



Assembly

Distr.: General
15 June 2017

Original: English

Twenty-third session
Kingston, 7-18 August 2017

Request for observer status in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (d), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly on behalf of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Note by the secretariat

1. On 24 January 2017, the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme submitted a letter to the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, requesting observer status in the Assembly of the Authority. The text of the letter and additional information provided by the applicant are contained in annexes I and II¹ to the present note.
2. In accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (d), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, intergovernmental organizations, such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, may participate as observers in the Assembly if invited by the Assembly.
3. Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the same rule further provide that observers referred to in paragraph 1 (d) of that rule may participate, upon the invitation of the President, in the deliberations of the Assembly on questions within the scope of their competence, and that written statements submitted by such observers shall be distributed by the secretariat to the members of the Assembly.

¹ Annex II is being circulated in the language of submission only.



Annex I

Letter dated 24 January 2017 from the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme addressed to the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) respectfully requests that the Programme be recognized by the Assembly as an observer to the International Seabed Authority, under the provisions of rule 82, paragraph 1 (d), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme is an intergovernmental organization that was established by its member Governments in 1992, to support regional cooperation and the coordination of the protection, management and sustainable development of the Pacific environment. The Agreement establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme came into force in 1993, thereby officially making the organization an autonomous body. The Pacific Regional Environment Programme currently has a membership of 26, comprising 21 Pacific islands and five metropolitan countries.

SPREP works to achieve its vision of “the Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures”, through four priority work areas:

- (a) Climate change resilience;
- (b) Ecosystem and biodiversity protection;
- (c) Effective waste management and pollution control;
- (d) Environmental governance.

SPREP has a strong interest in the work of the International Seabed Authority and is interested in becoming an official observer, given the following:

(a) The unique environmental mandate of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme within the Pacific region;

(b) SPREP has a broad portfolio of ocean responsibilities, including ocean monitoring and observation, ocean acidification, protection of threatened and migratory species, marine pollution and debris reduction, and the protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction;

(c) SPREP is actively promoting and building capacity with tools and approaches that have application to the management of resources and activities within the Area, including environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment, marine spatial planning, ecosystem-based management and marine protected areas;

(d) Four member countries of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga) have sponsored entities in their applications to sign exploration contracts with the International Seabed Authority to carry out deep sea exploration in the Area;

(e) The regulatory standards that are established for deep sea mining in the Area are likely to have implications for deep sea mining regulation within the Pacific Regional Environment Programme members’ exclusive economic zones.

Please refer to the attachment for further background information.^a

SPREP believes that it can contribute a unique and valuable perspective to the management of resources and the organization and control of activities within the Area and, accordingly, I request your support for our application for observer status.

(Signed) Kosi **Latu**
Director General
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

^a See annex II.

Annex II

Supporting information to the request by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme for observer status in the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority

1. Name of organization

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

2. Office address

SPREP
Avele Road
Apia, Samoa

Postal address (preferred)

SPREP
PO Box 240
Apia, Samoa

3. Names of proposed primary representatives

Kosi Latu
Director General
kosil@sprep.org

Clark Peteru
Acting Director, Environmental Monitoring and Governance Division Legal Adviser
clarkp@sprep.org

4. Purposes of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Under the Agreement establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the purposes of the organization are to promote cooperation in the South Pacific region and provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations (art. 2).

The vision of SPREP is: “A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.”

5. History

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme commenced in the late 1970s as a joint initiative of the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation, with funding from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Following the Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific in 1982, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme was established as a separate entity within the South Pacific Commission, based in Noumea. In 1990, the Programme became the South Pacific component of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.

SPREP left the South Pacific Commission in Noumea in 1992 and relocated to Samoa. It achieved autonomy as an independent intergovernmental organization,

with the signing of the Agreement establishing the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, in Apia, on 16 June 1993.

SPREP is recognized as the Pacific region's key intergovernmental organization for the environment and sustainable development and it functions as the secretariat for two regional conventions: the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment in the South Pacific Region (Noumea Convention); and the Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention).

6. Recent activities

With respect to its environmental mandate, the SPREP secretariat provides national-level technical advice, programme support, human and institutional capacity-building, and coordinated regional responses to global issues and international agreements, for example, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution From Ships.

Since 2011, SPREP has collaborated with the South Pacific Commission-European Union Deep Sea Minerals Project and has provided technical input to support the development of the Regional Legislative and Regulatory Framework for Deep Sea Minerals Exploration and Exploitation, the Regional Environmental Management Framework for Deep Sea Minerals Exploration and Exploitation and the Regional Scientific Research Guidelines for Deep Sea Minerals. The secretariat was invited by the South Pacific Commission to deliver presentations on environmental impact assessments, strategic environmental assessments, risk assessments, environmental best practices and the precautionary approach at the Workshop on Environmental Management of Deep Sea Mineral Activities, held in Fiji in October 2015.

In 2015, SPREP prepared a submission to the International Seabed Authority with regard to the development of a regulatory framework for mineral exploitation in the Area.

Throughout 2016, SPREP has been working alongside the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Community and the Forum Fisheries Agency to provide technical and policy support for the Pacific small island developing States at the United Nations in negotiations on the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. SPREP support has been provided in line with the organization's mandate on environmental matters and the core activities of the secretariat under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol and in relation to environmental planning tools (e.g., environmental impact assessments, strategic environmental assessments and marine spatial planning).

SPREP has also undertaken spatial analysis of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas and deep sea mining contract areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

7. Descriptive statement of the extent to which the purpose of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme relates to that of the International Seabed Authority and the contribution that the Programme can make to the progress of the Authority

The purpose of the SPREP secretariat in promoting cooperation among the Programme's members and providing assistance with protecting and improving the environment ensuring sustainable development for present and future generations is aligned with the responsibility of the International Seabed Authority to organize and control activities in the Area and ensure that the marine environment is protected from the potential harmful effects of deep seabed mining.

As the Pacific region's intergovernmental environment agency, SPREP has the acknowledged lead in the following areas relevant to the work of the Authority:

- Ocean monitoring and observation
- Marine protected areas
- Protection of threatened and migratory species
- Reduction of marine pollution
- Reduction of marine debris
- Marine spatial planning
- Environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments
- Protection of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction

8. Structure

SPREP is an intergovernmental organization with two organs, the SPREP Meeting and the secretariat. The SPREP Meeting elects a chair from among its members who remains in office until the following Meeting.

The SPREP Meeting is convened by the SPREP Director General, who is the head of the secretariat and holds responsibility for the administration and management of SPREP.

The secretariat is located in Apia and plays the lead role in implementing the strategic plan of SPREP, with cooperation and support from the Programme's members.

The Programme's broad portfolio of ocean responsibilities, as listed above, is spread across and integrated among all technical programmes of the secretariat, and the secretariat's Blue Team is the mechanism through which much of this integration is carried out.

9. SPREP members

SPREP members are American Samoa, Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

10. Affiliated organizations

SPREP is one of several intergovernmental agencies comprising the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific. The other agencies are the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, the Pacific Community, the Pacific Islands Development Programme, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Pacific Power Association, the South Pacific Tourism Organization and the University of the South Pacific.

The agencies of the Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific work together to ensure that regional organizations pursue their collective aim of achieving sustainable development in Pacific island countries and territories in the most effective and efficient manner.
