination of donor partners.

112. The Representative of French Polynesia highlighted that one of the characteristics of her country that affects HIV/AIDS is the two-way movement of people between the outside world and French Polynesia. She said that the authorities in her country reacted quickly after the first AIDS cases, and now have good knowledge of the situation. Their actions have been implemented in the context of taking care of people living with AIDS, respecting their rights, and preserving the economic activity of the country. The infection has been stabilised since 1995, with only about 10 new cases per year, a large percentage of whom are temporary residents. She noted that out of the 235 HIV + cases detected, 59 are now deceased and 83 have left the country. Today, out of the 90 HIV + cases in French Polynesia, 22 have AIDS. She said that 40% of all new cases are youth under 30 years of age, the majority of which are born in French Polynesia. She said that her country has from the beginning emphasised surveillance in order to have a full grasp of the situation, with good results. She said that screening tests are proposed on a systematic basis to all pregnant women; out of the 5000 pregnant women tested per year, there have not been any new HIV cases for the last three years. She said that 9000 voluntary tests are now carried out per year at free and anonymous test centres, with compulsory reporting of positive cases. She noted that the authorities have also emphasised preventative actions, such as street information at night, the free distribution of condoms at key locations throughout all the islands, and a new French-funded programme to place vending machines in secondary schools and nightclubs. Finally, French Polynesia has put into place a new sexual education programme in secondary schools, taught by specialised nurses who emphasise protection. She also noted the positive results from community contact training in schools. She explained that her country placed importance on specialised medical consultation, that patients all have access to treatment with retro-viral drugs, and she emphasised the fact that social support exists so as not to exclude people living with AIDS. She noted the complementary role played by NGOs, such as "Agir Contre le SIDA". She concluded that even though the situation was improving, it was necessary to remain vigilant and continue with surveillance. Responding to a question from the Representative of New Zealand, she stated that the condom vending machine programme was funded by France to a total amount of XPF 5,000,000.

113. The Chairperson opened the floor for discussion after thanking the speakers for their enlightening presentations.

114. The Representative of Fiji Islands thanked SPC for its work in mobilizing the support of development partners and in securing funding from the Global Fund. He expressed particular appreciation to

the Senior Deputy Director-General for coordinating the development of the regional proposal from the Pacific, with valuable assistance from WHO. The proposal is now considered a model by the Global Fund. He encouraged the Secretariat to continue to pursue various funding sources, internationally and regionally, as countries do not have the capacity to access these funds at national level. He welcomed the fact that UNAIDS was now re-establishing its activities in the region. He concluded by saying that countries can learn from the experiences of French Polynesia, particularly on how to obtain data on unreported cases, and how to establish surveillance and response actions.

115. The Representative of Kiribati said that members now have a fuller picture of the HIV/AIDS situation in the region, and welcomed the information provided by other countries. He stated that parliament is very supportive and committed. He noted that the rate of escalation experienced in the region highlights the need for more concerted effort. He therefore asked for the help of donors and development partners to assist PICTs with these issues.

Sub-Theme 4: Challenges facing PICTs in their fight against infectious diseases

116. The Senior Deputy Director-general recapped the main themes covered in the morning's presentations:

- The magnitude of the HIV/AIDS problem in the Pacific region varies, but incidence of the disease is increasing in most PICTs
- Political commitment is the key to addressing the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS; present levels of political commitment vary across the region
- It is crucial that country's and regional organizations adopt a multi-sectoral approach to addressing the issue
- Education regarding HIV/AIDS is of critical importance
- Organisations such as SPC need to ensure that HIV/AIDS is addressed in all of its sectoral programmes

He also noted that a Pacific regional strategy was currently being developed by various countries and organisations, and would be presented to the Pacific Islands Forum at its 2004 meeting. He stressed the importance of donor harmonization and partnerships, highlighting the partnership between France, Australia and the Secretariat in the Pacific regional HIV/AIDS project, and between France, New Zealand and the Secretariat for the PREPARE project; he also noted the partnerships between SPC, WHO and various UN agencies. He explained that these were strategic partnerships that allowed country's and agencies to pool resources and more effectively address the issue. He noted the critical importance of HRD, and closed by highlighting the request made by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Islands that SPC and WHO take the lead in preparing the region's fourth round application to the Global Fund.

