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Paper 6 B
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**FORTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(Alofi, Niue, 31 October – 2 November 2015)

**AGENDA ITEM 6 B: STRENGTHENING COHERENCE THROUGH THE COUNCIL OF REGIONAL
ORGANISATIONS IN THE PACIFIC (CROP)**

(Paper presented by the secretariat)

Summary

1. This paper, prepared by the secretariat, presents the report of the Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), offers some observations on the report and seeks guidance from CRGA on several matters that influence CROP cohesion.
 2. CROP exists to ensure that regional organisations pursue their collective aim of achieving sustainable development in Pacific Island countries and territories in the most effective and efficient manner.
 3. The CROP Chair's report highlighted issues including strategically situating CROP within the Framework for Pacific Regionalism; strengthened regional coordination in engaging with external donors/financiers; and coordinated support to countries both regionally and internationally.
 4. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. acknowledge the report of the Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) and approve the recommendations of the report;
 - ii. reaffirm that the secretariat should continue working towards improved CROP coordination, while preserving the interests of the Pacific Community;
 - iii. agree that management of CROP cohesion in relation to the Pacific Community rests with the Director-General, who will initiate requests for CRGA's guidance when required;
 - iv. agree to actively participate in the study of regional governance and financing, ensuring adequate representation from Pacific Community members on any review team or working group;
 - v. urge that CROP agencies increase their efforts to improve cohesion with the aim of enhancing service delivery to member countries and territories.
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STRENGTHENING COHERENCE THROUGH CROP

Purpose

1. This paper, prepared by the Secretariat, presents the report of the CROP Chair, offers some observations on the report, and seeks guidance from CRGA on several matters that influence CROP cohesion.

Background

2. CROP exists to ensure that regional organisations pursue their collective aim of achieving sustainable development in Pacific Island countries and territories in the most effective and efficient manner. All agencies are involved in facilitating and progressing development in the Pacific Islands. CROP seeks to ensure that, through coordinated and cooperative action, the best results are achieved in the interests of the people of the region.
3. The following agencies are members of CROP:
 - Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO)
 - Pacific Community (SPC)
 - Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP)
 - Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
 - Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)
 - Pacific Power Association (PPA)
 - Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
 - South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)
 - University of the South Pacific (USP)
4. Forum leaders established CROP (formerly South Pacific Organisations Coordinating Committee, SPOCC) in 1988, with a mandate to improve cooperation, coordination and collaboration between intergovernmental regional organisations to work towards achieving the common goal of sustainable development in the Pacific region. The 1995 Forum appointed the Secretary General of PIFS as the permanent chair of CROP. This decision was reaffirmed at the special leaders' retreat in April 2004. Leaders also mandated the Secretary General to undertake the CROP 'coordination role'. The Secretary General reports to leaders on CROP matters.
5. CROP CEOs meet two or three times a year with the aim of strengthening cohesion and improving service delivery to their members, noting that although CROP agencies do not all have the same membership, they do all have 14 members in common. Supporting the CROP CEOs are several working groups¹ comprising representatives of CROP agencies and key partners working in the same sectors. These working groups are being reviewed.

¹ CROP working groups: CROP Executives – working arm on Climate Change and Disaster Management; Gender Working Group; Health and Population Working Group; Human Resource Development Working Group; ICT Working Group; Land Working Group; Marine Sector Working Group; Pacific Energy Advisory Group (PEAG); Sustainable Development Working Group.

CROP Chair's Report

6. The report of the CROP Chair (Annex A) and the recommendations from the Forum Officials Committee are presented for CRGA's information. Key items covered in the report include strategically situating CROP within the Framework for Pacific Regionalism; strengthening regional coordination in engaging with external donors/financiers; and coordinating support to countries both regionally and internationally. The report is straightforward and reflects the sentiments of the CEOs.
7. The report also proposed several recommendations, which later became the decisions of the Forum Officials Committee as follows:
 - a) Affirmed the important role of CROP agencies in the processes of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism;
 - b) Affirmed the need for members to further explore opportunities to strengthen collective governance and financing arrangements;
 - c) Encouraged CROP agencies to continue their coordinated engagement with external donors on regional priorities, including through the 11th European Development Fund, to encourage more effective and coordinated support for Pacific island priorities and minimise fragmentation of regional efforts; and
 - d) Acknowledged the strong leadership of CROP Executives in ensuring cohesive and effective technical assistance and policy support to Forum Island Countries throughout the international climate change, gender, oceans and post 2015 development agenda negotiations.

