

The Road Map –Process and Way Forward

Preamble

The SCW at its first meeting agreed that a task for the SOPAC Director between its Second and Third Meetings would be to develop a road map. The first CEOs Trilateral, as well as First Programme Trilateral consultations have been completed and progress reports will be presented to the second SCW.

This “non paper” has been prepared to facilitate a discussion at SCW 2 on overarching issues related to the consideration of the road map. I seek to raise some of the issues that will need to be considered and trust that this paper will encourage and facilitate discussions of Members in order that they may bring forward other issues that should be considered. Clearly guidelines and guiding principles should be established for the CEOs to move forward on developing a road map that will bring meaningful success to each and all Members and that will meet SOPAC’s accountability to its present donor and support partners and staff, as well as the equivalent for the other organisations.

The Road Map Process

The Road Map and Responsibilities

The road map is essentially a demonstration / articulation of a proposed process for achieving the goals of the Leaders 2007 Communiqué.

SOPAC Council had decided to have ownership and take the lead in this process through its decision in 2007. Equally important in following this process is the imperative that wherever the components of the current SOPAC work programme are to be placed institutionally there is a need to be assured from that governing body or bodies that service support to island Members currently provided through SOPAC will continue and will improve.

In SOPAC’s programme the underlying conceptual framework is that applied geoscience, technology and social science are integrated into unified and multifaceted outputs allowing for evidence-based policy and strategy formulations. It allows for better informed and more realistic decisions regarding policies and strategies by clients and Members to achieve desired outcomes such as improved coastal management, resource economics, and disaster risk management.

This conceptual framework is not unique but it is critical, and recognition of it is essential in the proposed rationalisation, absorption and new institutional arrangements exercise – the quality and relevancy of SOPAC’s mandate. It is important that this issue be considered as we define the road map. Although this is not new in global terms, it is a defining difference of SOPAC’s conceptual framework.

Rationalisation First, then Implementation of Absorption Follows

Necessarily, initial tasks of the road map process are dominated by examining issues surrounding rationalisation

- What are the guiding principles?
- Examination of the SOPAC, SPC and SPREP work programmes to determine what elements of the SOPAC work programme may be rationalised.
- What the preferred new institutional arrangements might be.

SCW, having reached agreement on what rationalisation will look like (what the preferred future institutional arrangements will be), will also by that time of necessity need to understand the process of absorption and have addressed any legal and contractual implications.

SCW will also have to consider, inter alia, the following matters:

- Managing the change process (the Road Map) to ensure a sustainable outcome.
- Improved service delivery.
- Business cases from SPC and SPREP.
- Independent due diligence checks.

Managing the Change Process (the Road Map) to ensure a Sustainable Outcome

Clearly before the change process can be determined, finalised and managed, the outcome of the change process needs to be considered and agreed upon in order that sustainability is addressed and assured. Perhaps a sustainable outcome is: “*to demonstrate the content of the current work programme is secured and fully resourced, service delivery to Members ensured, and further improvement nurtured*”, if the change process results in the Commission closing.

SCW should consider and agree, that a sustainable outcome must retain the work programme, or at least the majority of the work programme, as a whole. (Members may wish to recall there was strong support for this to be the case at the time of the SPC/SOPAC integration Study in 2000, refer Executive Summary page iv of Consultant’s Report).

Once a sustainable outcome is determined; and preferred institutional options identified; and a change process mapped out, it will be necessary to set a timeline framework in place.

Improved Service Delivery and Effectiveness

In order to guide further development of the process - the road map – SCW may wish to have a discussion on the issue of “improved service delivery and effectiveness”. You will recall I raised this issue during SCW 1.

Embedded in the SOPAC Strategic Plan are two important issues related to this question.

- Firstly, in regard to work programme priority setting, outputs and outcomes, and means of delivery, there is a clear distinction made between outputs and outcomes. “The Secretariat delivers outputs, whereas delivery on outcomes requires action by the recipient Member governments. For example, the Secretariat carries out field surveys for which the output is a document with recommendations and map products, whereas outcomes requires the Members to use these products in a manner that contributes to sustainable development” [p15 of SOPAC Strategic Plan 2005-2009].
- Secondly, “each Member of the SOPAC Governing Council recognises that as owners of the Commission, in order to fully capitalise on the work programme, we have a responsibility to work with the Secretariat to ensure that the scientific and technical interventions carried out are translated into meaningful development results and outcomes for our people” (Chair’s Foreword to the SOPAC Strategic Plan 2005-2009).

Depending on whether improved service delivery and effectiveness is targeted at the outputs or outcomes level different consequences emerge. The impression gained from the Council discussion is implicitly, if not explicitly, that the improved service delivery is targeted at the outputs level; that is the work programme produces more products and better products. The intention is that real improvement in service delivery means meaningful developmental results for the people of the region. To achieve improved service delivery at outcome level the capacity of each Member must be taken into consideration.

Business Cases

“Due Process” within the context of SOPAC Council responding positively to the Leaders Communiqué, will require that the proposed recipient organisations (SPC) and /or SPREP) must develop business cases (referred to as BCAs in SCW 1) to support (i) not only their claims in regard to certain SOPAC programmes/activities; (ii) but also how they will absorb, sustain and improve service delivery and (iii) retain the services to the region of STAR.

The SOPAC Director cannot take responsibility for these business case developments, as there is no ultimate accountability since the position will have been terminated/ no longer exist, depending on the institutional arrangements outcome. The SOPAC Director will however, be required to provide any necessary data and information, particularly that pertaining to current circumstances, and which may well be used as a starting point to measure improved service delivery.

Due Diligence

The application of “Due Process” will require SCW to ensure due diligence checks are carried out on the business cases in order to have an independent validation. These checks must be completed before the SCW can make a decision on any

preferred business case. As the SOPAC Director will not have responsibility for developing the business cases, she will be an option for carrying out, or arranging for, the due diligence checking.

In the business world, for example where any organisation is considering an acquisition, merger or joint venture, due diligence assesses the risks and opportunities of the proposed transaction. Furthermore, it helps to reduce the risk of post-transaction unpleasant surprises, including failure. It is vital that the results of any due diligence process are relevant to the transaction including valuation for the target and the cost of acquisition, and an integration plan that incorporates perceived synergies.

Finally, it is important that SCW also consider in its due diligence exercise the critical imperative of the SOPAC mandate for its programme which is the multidisciplinary approach for integrated solutions. I had presented this case to the SCW first meeting and have talked about it earlier on in this paper. This is also referred to in the Muller and Siwatibau Report (2000) as SOPAC's "Corporate Culture".

The Way Forward

After consideration of overarching issues by the SCW it is suggested that the interested/ receiving organisations mentioned in the Leaders Communiqué and SOPAC Council decision (SPC and SPREP) should be asked/ encouraged to submit what I call business cases to the SOPAC Committee of the Council of the Whole. Such business cases and plans should show due consideration of issues raised and discussed in this paper and by SCW. It is also assumed that a serious business plan would be a result of consideration of all options listed in Agenda Item SCW 1.6 of the SCW first meeting and then arriving at what the CEO of SPC or CEO of SPREP would deem to be the best business case scenarios.

The SOPAC Director will, of course, be available, ready and prepared to provide information where deemed relevant and appropriate, to her counterparts.

SCW will then consider these business plans, commission subsequent independent due diligence checks and any other assessment process considered necessary. SCW will then submit its findings to the SOPAC Council which will decide on the next course of action.