117. Dr. Tuiketei of the Fiji Islands Ministry of Health gave a presentation addressing the challenge PICTs face in their fight against infectious disease. She explained that while a number of communicable diseases (e.g. polio, measles, etc.) were under control in Fiji, new and emerging diseases (e.g. dengue, HIV/AIDS, SARS, etc.) were not. She outlined the surveillance and reporting systems and laboratory network currently in place in the country, and highlighted the challenges faced by Fiji Islands in addressing communicable diseases. She noted that gaining political commitment was a problem in some PICTs, but emphasised that her Prime Minister had shown a continued commitment to addressing communicable diseases and to meeting the MDG targets, and had allocated specific funding to fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. She also made reference to the funding her country had received from its development partners. She said that infectious diseases posed a significant economic threat, both in terms of tourism decline and as a result of lost economic productivity. She also noted that infectious diseases should be considered in relation to the issues of human resource development, natural disasters, and environmental health. She closed by reemphasising the importance of political commitment and concerted efforts by all stakeholders, and by noting again the importance of collaboration and the contribution that PPHSN could make in strengthening public health surveillance in the region.

Sub-Theme 5: Which way from Here?

118. The Senior Deputy Director-General introduced the panelists, and made a presentation on behalf of the Dean of the Fiji School of Medicine (FSOM), Dr Wame Baravilala, who was unable to attend the morning's session. He stated that FSOM had a variety of programmes that addressed infectious diseases from different perspectives, and which offered a range of certificate, diploma and degree courses. The subject areas include :

- Environmental health
- Medical laboratory technology
- Medicine
- Pharmacy
- Public health

He also made reference to medical training available through the University of Papua New Guinea, and to training of nursing staff, which is available in most PICTs.

119. The Deputy Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Mr Iosefa Maiava, gave a presentation addressing the means by which PIFS is working to mobilise support for addressing challenges in the social sector. He said that costs of not acting to address epidemic diseases were not sufficiently recognized or appreciated at the leadership level in many PICTs. He made reference to the issue of SARS, and to the fact that the political leaders in many countries did act quickly, in part because they realized that SARS could cripple their economies. He said that this highlighted the need to ensure that political leaders were aware of the economic implications of infectious disease outbreaks. He spoke of the competition for resources that exists between various sectors, and emphasized the fact the health sectors continued to be under-resourced. He said that the enormously complex health situation in most PICTs (which are confronted by both NCDs and communicable diseases), served to compound the problems stemming from the lack of adequate funding. He also indicated that the long-term nature of health gains made it difficult for political leaders to direct significant resources to these issues. He made reference to the remarks made by the Prime Minister of Fiji Islands, who stated that infectious diseases constituted a security issue for the region, and said that view had been adopted by regional leaders, through the Pacific Islands Forum. He made reference to the fact that Forum leaders had shown a real commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS by calling for the presentation, to their 2004 meeting, of a regional strategy on HIV/AIDS, the development of which is being coordinated by SPC. He said that this high-level commitment on the part of political leaders in the region had been instrumental in securing support from the Global Fund. He emphasised the need to include additional diseases, and particularly NCDs, in the MDGs applicable to the region, as if this was not done countries in the region would not be able to access the funding support they need to address these health threats. He also noted the importance of ensuring that economic reforms do not result in problems in various social sectors. He spoke of the need to strengthen political commitment to addressing infectious diseases, and to make the international context (e.g. MDGs, international trade rules) more friendly to countries of the Pacific region.