Issues for CROP cohesion

8. While the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (paper 6 A) has a process that is still evolving, the limited engagement from CROP CEOs could be much improved. CEOs of technical agencies, including the Director-General of the Pacific Community, should be seen as the lead technical advisers in their agencies' areas of competence and should therefore play a stronger role in the Framework process.
9. A proposed study of regional governance and financing² will serve to identify opportunities to strengthen the collective work of CROP. The proposed study will also take into account recommendations from the Pacific Community's governance review. It is anticipated that this study will require significant oversight by member countries as it will examine how to strengthen regional policy cohesion and cooperation across CROP agencies, including through their governing councils.
10. Strengthened regional coordination in engagement with external donors and partners should become a key objective of CROP. At present, each agency individually approaches partners on available funding, with the result that they may be competing for the same pocket of funds at times. While in theory, strengthened regional coordination would help remove this competition, it will require rigorous discipline by agencies to keep within their given mandates. It will also require increased trust among agencies to avoid situations where, once a decision on a particular issue or position has been taken collectively by CROP CEOs, an individual agency does not undermine that decision by exploring alternative avenues that are not aligned with its previous commitment.

² This study will take forward recommendation 31 of the 2013 *Pacific Plan Review* to revisit regional governance and financing arrangements, endorsed by leaders: 'to overhaul the institutions, processes, governance and financing of regionalism and its implementation, such that a genuinely politically led process emerges, that hears citizens' voices, that establishes a manageable set of high-level priorities for change, and that is supported by agents and agencies who are themselves incentivised to deliver on regionalism's political priorities.'

11. Efforts towards improved coordination will also require the various governing councils to ensure rigour and discipline on questions of collective financing, noting again that 14 common members sit on the governing councils of all CROP agencies. The role of governing councils is central, with the onus on CEOs to ensure/advocate collective action where appropriate.
12. The global development arena is at a dynamic stage with the recent adoption of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the lead-up to the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP21). At the regional level, there has been considerable focus on ocean-related issues, the proposed regional strategy for climate and disaster resilient development, food security, and non-communicable diseases. For some of these issues, CROP agency mandates are clear cut, but for others they are less so. Where issues cut across the mandates of several agencies, CROP cohesion tends to break down as individual agencies seek to affirm their own legitimacy or promote their own interests. All CROP governing councils will need to play a greater role, not only in ensuring delivery of services within mandates, but also in supporting CEOs to facilitate CROP cohesion.

Recommendations

13. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. acknowledge the report of the Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) and approve the recommendations of the report;
 - ii. reaffirm that the secretariat should continue working towards improved CROP coordination, while preserving the interests of the Pacific Community;
 - iii. agree that management of CROP cohesion in relation to the Pacific Community rests with the Director-General, who will initiate requests for CRGA's guidance when required;
 - iv. agree to actively participate in the study of regional governance and financing, ensuring adequate representation from Pacific Community members on any review team or working group;
 - v. urge that CROP agencies increase their efforts to improve cohesion with the aim of enhancing service delivery to member countries and territories.
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Annex A

CROP CHAIR'S REPORT

Purpose

1. To report meeting outcomes of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) held over the last reporting period (July 2014 to August 2015).

Recommendations

2. The Committee is invited to:

- (a) **affirm** the important role of CROP agencies in the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* processes;
- (b) **affirm** the need for members to further explore opportunities to strengthen collective governance and financing arrangements in the region;
- (c) **encourage** CROP agencies to continue their coordinated engagement with external donors on regional priorities, including through the 11th European Development Fund, to encourage more effective and coordinated support of Pacific island priorities and minimise fragmentation of regional efforts;
- (d) **acknowledge** the strong leadership of CROP Executives in ensuring cohesive and effective technical assistance and policy support to Forum Island Countries throughout the international climate change, gender, oceans and post-2015 development agenda negotiations; and,
- (e) **task** the FOC Chair to write to the Chairs of the other CROP Governing Councils to endorse the above recommendations.

