

SPC/CONF 12 (2021)

Outcomes
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**OUTCOMES OF THE TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**
(2 December 2021, virtual meeting)**OUTCOMES****AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: OPENING OF CONF 12**

1. The 12th Conference of the Pacific Community (CONF 12) opened on 2 December 2021, and was conducted virtually, using the Zoom online platform. The Secretariat was present at the headquarters of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Noumea, New Caledonia, and at the Suva, Fiji, Regional Office.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following SPC members: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America and Vanuatu. The European Union attended as a permanent observer. It was also attended by the following partners: International Labour Organization (ILO), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Oceania Customs Organisation Secretariat (OCFO), Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO), Pacific Disability Forum, Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP), Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), UN ESCAP, UNFPA and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
3. The meeting was opened by the Director-General of the Pacific Community, Dr Stuart Minchin, who invited the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, His Excellency David W. Panuelo, to deliver the opening prayer. He offered welcoming remarks to all members, the permanent observer, partners and other stakeholders, and thanked the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Hon. Mark Brown, for his contributions to the Conference as Chairperson, his wisdom and guidance over the last two years.

4. In a video message to Conference, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, the Hon. Bob Loughman Weibur, warmly welcomed members to the Conference on behalf of the government and people of Vanuatu. He spoke to the importance of SPC as a forum for exchanging ideas and knowledge to confront the myriad of challenges facing the region, and he hoped that members would embrace the inclusion of 'Well-Being' as a prosperity indicator. He thanked all members for joining these discussions and shaping the future of the region.
5. The Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Cook Islands, Ms Tapaeru Hermann, spoke on behalf of the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Hon. Mark Brown, and delivered his statement as the outgoing Chairperson of Conference. She acknowledged the Director-General and the Secretariat for their support and noted the critical role that SPC has and will continue to play in helping the region forge a way forward. The Pacific Community's new Strategic Plan 2021+ would be a tool for determining this pathway back to prosperity. The Representative warmly welcomed the UK in its resumption of membership with SPC and congratulated the EU on becoming SPC's first permanent observer. The Representative also congratulated SPC's membership for pulling together through this difficult time. She invited the Minister of Finance and Economic Management of Vanuatu, Hon. Johnny Koanapo Rasou, to assume the Chair on behalf of Vanuatu and Ms Peleni Talagi, the Secretary of Government of Niue, to assume the Vice-Chair on behalf of Niue.
6. The Chairperson assumed the Chair and thanked the outgoing Chair for their statement and able chairing over the past two years. He welcomed all members to the 12th Conference and made opening remarks. He then invited the Director-General to present the agenda of Conference.
7. The Director-General led the Conference through the agenda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

8. Following the Director-General's summary of the agenda, the Chairperson requested a motion for its adoption. New Zealand moved that the agenda be adopted and the Republic of the Marshall Islands seconded. The Chair declared the agenda adopted.

ELECTION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE

9. The Secretariat noted the drafting committee nominees: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, United States of America and Vanuatu. As per the Rules of Procedure

of Conference, Niue, as Vice-Chair of Conference, assumed the Chair of the Drafting Committee.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

10. The Director-General (D-G) reflected on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that continued to affect people in the region and around the world, and led members in a moment of silence for victims of the pandemic and those staff members that SPC had lost during the year. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the D-G highlighted SPC's active role in the Joint Incident Management Team (JIMT), which advised member governments on responses to the pandemic; delivered training and planning support; and provided leadership and technical expertise in the areas of coordination, surveillance, infection prevention and control, laboratory services, risk communication and clinical services. He noted the development of a COVID-19 Response Framework, which identified different levels of readiness and action depending on the COVID-19 situation in SPC's host countries, and the increased focus on staff well-being during the COVID-19 outbreaks in Noumea and Suva. The Secretariat noted Heads of Delegations' request to provide and coordinate further medical workforce surge support in the region in the face of the ongoing pandemic and other public health threats via its Public Health Division.
11. The D-G noted the operational and financial stability of SPC, despite the challenges of COVID-19, and highlighted several key pivots: Enhanced information services capability and digital transformation, with enhanced investment in interpreted video conferencing, internet connectivity, learning delivery tools, cyber-security and control systems; Virtual capacity building through online learning systems; Online consultations, meetings and workshops; procurement of in-country consultants; innovation and repurposing of specialised capacity; and a flexible approach to the temporary remote location of staff. Key resource changes had been made to assist strengthening capabilities across the organisation. New Directors in Human Resources, Resource Mobilisation and Integration and Climate Change had been hired. The Deputy Director-General (DD-G) roles were realigned with a OneSPC approach to improve delivery for members. The focus in 2022 would be on building cross-cutting programmes across key focus areas that delivered integrated solutions for members.
12. Progress has been made on transforming institutional effectiveness and governance through the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2021+ process, which had been based on a member-driven, inclusive approach that promoted Pacific thought leadership and voices. He emphasised continued collaboration with the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) family on the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy and the need to strengthen partnerships and coordination to optimise resources, networks and assets for the benefit of the region. On the international front, SPC had played a key role in the UN's Food Systems Summit, UNFCCC COP26, the UN Ocean Decade, the UN High-Level Dialogue on Energy, the

sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement and support for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as part of the 15th Convention of Parties.

13. The Director-General welcomed the resumption of the membership of UK, which brought the total number of members to 27, and looked forward to working with them in the future. He welcomed the EU as a permanent observer to SPC following an out-of-session decision by SPC's members. The EU was a long-standing and significant donor to SPC and this closer partnership would ensure more consistent engagement with SPC in support of regional programmes. He acknowledged the renewal of existing partnerships with New Zealand, Australia and France. These partnerships were critical to achieving a long-term view and confidence, both in programming and finance. He noted new partnerships with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund to support members in accessing climate finance. Through the Director of Integration and Resource Mobilisation, SPC continued to actively pursue new opportunities to support members in the future.
14. The Chairperson welcomed the D-G's Report and thanked him for highlighting SPC's achievements in 2021. Formal statements were made by the President of FSM, His Excellency, David W. Panuelo, New Zealand's Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Aupito William Sio, New Caledonia's Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and the Protection of Young People, Hon. Mickael Forrest, and the Ambassador of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Fiji, H.E. Tregar Albon Ishoda. By video message, the Conference also heard from the Minister of State for Pacific and the Environment of the UK, the Right Honourable Lord Goldsmith, whose statement marked the UK's resumption of its membership in SPC.
15. Heads of Delegation expressed sincere condolences for all members who had lost loved ones to COVID-19, and expressed solidarity with the people of the Solomon Islands. The resumption of the UK's membership to SPC was warmly welcomed, as was the successful application by the EU to become a permanent observer to SPC. Heads of Delegation also expressed deep appreciation for the leadership of SPC's Director-General and highlighted the importance of SPC's work to accompany the development aspirations of its members and its ongoing relevance to addressing key issues in the Pacific region.
16. Conference:
 - i. welcomed the Director-General's Report.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: REGIONAL STATE OF PLAY AND SPC'S ROLE

17. The Chair of the CRGA Subcommittee for the Strategic Plan, Mr Jimmy Naouna of New Caledonia, presented the draft Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2021+ (Strategic Plan), which was co-developed by SPC members and the Secretariat according to the key

principles of CRGA stewardship, inclusive consultation and high-level thought leadership. The Strategic Plan was aligned with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and members' priorities at national, regional and global level. The draft Strategic Plan was developed as a navigational tool that would guide the work and service of SPC in years to come and incorporated both the cultures and the contexts of the Pacific region and members' visions for the future. Over the past 24 months, SPC had embarked on a journey of reflection and learning to inform the long-term thinking and planning towards the Blue Pacific's long-term vision. The CRGA Subcommittee and Secretariat led members through several participatory processes that focused on culture and connections to ensure the organisation's continued and evolved support for all Pacific people. The resulting Strategic Plan was co-developed and adaptive, which enabled the achievement of shared goals through transformation and collaboration.