120. The New Zealand Associate Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Official Development Assistance), the Honourable Marian Hobbs, began by saying that New Zealand as a Pacific Island country, and one that shared families with other Pacific countries, it also faced threats from the infectious diseases under discussion. She then went on to give delegates a politician's perspective (as opposed to the perspective of the public servant or the expert). She pointed out that to be re-elected politicians have to be liked, and want to be able to tell reassuring stories. She said that it was difficult for politicians to show strong leadership when a community does not want to hear a message, giving as an example the ban on smoking in public venues. She made the point that SARS was morally and politically neutral, in contrast to some other diseases. She emphasised that politicians often have several different jobs, she herself holding several portfolios. Politicians are not experts in one area, she said, and have a need to be educated and persuaded of the importance of issues, in the light of conflicting funding priorities. She said that it is difficult for politicians to allocate money for programmes before the population at large perceives the problem, such as an epidemic. She concluded by encouraging countries to adopt a regional strategy, which would assist politicians when justifying allocations to aid organisations.

121. Mr Jim Lloyd, member of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia, said he was disturbed by the picture painted by the expert speakers, and explained that HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea was of great concern, particularly to Australia. He said, however, that the relatively low incidence of the

disease in other Pacific countries gave them the opportunity to deal with the problem before it reached crisis proportions. He said that Australia was providing funding to PNG to help it deal with the problem, but pointed out that education was an important part of the response and one that could be achieved with minimal funding. He agreed that political will was needed, and noted the need for support for community leaders (and particularly church leaders). He said that HIV/AIDS impacted particularly on young people and children, and therefore was an important security issue, as these age groups represented the future of Pacific nations. He pointed to the Australia's success in addressing HIV/AIDS, but said that Australia could never cease its work on the issue. He said that the success achieved to date by French Polynesia was also very encouraging to other Pacific countries. He said that Australia was doing what it could to assist countries in the region against HIV/AIDS, and noted Australia's funding support to SPC, and the AUD 12,500,000 support to the Pacific regional HIV/AIDS project, which will consolidate the progress made in earlier efforts. He also made reference to Australia's co-funding, with New Zealand, of the regional UNAIDS programme coordinator. He agreed that a regional approach was needed, including support to both governments and NGOs, for the implementation of regional strategic plans.

122. The Acting Director of the Pasteur Institute of New Caledonia, Mme Eliane Chungue, discussed the role of the Pasteur Institute within the PPHSN network. She explained that, along with the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the Pasteur Institute of New Caledonia was part of an international network of Pasteur Institutes comprising 23 Institutes throughout the world. The International Pasteur Institute Network's scientific philosophy and policy are aimed at responding to useful public health, research and training missions at the local, regional and international levels in a spirit of scientific solidarity. As an allied member of the PPHSN, the EpiNet member for New Caledonia and a member of LabNet, she added that the Pasteur Institute could provide scientific expertise to the Pacific. In addition to its role as a Level 2 regional laboratory, she stated that the Pasteur Institute functioned as Level 3 laboratory within LabNet and could go beyond baseline diagnosis by (i) conducting microbacteriological surveillance with more in-depth characterisation of the pathogens in circulation, (ii) monitoring emerging drug resistance and, in this way, serve as a reference point for the SPC. This could involve serotyping, gene typing, identifying new phenomena such as resistance to anti-infectives and antibiotics. She said that even after a disease is controlled, research services are needed to ensure that the disease does not re-emerge. She added that the Pasteur Institute can assist in training laboratory technicians through training sessions and workshops. She also supported LabNet's objectives to assist Level 1 and 2 laboratories in Pacific Island countries. The Pasteur Institute is not a donor in the strict sense of the term but can and would like to provide its support, through the scientific community it represents, since it has a local, regional and international role to play.