Strategic Alignment

3. This paper reports on the role of CROP to *'provide (i) high-level policy advice to Leaders and Members to facilitate policy formulation at national, regional and international levels; and, (ii) a mechanism between the Executives of Pacific regional organisations to coordinate action and review progress of their agencies' implementation of the Pacific Plan and other regional frameworks'* (para. 4 CROP Charter 2012). With the recasting of the Pacific Plan as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism in 2014, revisions within the CROP Charter will be needed to address this accordingly.

Financial Impact

4. The proposed actions within this paper will have nil financial impact. Individual CROP agencies fund their own participation and engagement in CROP work.

Background

3. The Council, which comprises the Chief Executives of nine regional organisations³, has met four times since July 2014, reflecting the importance of regular collective dialogue to strengthen coordinated

³ The members of CROP are: the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (PIFFA), Pacific Islands Development Programme (PIDP), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), The University of the South Pacific (USP), Pacific Power Association (PPA), and the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO).

support to countries, to respond to emerging issues and to deliver on the Leaders' call for deeper and more effective regionalism. Details of the substantive agenda discussed can be found at Annex 1. A summary of key achievements by CROP working groups is at Annex 2.

Key outcomes

5. Over the past year, CROP Executives' discussions have centred on three key themes – the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, strengthened coordination with external donors/financiers, and support to countries.

Strategically situating CROP within the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

6. CROP Executives are committed to working collectively, drawing on their respective technical competencies and mandates, to support and implement the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*. At their retreat in February 2015, Executives acknowledged that by facilitating a rigorous prioritisation process for Forum Leaders to focus on high-level regional issues and avoid excessive bureaucratisation of the regional agenda, the *Framework* empowers ministerial meetings and CROP governing councils to pursue core business. By extension, CROP Executives agreed that their meetings should focus on discussing strategic issues and 'game changers' for the region where collective action is required. Coordinated engagement with external donors would similarly adopt a high-level perspective of regional financing (discussed in more detail below).

8. CROP's relationship with the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR) continues to evolve. Lessons to date from the first regional call for initiatives have highlighted the need for increased CROP collaboration and clear engagement in the process, as well as the need for clarity from the SSCR in relation to what technical advice CROP can provide to them through the process. There have been preliminary discussions on the possibility of a CROP working group to support the SSCR, with arrangements expected to be clearer by the time of the next regional call for proposals in late 2015/early 2016. CROP Executives can also lend support to the Secretary General of PIFS, as CROP and SSCR Chair.

9. A review of CROP working groups will conclude in mid-August 2015. An inter-agency review team, led by Dr Jimmie Rodgers, is developing recommendations to strengthen this CROP coordination mechanism and identify opportunities for greater alignment with the emerging regional agenda.

10. The proposed study of regional governance and financing⁴ will serve to identify opportunities to strengthen the collective work of CROP, and it was agreed by CROP Executives at their meeting on 16 July to defer this work until the conclusion of current reviews relating to CROP working groups and regional ministerial meetings. This study will require significant oversight by member countries as it will examine how to strengthen regional policy cohesion and cooperation across CROP agencies, including through their governing councils.

Strengthened regional coordination in engagement with external donors/financiers

11. In the context of CROP, deeper regionalism requires strengthened approaches for operating as a collective unit in support of regional priorities. Acknowledging the specific institutional mandates of each

⁴ This study would take forward recommendation 31 of the 2013 *Pacific Plan Review* to revisit regional governance and financing arrangements, endorsed by Leaders: 'to overhaul the institutions, processes, governance and financing of regionalism and its implementation, such that a genuinely politically-led process emerges, that hears citizens' voices, that establishes a manageable set of high-level priorities for change, and which is supported by agents and agencies who are themselves incentivised to deliver on regionalism's political priorities.'

agency (and the respective governing councils' responsibilities in this regard), deeper regionalism is achieved where there is effective coordination and collaboration amongst agencies, and duplication and competition for resources is reduced. CROP identification of regional priorities for funding has highlighted how the respective strengths of each agency can contribute to a regional priority and ensure cohesion in representation to external donors.