18. The Chairperson thanked the Chair and all members of the Subcommittee and Secretariat for their steadfast efforts and commitment in steering this Strategic Plan process to finalisation and in helping collective efforts to create resilience and opportunities for Pacific peoples.
19. Heads of Delegation expressed support for the adoption of the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2021+, and commended the Secretariat on the clear and compelling narrative of SPC's added value to the region over the next decade.
20. Conference:
 - i. adopted the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2021+;
 - ii. acknowledged the continued role of the CRGA Subcommittee for the Strategic Plan in providing consistent guidance to the organisation.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: LETTER FROM CHAIR OF CRGA 51 TO CHAIR OF CONFERENCE ON
CRGA 51'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS MADE BY CRGA 50**

21. The Chairperson of the 51st Meeting of CRGA, Mr Manuel Terai from French Polynesia, was invited to speak to the matters discussed by members at CRGA 51 and to present the resolutions of CRGA 51 to Conference. He thanked members for the great honour and privilege in chairing the 51st session of the CRGA and that its success could be attributed to the active participation of member countries and territories as well as the Secretariat. He also thanked Ms Desna Solofa from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Samoa for her excellent leadership of the drafting committee, which allowed for the rapid adoption of all recommendations. He highlighted a summary of CRGA's recommendations that were communicated in the *Letter to the Chair of 12th Conference for Conference's consideration*:

- i. CRGA warmly welcomed the UK's resumption of its membership with SPC and congratulated the European Union (EU) on becoming the first permanent observer to the organisation;
- ii. The meeting warmly welcomed the Director-General's report, which had highlighted the good work SPC had done in 2021, in particular SPC's assistance to the region's COVID-19 pandemic response, remaining active in the CROP family and through international convenings, delivering a balanced budget and ensuring that the Secretariat continued to deliver high-quality scientific and technical support to the region despite the challenges to project execution and implementation;
- iii. CRGA heard the Chair of the Subcommittee for the Implementation of the Strategic Plan, Mr Jimmy Naouna of New Caledonia, co-present the Pacific Community's Strategic Plan 2021+, which was a result of an inclusive, member-driven approach that promoted Pacific leadership and voices. The meeting also warmly thanked and congratulated the Chair, members of the Subcommittee, the Strategy, Planning and Learning (SPL) team and SPC staff for their input over the last two years;
- iv. CRGA approved several revisions to the Pacific Community Governance Arrangement, including to the Criteria and Procedures for the Appointment of the Director-General of the Pacific Community and the Policy on Membership and Observer Status;
- v. The establishment of a Polynesia Regional Office was approved and would begin operations out of Suva, Fiji, before transitioning to a new host country location in 2023;
- vi. CRGA heard from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, who commended SPC on delivering a balanced budget and maintaining reserves. However, he expressed concern at low implementation rates and noted that these were being closely monitored. CRGA noted that SPC had received an unqualified approval for the 2020 Financial Statements from KPMG (Fiji) and recommended that KPMG be re-appointed in its role as SPC's external auditor for the period 2022-2025;
- vii. CRGA heard an update on SPC's 2021 financial performance as well as the proposed 2022 budget including remuneration. CRGA approved the resumption of discussions with the members of the working Group on assessed contributions and host country grants on whether it was possible to resume consultations on this issue in 2022. The meeting also encouraged all development partners to consider the adoption of multi-year restricted programme funding and to pay SPC's target rate of 15% PMF to ensure long-term financial sustainability;
- viii. CRGA recommended that the Director-General, Dr Stuart Minchin, be offered an extension of his appointment as Director-General of the Pacific Community for a period of two years, from the end of his current contract. Furthermore, the meeting

endorsed the Standing Committee's assessment that the Director-General has, over the past year, been performing in the 'adding value zone' and noted that the implementation of any salary increase be effective from the beginning of the year following his review. CRGA noted the Director-General's preference to cap any increase at 100% of band 18 and that this would be applied. Finally, CRGA recommended that women in leadership and gender parity at senior level be a key focus area for the Director-General's performance in 2022;

- ix. Finally, CRGA noted several papers, including the Human Resources Report, the Pacific Board of Educational Quality Report, an update on CRGA 50 and out-of-session decisions and implementation, and the Report on the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014-2023.
22. As set forth by the Rules of Procedure for the Conference of the Pacific Community, Conference was also required to note the decisions of CRGA 50 in 2020, which were presented by the Director-General.
23. Conference endorsed the recommendations of CRGA as communicated in the *Letter from the Chair of CRGA 51 to the Chair of the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community*.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND CRGA'S
RECOMMENDATION TO CONFERENCE
(Closed session)**