DISCUSSION

123. The Representative of American Samoa commended the presenters for their well-prepared statements and said that they had shed light on many of the issues and provided significant information that was of interest to all countries in the region. He noted the importance of joining agendas and not letting one specific issue take away from SPC's activities. He said he was pleased to learn that PICTs are looking at diseases as an issue of national security. He urged SPC to address these issues in a regional approach and not in a fragmented manner, as they impact on all PICTs, and that the ultimate purpose should be to eradicate AIDS throughout the region. He noted that SPC was well suited to strategise and implement strategies in a global coordinated response. He suggested that there should be a regional laboratory, similar to the CDC that responds to all countries equally. He suggested that there was a need to channel funding for a Level 3 laboratory, through SPC. He added that SPC should develop a response team for rapid intervention in the region.

124. The Senior Deputy Director-General provided a summary of the panel discussion. He first emphasised that PICTs need to act together now. He stated that the Pacific is one region in the world where the infection trend could be halted and even reversed, but that the key to achieving this is through high-level political commitment, and harmonised donor assistance. In this respect, he acknowledged with gratitude the initiatives funded by donors present at this Conference. He further noted that HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue, but one of national security.

125. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Conference, thanked the Secretariat for the efficiency shown in organising the presentations and panel discussions.

126. The Conference adopted the following statement.

“The Pacific Islands Response to Infectious Disease”.

The Conference noted, with respect to infectious diseases in the region that:

- Infectious diseases continue to result in significant ill health and death.
- Diseases such as cholera, typhoid, malaria, dengue fever, influenza, tuberculosis, leptospirosis and HIV/AIDS occur across the region.
- New infectious diseases continue to emerge, such as the recent outbreak of SARS.
- Infectious diseases will continue to result in a significant disease burden for the foreseeable future.
- Increases in noncommunicable diseases will also increase the vulnerability of Pacific Island people to a number of infectious diseases.

The Conference acknowledged, with respect to effective action against infectious diseases that:

- Preparedness and planning; public health surveillance; outbreak and case investigation; response and prevention through activities such as health promotion, environmental health and immunisation programmes are essential.
- Strong partnerships between Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), regional organisations and donors, and between PICT governments, NGOs, the private sector and communities are especially important.
- The Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) and the regional Global Fund project are excellent examples of such partnerships.

The Conference noted, with particular reference to HIV/AIDS that:

- HIV/AIDS is on the increase in many PICTs, and has already reached epidemic proportions in Papua New Guinea.
- Political will, commitment and leadership are key to addressing the HIV/AIDS challenge in PICTs, to prevent it becoming a regional epidemic.
- The Pacific region is probably the only region in the world today where there may be a realistic chance of achieving a target of halting and ultimately reversing the increasing trend of HIV infections.

The Conference acknowledged that central to achieving this goal are:

- The existence of high level political will and commitment at national and regional levels to lead the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- The recognition of HIV/AIDS as a broader issue than just a health problem (as it has obvious social, cultural, economic and political dimensions).
- The development and implementation of a broad-based and integrated “Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS and STIs” that demonstrates a coordinated approach by all stakeholders addressing the HIV/AIDS challenge in the region”.
- The mobilisation of financial and other resources through donor partnership initiatives such as the France/Australia and France/New Zealand initiatives in HIV/AIDS and disease surveillance.

In responding to the challenge of infectious diseases in Pacific Island countries and territories into the 21st century, the Conference agreed on the following outcomes:

1. With respect to the role of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in infectious disease surveillance and control, the Conference agreed that:

- Infectious disease surveillance and control is core business for SPC’s Public Health Programme. SPC must provide active support to PICTs in areas such as surveillance and prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs); coordinating the development and implementation of a new regional HIV/AIDS/STI strategy; tuberculosis control; and surveillance and control of key epidemic and other infectious diseases, principally through PPHSN. SPC should continue to seek opportunities to strengthen the support it is able to provide to PICTs in this area.
- SPC needs to continue to actively support PPHSN, in particular through its ongoing role as

Coordinating Body Focal Point.