12. Coordination in relation to the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) has however been more challenging, in part due to the evolving complexity of rules and regulations of the EDF processes. Similarly, coordination of regional finance for climate change projects (such as from USAID) is another area where a collective voice to donors and partners would reduce fragmentation of regional effort. CROP Executives have agreed to continue to reinforce to external donors the importance of funding regional priorities that are jointly determined through CROP and the *Framework* processes. Countries' support in ensuring consistency in messaging to partners about aligned regional finance is welcomed.

Coordinated support to countries both regionally and internationally

13. Coordinated and effective support to Pacific island countries is a high priority for CROP Executives, facilitated through a number of CROP working groups:

<p><i>Post-2015 development agenda</i></p>
<p>The CROP Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) played a key role in providing coordinated technical advice to countries in their negotiations of the SAMOA Pathway in 2014, as well as through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Open Working Group process. The SDWG continues to provide important technical support to countries in the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, and the Third Conference on Financing for Development (held in Addis Ababa in July 2015). It provides important oversight of the Pacific National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) Partnership Group and tracking the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.</p>
<p><i>Ocean-related issues</i></p>
<p>CROP Executives agreed in August 2014 that the CROP Chair and PIFS Secretary General would serve as Pacific Ocean Commissioner, to provide oversight of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and Pacific Ocean Alliance (est. May 2015), and is supported by the CROP Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG). The MSWG continues to provide important technical support to countries in their negotiations at the United Nations in relation to Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and the SDGs for oceans and seas negotiations. The role of non-CROP observers within the MSWG is being assessed as part of the review of CROP working groups.</p>
<p><i>Climate Change</i></p>
<p>SPREP leads coordination of support to countries in their international climate change negotiations, and has supported a series of climate change workshops in the lead up to COP21 in Paris, this December 2015. The CROP Working Arm on Climate and Disaster Resilient Development (WARD) continues to be an important coordination mechanism for integrated support to climate change and disaster management, such as through the Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific (SRDP), yet to be endorsed. Access to climate finance is a key area of support to countries, with Executives' welcoming of SPREP's accreditation to the Green Climate Fund as an authorised implementing agency for the region.</p>

Gender Equality

PIFS leads coordination of support to countries in their international negotiations at the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) with technical assistance on key areas from SPC and the CROP Gender Working Group (GWG). The GWG intensified its technical assistance towards members participating at the Beijing Review, 2014 SIDS Conference, CSW 59th Session Political Declaration, Security Council Resolution 1325, International Conference on Population and Development Review and the SDGs Open Working Group Process.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Chaired by USP, the CROP working group on ICT organised the first ever ICT Ministerial meeting in June 2015. As a recognised transformational sector for the Pacific region, regional ICT policy and programs formed the basis of ministerial discussions. The progression of a regional digital strategy, working with national governments and the private sector, will be an important area of support from the ICT working group going forward.

ANNEX 1

Date/Host	Substantive Agenda
<p>August 2014 <i>(hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme in Apia, in the margins of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Coordination of support to the calls for action from the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, ii. Outcomes of the Forum Leaders meeting in Palau, particularly in relation to the <i>Framework for Pacific Regionalism</i> and fisheries, and, iii. CROP engagement in a review of ministerial meetings
<p>February 2015 <i>(hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Noumea)</i></p> <p>This meeting was preceded by a one-day retreat of CROP Executives-only to ensure consensus on an approach to support the implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, including CROP's role in the regional prioritization process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Seven CROP technical working group reports, ii. Overview of institutional priorities for 2015, iii. Joint approach to reviewing CROP working groups and regional governance and financing, iv. CROP coordination with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the 11th European Development Fund; - international climate change negotiations; - the Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific (SRDP); - Pacific Ocean partnerships; - non-communicable diseases; - water and sanitation; - CROP harmonization v. Prioritisation of inter-agency work in their engagement with external donors (e.g. Korea-PIFS Fund).
<p>April 2015 <i>(hosted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, non-Suva-based agencies participated via teleconference)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. facilitated initial dialogue between CROP Executives and the appointed members of the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR) to confirm the regional prioritization process under the <i>Framework</i>, ii. discussed the strategic intent of a review of regional governance and financing, iii. strengthened coordination in regional engagement with donors, the 11th EDF and the Korea-PIFS Cooperation Fund.
<p>July 2015 <i>hosted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva, non-Suva-based agencies participated via teleconference)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. follow up on the outcomes of the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism, ii. progress of CROP coordination regarding the 11th EDF, iii. the reviews of CROP working groups and regional governance and financing, and iv. to discuss working recommendations of the CROP Harmonisation Triennial Remuneration Review

CROP Working Group Reports

There are seven official CROP Working Groups which each have lead agencies chairing or co-chairing their arrangements. The Executive of the representative chairing agency of each of the working groups provided progress reports at the first meeting of CROP Executives for 2015. A summary of those discussions is in the table below.

