

## SPC and New Caledonia sign Pacific OCT Agreements

Written by Administrator

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*Wednesday 16th February, 2011, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Nouméa, New Caledonia.* The Government of New Caledonia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community have signed three agreements today to fund interventions to reduce public health risks resulting from contaminated drinking water, inadequate sanitation and drought.

In welcoming this signature, SPC Deputy Director-General Richard Mann noted the ‘importance of these agreements to the ongoing development of the country’ and their focus on ‘addressing priorities set by New Caledonia.’

The agreements worth € 1.55 million in total will support New Caledonia in the areas of water safety planning, sanitation, and integrated water resource management. These initiatives fall under a larger regional project aimed at reducing disaster risk in Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories thereby benefiting New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna and Pitcairn Islands.

The project is managed by the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division of SPC (SOPAC) and funded by European Union Development funds. Following SOPAC’s integration into SPC in January 2011, “all SOPAC services are now accessible to New Caledonia on the same terms as they are to other SPC members,” Mr. Mann said.

The New Caledonia President Philippe Gomès and government ministers noted the unanimous support from municipalities in New Caledonia to enhance the safety of drinking water and bridge the sanitation gap which puts the population and the lagoon (a UNESCO world-heritage site) at risk. The second Vice-President of Northern Province Jean-Pierre Djiawé pointed that ‘fresh water is a finite resource’ hence ‘the necessity to identify, manage and protect it in the face of strong demographic growth and rapid industrial development in the Vok-Koné-Pouembout area.’

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