- SPC should work with PPHSN members to progressively increase the range of diseases covered by the network. Specifically, SPC should integrate surveillance of HIV and other STIs into the network.
- SPC needs to assist member countries and territories where required through training staff in infectious disease surveillance and control.
- SPC should strengthen technical support available to PICTs in relation to the prevention of infectious diseases through activities such as environmental health and health promotion.
- SPC should seek to integrate awareness of health issues and potential health impacts into its range of programmes.
- SPC should ensure that the regional strategy for HIV/AIDS/STI is reviewed and redeveloped in time for consideration by the Pacific Islands Forum in August 2004.

2. With respect to regional coordination in infectious disease surveillance and control, the Conference:

- Acknowledged that a range of regional organisations are actively involved in this area, in particular in relation to HIV/AIDS.
- Noted that the HIV/AIDS Regional Coordination Meeting organised by SPC in October 2003 recommended that there was a need for improved coordination of HIV/AIDS activities and that this coordination should principally be undertaken by SPC (for PICTs, NGOs, donors and non-UN regional organisations) and UNAIDS (for UN organisations).
- Agreed that SPC should take on this coordination role for HIV/AIDS activities.
- Recommended that for other infectious diseases, activities should continue to be discussed and informally coordinated as necessary through the PPHSN and regional tuberculosis programmes.

3. With respect to member countries and territories, the Conference:

- Noted that most of the responsibility for infectious disease surveillance and control rests with individual governments and administrations.
- Agreed that ensuring these activities are effective at the national level is essential if the health of Pacific people is to be adequately protected.
- Agreed that sharing public health information within and between PICTs, through PPHSN from the very early stages of possible outbreaks, is fundamental to effective outbreak control.
- Recommended that PICTs continue to actively participate as partners in PPHSN.
- Recommended that PICTs seek to strengthen multi-sectoral approaches to public health issues, including infectious disease control and prevention.
- Further recommended that PICTs, with the support of donors and regional organisations, seek to develop a dedicated and stable workforce with appropriate career paths.
- Further recommended that PICTs actively address HIV/AIDS prevention, including the development and/or implementation of national plans, and utilising the opportunities provided by new regional initiatives.
- Further recommended that PICTs explore and utilise opportunities to prevent other priority infectious diseases, such as through environmental health, health promotion and immunisation programmes.

4. With respect to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the Conference:

- Noted with appreciation the role played by the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office and SPC in helping facilitate the successful submission from 11 Pacific Island countries for funding in round 2 of the GFATM.
- Endorsed the decision by the Pacific Island Regional Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCCM), the coordinating body for the regional GFATM project, for the Pacific to contend for round 4 funding from the GFATM.
- Also endorsed the decision by the PIRMCCM to include in this new bid other interested PICTs that meet GFATM eligibility criteria.
- Requested further assistance from SPC and WHO to facilitate the regional submission to round 4 of the GFATM.

5. With respect to the importance of high level political leadership and commitment in the fight against HIV/AIDS, the Conference:

- Noted the strong emphasis in the UNGASS Declaration on the need for political leadership and commitment at the highest level, to lead the national fight against HIV/AIDS.
- Also noted that in practically all African countries for example, heads of government and heads of

state are now at the forefront of this fight in their respective countries.

- Further noted that political commitment to and leadership in this fight is only just beginning in some PICTs.
- Acknowledged that the current rapid increase in HIV/AIDS in a number of PICTs makes the urgent attention and involvement of political leaders in this issue essential.
- Agreed to advocate for stronger political commitment and leadership at national levels, to ensure that Pacific Islands' most valuable resource, their people, are better informed about HIV/AIDS, and better protected.