WORKING GROUP (Co-Chair)	KEY UPDATES
Gender (PIFS, SPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met in May 2015. - Through PIFS and SPC, collaborated with UN Women and other UN agencies to assist Pacific countries with their National Beijing +20 Review Reports as part of development partner working group activities. This support led to almost all PICTs submitting National Reports and Surveys for input to the Asia Pacific Gender Equality Conference on Beijing +20 held in November 2014. - GWG established sub- groups to ensure regional gender coordination and prioritisation of gender issues within the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and other frameworks eg:- disabilities, human security, EDF 11 and regional processes such as CROP Working Groups , Ministerial meetings such as fisheries etc. - GWG provided input on the Review of the Revised Pacific Platform for Action and update on the regional implementation assistance to members on the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
Health & Population (SPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met twice in June 2014 and July 2015. - Supports monitoring of country progress against the agreed targets of the Pacific NCD (Non-Communicable Diseases) Roadmap, adopted at the Joint Forum Economic Ministers and Health Ministers meeting in 2014. - Continues to explore ways through CROP agencies to strengthen the regional health architecture to ensure their collective efforts complement each other in support of country-level efforts.
Human Resource Development (USP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met twice in June 2014 and July 2015. - Implementing decisions of FEEdMM is an important function of the Working Group where tasks and responsibilities are shared amongst the agencies resulting in achievement of tangible results and avoided duplication. - Provides oversight of monitoring of the Pacific Education Development Framework.
Information Communication Technology (USP, SPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restarted meetings in 2014 and last met in May 2015. - Finalised review of the Framework for Action on ICT Development in the Pacific (FAIDP). - Facilitated a High-Level Consultation with partners in March 2015 to help inform the synergy, coordination and development of the new Regional Strategy for ICT. - Through USP, supported the Pacific ICT ministerial meeting in June 2015.

Land Resources Working Group (SPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met twice in June 2014 and February 2015. - Re-established in June 2014 and comprises SPC, PIFS, USP, SPREP, and FAO. Revised terms of reference (TOR) have been developed to reflect changes needed to suit the current objectives the group. - Has only met once since, to consider a proposal from an NZ-based non-government organisation.
Marine Sector Working Group (FFA, SPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Met twice in November 2014 and March 2015. - The Pacific Ocean Alliance was launched at the SIDS Conference and conducted its first meeting in May 2015. - The Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner became fully operational in November 2014, when Dr Elizabeth Brierley was hired as a dedicated staff person with funding from the Australian Government's Partnership for Development project, EPOG. - CROP agencies provided a briefing note to the Pacific NY missions on issues relating to Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ). PIFS is leading coordination of advice. The latest round of discussions on the BBNJ issue were held in January 2015, with several CROP agencies represented to assist the Pacific Missions in NY and a briefing document drafted by PIFS with input from MSWG members was provided.
Sustainable Development Working Group (PIFS, SPC, SPREP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last met in March 2015. - Assisted member countries at the UN Third Conference on Small Island Developing States through the provision of technical advice on negotiations on the Outcomes document – the SIDS Accelerated Modalities Of Action or SAMOA Pathway, including onsite support during the Preparatory Committee meetings. - In collaboration with the CROP Marine Sector Working Group, assisted member countries through the provision of technical advice on negotiations on the SDGs, particularly in supporting Pacific Missions advocacy for a stand-alone goal on Oceans. - Reinvigorated the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) Partnership in 2014, and provide support to member states that seek assistance in the review of their national development plans in 2015. - In 2015, continues to support member countries at the global level, including the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations, and negotiations toward the Third Conference on Financing for Development