

SPC Focuses on 7 PICs to Strengthen Maritime Boundaries in the Region

Written by Zarin Khan

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The Pacific Community (SPC) aims to focus on 7 Pacific Island Countries (PICs), who have yet to negotiate their portions of the maritime boundaries, over the next five years.

Currently, SPC provides technical advice and support to 14 PICs that enable them to formalise their maritime boundaries through treaties. This contributes towards securing ocean resources for PICs and ensures their peaceful coexistence.

The technical work provided by SPC includes the delineation of territorial seas (12M), contiguous zone (24M) and Exclusive Economic Zone (200M) limit using accurately defined territorial sea baselines based on hydrographic charts, topographical maps, satellite images, and geodetic surveys.

SPC's Deputy Director General for the Suva Office, Dr Audrey Aumua said that SPC and our partners will continue to support the maritime boundary aspirations of PICs.

“What this entails is PICs declaring territorial sea baselines and the outer limits of maritime zones in national legislations and then depositing this information with the United Nations

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Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)".

These boundaries and treaties are also necessary for monitoring, control and surveillance of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the region. The process of delimiting maritime zones and boundaries empowers PICs to control activities for management of marine resources contributing to improving global and regional ocean governance.

SPC is leading a successful international collaborative effort to fulfil one of the region's key strategic priorities embedded in the Pacific Ocean scape Framework. The recruitment of the new Maritime Boundaries Adviser, Mr Malakai Vakautawale, is an example of how SPC is prioritising the maritime boundary activities in the region.

Mr Vakautawale will work with the SPC's Maritime Boundaries Team and its regional partners and the 14 PICs.

SPC's partners include Geoscience Australia, Australian Attorney General's Department, the Commonwealth Secretariat, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency and United Nations Environmental Program GRID Arendal.

This partnership is an effective mechanism to address maritime boundary issues and to safeguard the sovereign rights of PICs.

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