6. With respect to preparedness for future infectious disease outbreaks, the Conference:

- Agreed that being prepared for possible future outbreaks is essential for prompt and effective public health responses.
- Recommended that PICTs pay more attention to preparedness, including: the development and adoption of national plans to guide future responses to outbreaks of priority communicable diseases, the regular updating of these plans informed by periodic exercises, and the identification of necessary resources that could be accessed quickly.
- Also recommended that SPC should provide additional technical support to PICTs to strengthen their activities in this area, and through PPHSN should organise occasional regional exercises to test preparedness.
- Further recommended that SPC should work with donors and PICTs to identify a flexible funding mechanism such as a revolving fund, to support rapid response to major disease outbreaks.

7. With respect to the importance of legislative and policy frameworks in supporting the effective control of infectious diseases in the Pacific, the Conference:

- Acknowledged that modern and flexible public health legislation, with supportive policy frameworks, greatly assists national public health action, including the control of priority and emerging infectious diseases.
- Recommended that PICTs review and, where necessary, seek to update their relevant legislative and policy frameworks, and that the legislation should be implemented.
- Also recommended that SPC should provide technical support to PICTs on request to assist them with this process.

8. With respect to the role of development partners and donors in infectious disease surveillance and control in the Pacific, the Conference:

- Acknowledged the important contributions from a number of donors under their bilateral, regional or multilateral programmes to support these activities in PICTs.
- Noted with appreciation the new France-New Zealand project in infectious disease surveillance, and the new France-Australia project in HIV/AIDS/STI.
- Agreed donor support for infectious disease surveillance and control needs to continue into the foreseeable future.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – EVALUATION OF SPC'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairperson stated that Conference had discussed *in camera* CRGA 33's recommendation relating to the request of the incumbent Director-General, Ms Lourdes Pangelinan, for a further and final two-year term as Chief executive Officer, effective from 6 January 2004.

He indicated that, after careful consideration of the evaluation of the incumbent Director-General's performance over the past two years, and noting the continued excellent services provided by the organisation to the region, CRGA had overwhelmingly and unanimously agreed to recommend to Conference that Ms Pangelinan be offered a further and final two-year contract.

The Chairperson said that, during its *in camera* session, Conference fully endorsed CRGA's recommendation and took this opportunity to note the very high confidence it has in Ms Pangelinan and to place on record its consensus that she is steering the organisation on the right course.

During its *in camera* session, Conference also agreed to send to Ms Pangelinan a letter of commendation that recognises her leadership and vision, and congratulates her on her performance of the past several years.

On behalf of Conference, the Chairperson congratulated Ms Pangelinan on her reappointment as Director-General.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – YEAR 2005 CONFERENCE

127. The Conference welcomed the offer by the Representative of Palau to host the fourth Conference of the Pacific Community in 2005. The Chairperson will be provided by Palau, and the Vice-Chairperson by Cook Islands.

STATEMENTS BY OBSERVERS

128. Statements handed to the Secretariat will be appended in full to the final report.

129. The Representative of the Republic of Korea complimented the Chairperson on his leadership, and paid tribute to SPC for the excellent arrangements. Korea has been an observer since 1982 and places great importance on regional cooperation. Its firm intention is further strengthen ties with the Pacific Community. In 2003 Korea provided USD 50,000 to assist with the preparation of thematic papers for the Ninth Triennial Women's Meeting, and the organisation of ministerial meeting by SPC's Pacific Women's Bureau to assess progress and future work on the Beijing Platform.

130. The representative of Taiwan/ROC provided copies of his country's statement to the Conference, reaffirming its commitment to promote, strengthen and support economic progress, mutual understanding, collaboration and friendly relations among the countries and peoples of this region, both bilaterally and through the various regional organisations. The Government of Taiwan/ROC has provided USD 245,000 to the Pacific Community for nine projects for 2004.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – OTHER BUSINESS

130. The Conference agreed there was no other business.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The Conference adopted its report as amended.