24. Conference:
- i. endorsed CRGA 51's assessment that the Director-General has, over the past year, performed in the 'adding value zone', i.e., his performance has consistently exceeded the requirements of the position;
 - ii. approved CRGA 51's recommendation that the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community offer Dr Stuart Minchin an extension of his appointment as Director-General of the Pacific Community for a period of two years, from the end of his current contract;
 - iii. noted that the implementation of any salary increase for the Director-General is effective from the beginning of the year following this review. As Director-General has indicated his preference to cap any increase at 100% of band 18, this will be applied;
 - iv. directed that women in leadership and gender parity at senior level be a key focus area for the Director-General's performance in 2022;

- v. noted that the CRGA Standing Committee will relay the outcome of this performance assessment to the Director-General following CRGA 51 and the 12th Conference.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: THEMATIC 12TH CONFERENCE FACE-TO-FACE IN 2022 – DATES AND FOCUS

25. Given the challenges presented by COVID-19, the decision was taken to focus the 12th Conference and convene the thematic session in a face-to-face meeting in the first half of 2022. The Chairperson invited the Director-General to make introductory remarks on the proposal.
26. The Director-General noted that 2022 was SPC's 75th anniversary year and welcomed the proposal to host the thematic session of 12th Conference in Vanuatu to discuss the Conference theme and celebrate this milestone for SPC.
27. The Chairperson invited the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, the Honourable Marc Ati, to present the focus of the thematic session for member consideration. Within the context of the new Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2021+, the Minister proposed the theme 'Blue Prosperity and Pacific Well-Being', which highlighted the Blue Pacific Continent's ambition for prosperity but also firmly anchored the measures of prosperity in the Pacific's own interpretation of progress and 'Well-Being', rather than more traditional economic growth indicators, like Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He emphasised the importance of a 'People-Centred Approach' to sustainable development that accounted for the unique contexts of Pacific region. In the context of recent regional and international convenings, such as the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, the UN Decade on Ocean Science, the COP26 negotiations and the Blue Pacific Food Systems Dialogue, the Minister noted that the theme allowed for an inclusive and holistic consideration of land, sea, air, people and ecosystems in the Pacific context. Vanuatu's hope was that the theme would draw attention to the centrality of the Pacific's blue resources and ocean initiatives, and encouraged Conference to think of longer-term visioning around prosperity in the region. Vanuatu was a leader in setting 'Well-Being' measures, which was demonstrated in its Vanuatu 2030 People's Plan, and he encouraged a strong reflection of this theme in the Pacific Community's Strategic Plan 2021+. Finally, during the 2022 thematic session, it was hoped that there would be an opportunity to reflect on the Strategic Plan in its initial phase and to celebrate the 75th anniversary of SPC. Three quarters of a century was an incredible testament to the strength of Pacific partnerships and SPC's shared regional commitment to the power of multilateralism. The organisation had faced many challenges, lessons and experiences along this journey, but had survived and remained strong because it had stayed united. It was this strength and determination that offered confidence in a sustainable and resilient future, both for SPC and for all the people of the Pacific.

28. Heads of Delegation welcomed the invitation by Vanuatu to join the thematic 12th Conference in Port Vila in July 2022. They also expressed support for the theme.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: YEAR 2023 CONFERENCE VENUE AND ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

29. The Director-General updated Conference on the practice for determining the location of Conference. The Rules of Procedure for the Conference of the Pacific Community provide that Conference is held at SPC's headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, unless a member offers to host the event. In the latter case, the host will need to meet the full additional cost to SPC of hosting the Conference, and the associated pre-Conference meeting of CRGA, away from SPC's headquarters. Based on the established order of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Conference in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Pacific Community, New Caledonia would be Vice-Chair.

30. Conference noted that:

- i. the Thirteenth Conference of the Pacific Community will be convened at SPC's headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, in 2023 subject to (iii) below;
- ii. a decision on the Chairperson for 13th Conference would be made by CRGA 52, and New Caledonia would provide the Vice-Chairperson;
- iii. any member wishing to host the 13th Conference may do so, subject to resolution by agreement if there are several offers, and to further note the member will need to meet the full additional cost of hosting the Conference and the associated pre-Conference meeting of CRGA 53.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: ADOPTION OF CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

31. Conference adopted its outcomes.

CLOSING REMARKS

32. The Director-General and Chairperson made closing remarks. The Kiribati High Commissioner to Fiji, His Excellency David M. Teaabo, delivered the closing prayer.

33. The Chairperson declared the 12th Conference of the Pacific Community closed.
