

## SOPAC and SPC sign Letter of Understanding

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 05 August 2010 16:43 - Last Updated Thursday, 05 August 2010 18:06

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**In Port Vila, at the Plenary Session of the 41st Pacific Island Leaders Meeting, Wednesday 4th August, the**

**Director of SOPAC, Dr Russell Howorth**

and the

**Director General of SPC, Dr Jimmie Rodgers**

, signed a Letter of Agreement to transfer and integrate the core work programme of SOPAC into SPC as a new

**Applied Geoscience and Technology Division**

to commence operations on 1st January 2011.

Witnessing the signing on behalf to the SOPAC Governing Council was the current chair Vanuatu represented by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Honourable Edward Natapei. The SPC Conference was represented by the current chair Tonga, represented by the Prime Minister of Tonga, Honourable Feleti Sevele.

Prime Minister Natapei said, “ We have just witnessed a rare if not unique moment in the history of Pacific regionalism. In 2007 the Leaders decided that the work of SOPAC be integrated into the SPC and SPREP. Three Letters of Agreement were signed earlier in the year to transfer energy, ICT and climate related activities to SPC and SPREP. But this Letter of Agreement signed today marks the largest single transfer between two of our regional organisations. It involves some 100 staff and an annual budget of between FJ\$20-30 million.

I wish to commend all those that have been involved in bringing the Leaders decision into effect. I am sure I speak for all of us, Members, development partners and all stakeholders, when I look forward to the SOPAC work programme further improving its service delivery as a result of the new opportunities this move affords.

SOPAC “The Commission” has indeed today crossed the bridge to become SOPAC “The Division” of the SPC. I look forward to the 1st January 2011 when it will become fully operational.

Let me close by appealing to all, that this cannot happen if the support to the SOPAC work programme in its new home is not secured. Having complied with the Leaders decision it is now

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our collective responsibility to work to ensure that it is successful and sufficiently resourced”

Prime Minister Sevele supported the sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Natapei highlighting that he was pleased to see a Forum Leaders decision made at its 2007 meeting in Tonga come to fruition.