

Update by the CEOs on the RIF SPC-SOPAC merger, March 2011

Written by Administrator

Monday, 14 March 2011 11:06 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 March 2011 19:15



Monday, 14 March 2011, SOPAC Division, Suva – Our starting point in this update is to acknowledge the support we received from the SPC and SOPAC governing bodies who both acknowledged the complexity of what was involved and sanctioned the way things were progressing. We do hope that this update will demonstrate our ongoing commitment towards ensuring that the service delivery to Members from the now much enlarged SPC is not only protected but likely to grow and strengthen even further.

The weeks leading up to Christmas 2010 were as you might expect somewhat of an adventure. Key during this period was the necessity to get all the 100 or so SOPAC staff onto SPC contracts. All this had to be accomplished before the end of December 2010 to ensure the payroll could be finalised and ready to operate from 1 January 2011.

We are pleased to report success and in this regard acknowledge with appreciation the positive engagement from all staff which contributed to the accomplishment of what is hopefully a “one off” event! In regards to “image” we are actively promoting a single image for the enlarged SPC and a “One Team” approach. It will take time for many to adjust but we are certainly pleased with the progressive and proactive support to date received from Members, donor partners and many stakeholders and staff. We have retained the Acronym SOPAC, the widely accepted and well known name of SOPAC the organisation as now the acronym for the ‘Applied Geoscience and Technology division of SPC. This has been met with overall approval from Members and staff, judging from feedback received to date.

We are already seeing greater cooperation and synergies between the work programmes of many existing SPC divisions and the new SOPAC division with a number of joint activities already in place or planned for later in the year. We can say with confidence that these are happening as a consequence of the SOPAC work programme now operating within a much enlarged SPC, and these are almost certain to enhance service delivery to Members. Examples

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of such activities include:

- A common understanding across the work programmes of SPC, Forum Fisheries Agency and the SOPAC Maritime Boundaries Programme in regard to advice and support to Members on maritime boundaries.
- The new SOPAC Division Seabed Minerals Project working together with the Land Resources Division and the Human Development Programme and UNDP Pacific Centre in regard to joint activities in the mineral resources sector.
- Establishment of an MOU between SPC and the International Hydrographic Organisation to facilitate their engagement in the region in hydrographic survey work led by the SOPAC Division and the safety at sea work of the SPC Economic Development Division.
- Deployment of a Disaster Reduction Programme Officer to be based in the North Pacific regional office of SPC at Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia from March 2011.
- The deployment of a project accountant for the Overseas Countries and Territories (associated with the European Union) disaster reduction project managed by the SOPAC division at the SPC headquarters in Noumea which greatly facilitates the implementation of the project in particular in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis & Futuna.
- The increasing involvement by the SPC regional office for the north Pacific in the coordination and facilitation of water and sanitation activities for Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands especially supporting national water summits.

- Further GIS and RS (geographical information system and remote sensing) joint activities for Members, including joint funding of staff positions in the SOPAC Division in vegetation mapping with the Land Resources Division and the GIZ (formerly GTZ) Project.
- Installation of early warning systems to support disaster preparedness and communications through partnership between the SOPAC managed disaster reduction project and the SPC managed 'Pacific rural internet connectivity system (PacRICS)' in which SPC through its provider supplies the equipment and SOPAC meets the cost for the equipment and initial bandwidth costs.
- Enhanced collaborative work in the preparation of the new SPC-wide Climate Change Engagement Strategy.

We hope the above gives you a snapshot of the opportunities emerging for strengthened and enhanced delivery of technical advice and services to Members.

Over the next 3-6 months, much lies ahead of us to consolidate our efforts. The SPC Long Term Sustainable Financing Strategy work is of course vital for the enlarged organisation as is further contemplation of the new organisation structure that will best deliver in the years ahead. Timing is key to progress these major initiatives but at the same time, like the regional institutional reform exercise itself, it is vital we get it right and if time is needed time will necessarily have to be taken.

Prepared by Jimmie Rodgers and Russell Howorth

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