CLOSING

The Representative of Australia, on behalf of all members, expressed appreciation to the Chairperson for his leadership and guidance in ensuring that the Conference fulfils the expectations of the membership. This tribute was applauded by the Conference.

The Representative of France warmly thanked the Secretariat for the excellent meeting services, in particular in relation to translation and interpretation services and production of the report in the two official languages.

The Director-General offered her personal thanks to all the members for the confidence they placed in her. She paid tribute to her staff, saying that she was proud to be part of this organisation and the work that it is doing in the service of the region, particularly at a time when wonderful things are happening in SPC.

The Representative of the Federated States of Micronesia, speaking on behalf of the Conference, noted that it had been an extremely successful Conference and that the Conference had achieved its purpose in the true spirit of the Pacific way. He stated that all members should be proud of the accomplishment. He highlighted key items on the agenda that are crucial to the work of the organisation and its ability to deliver services to members, and that had been successfully addressed by the Conference, such as donor harmonisation, remuneration and CROP harmonisation, the budget and the evaluation of the Director-General. He offered

his Government's sincere congratulations to Ms Lourdes Pangelinan on her re-election as Director-General. He assured her of the Conference's continued support in meeting the island needs and gratitude for her excellent leadership of the Secretariat. He welcomed the Conference deliberations on the theme and the presentations and discussions on the growing threat of HIV/AIDS in the region, and on appropriate responses considering the long-term impact of this infectious disease on people. He expressed the Conference's appreciation to the guest speakers and presenters for their very useful and informative contributions to the theme. He thanked the Chairperson for his able leadership and recognised the valuable contributions by all members. He also expressed the Conference's gratitude to CRGA for its excellent work and particularly to CRGA's chairperson for leading the meeting. He thanked the staff of the Secretariat and the observers present. In conclusion, he commended the Government of Fiji Islands for the excellent hosting arrangements and more particularly for the very warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all present. He expressed the Conference's formal gratitude to the Prime Minister of Fiji Islands for having opened the meeting. He thanked all the local personnel and liaison officers for making this an enjoyable and fruitful stay. He wished everyone a safe journey home.

The Chairperson thanked the members for their support and for their contribution to a successful Conference. He thanked the Secretariat for an excellent meeting and expressed particular appreciation to the staff of the Secretariat. He wished the members a safe trip home.

The Senior Deputy Director-General delivered the closing prayer.

**Agreed formula for assessed contributions by island and donor members
for the next three years**

The Conference agreed to retain the current allocation for assessed contributions, with island members contributing 9.4% and donor countries contributing 90.6% of total contributions.

The Conference approved the following formula for assessed contributions of island members for the next three years, and thanked the island members for their agreement, particularly those members who agreed to higher assessed contributions in a show of solidarity true to the spirit of the Pacific.

Island Members	Current		New		Change
	%	CFP Units	%	CFP Units	CFP Units
Category 1					
French Polynesia	0.6816	52,121	0.7762	59,353	7,232
New Caledonia	0.6816	52,121	0.7762	59,353	7,232
Papua New Guinea	0.6816	52,121	0.7762	59,353	7,232
Fiji Islands	0.6816	52,121	0.7762	59,353	7,232
Guam	0.6816	52,121	<i>Now in Category 2</i>		
Category 2					
Guam			0.3547	27,124	- 24,997
Northern Mariana Islands	0.3547	27,124	0.3547	27,124	-
American Samoa	0.3547	27,124	0.3547	27,124	-
FSM	0.3547	27,124	0.3547	27,124	-
Solomon Islands	0.3547	27,124	<i>Now in Category 3</i>		
Category 3					
Solomon Islands	-	-	0.3033	23,193	- 3,931
Palau	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Samoa	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Marshall Islands	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Vanuatu	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Kiribati	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Tonga	0.3033	23,193	0.3033	23,193	-
Nauru	0.3033	23,193	<i>Now in Category 4</i>		
Cook Islands			0.3033	23,193	+ 4,282
Category 4					
Cook Islands	0.2473	18,911	<i>Now in Category 3</i>		
Nauru	-	-	0.2473	18,911	- 4,282
Wallis and Futuna	0.2473	18,911	0.2473	18,911	-
Tuvalu	0.2473	18,911	0.2473	18,911	-
Niue	0.2473	18,911	0.2473	18,911	-
Tokelau	0.2473	18,911	0.2473	18,911	-
Pitcairn	0.2473	18,911	0.2473	18,911	-
Sub-Total	8.4337	644,918	8.4337	644,918	
Host Country Levies					
New Caledonia	0.5732	43,828	0.5732	43,828	-
Fiji Islands	0.3932	30,064	0.3932	30,064	-
Sub-Total	0.9663	73,892	0.9663	73,892	-
Total PICTs	9.4	718,810	9.4	718,810	-

The Conference noted that the five metropolitan member countries (donor members) have decided to maintain the current percentage split for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006. This would need to be renegotiated at the next CRGA, if the metropolitan membership composition changed during this period.

	%	CFP units
Australia	30.5940	2,339,507
France	18.1130	1,385,088
New Zealand	17.9250	1,370,712
United States	17.9680	1,374,000
United Kingdom	6.0000	458,816
Total	90.6	6,928,123

Statements by observers

STATEMENT BY KOREA

INSERT

STATEMENT BY TAIWAN/ROC

Honourable Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Honourable Madam Director-General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Ladies and Gentlemen...

The Government of Taiwan/ROC extends warm greetings to all distinguished participants at this meeting and would like to acknowledge and thank the Secretariat of the Pacific Community for the invitation to attend the 33rd CRGA and the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community.

The Government of Taiwan/ROC would like to reaffirm its commitment to promote, strengthen and support economic progress, mutual understanding, collaboration and friendly relations among the countries and peoples of this region, both bilaterally and through the various regional organisations.

For a decade now, the Government of Taiwan/ROC under the auspices of the annual Taiwan/ROC – Forum Countries Dialogue Meeting, has contributed approximately US\$10 million dollars to the development of the region in the fields of education, agriculture, fishery, health, energy, culture, youth development, women development, marine industries, small and medium enterprises and various other sustainable development projects for the region.

In the year 2000, the Government of Taiwan/ROC launched the “Taiwan/ROC-Pacific Islands Forum [PIF] Scholarship Scheme” with an annual commitment of US\$500,000. The Forum Island countries within the region have warmly welcomed the Scholarship Scheme and up till now a total of US\$2.5 million has been committed to the Scheme for applicants from the 14 Forum Island Countries.

At the Tenth Taiwan/ROC – Forum Countries Dialogue held in Fiji last year, my Government committed US\$811,000 for 33 projects for 2003, in addition to the US\$500,000 annual assistance to the Scholarship Scheme. Of this, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community received US\$265,000 for 12 projects in 2003.

This year at the Eleventh Taiwan/ROC – Forum Countries Dialogue in New Zealand, the Government of Taiwan/ROC committed a total funding assistance of US\$820,000 for 33 projects, through the various regional organisations for the year 2004. Again, this is in addition to the annual US\$500,000 funding assistance of the “Taiwan/ROC-Pacific Islands Forum [PIF] Scholarship Scheme” which now brings Taiwan/ROC’s total commitment to the region for 2004 to US\$1,320,000. Of this, Taiwan/ROC’s contribution to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community is US\$245,000 for 9 projects for 2004.

The Government of Taiwan/ROC would like to express to the Honourable Chairperson and Distinguished Participants, its congratulations for the successful deliberations at this 33rd CRGA and the 3rd Conference of the Pacific Community. It also extends to Honourable Madam Director-General Lourdes Pangelinan, the Deputies and Staff of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, every success in the implementation of the 2004 projects funded by the Government of Taiwan/ROC.

Thank you!

List of participants

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