



GOVERNING COUNCIL 36th SESSION
Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga
22-29 November 2007

AGENDA ITEM	TITLE
11	ESTABLISHMENT and ADMINISTRATION
11.1	Regional Institutional Framework (RIF)
11.1 Suppl 4	Governing Council Decision on the RIF Item

Conclusion

In conclusion Council:

- (i) Noted that the core business of SOPAC is excellence in applied scientific and technical information and knowledge of earth systems, and demonstrating how this knowledge contributes to sustainable development for its island members.
- (ii) Noted that SOPAC has grown substantially over the past 35 years in many aspects into a well-established, and well respected regional organisation serving its Pacific Island members in developing natural resources, principally non-living resources, in a sustainable manner and strengthening resilience through integrated solutions in its three programme areas: Ocean and Islands management, Community Lifelines development and Community Risk management.
- (iii) Recognised that partners currently identify with SOPAC to the extent that the Commission now enjoys a substantial, annual budget which includes the attraction of non-traditional “new” money to support service delivery to its members.
- (iv) Recognised further that throughout its existence the Commission has been regularly “reviewed” in regard to its future, its role, and its direction, to which it has responded positively and emerged with improved and strengthened delivery of services to its members.
- (v) Noted that some members expressed concern that whilst the 2007 Leaders Communiqué does not call for a review of SOPAC, it in fact goes further to suggest radical changes to SOPAC, but is not supported by any evidence of due diligence and consideration by members during the RIF process.
- (vi) Acknowledged with concern that change processes increase demands on the Secretariat, and cause stress on the staff, that will impact current levels of service delivery.
- (vii) Is fully cognisant of the need to maintain the momentum established by the Leaders decision, in order to ensure the continuity in both the quality and effective delivery of service in meeting the needs of the people.
- (viii) Recognised the critical need to adhere to a set of principles of:
 - Transparency;

- Timeliness;
- Cost effectiveness;
- Focus on the RIF objective of creating an institutional framework that further improves service delivery to PICTS and assists with effective implementation of the Pacific Plan;
- Consideration of staff welfare;
- The need to address the full range of legal, organisational, administrative, governance, membership and financial implications.

Council therefore;

Agreed to accept the challenge offered by the 2007 Leaders Communiqué which states “the need to rationalise the functions of SOPAC with the work programmes of SPC and SPREP, with the view to absorbing those functions of SOPAC into SPC and SPREP”.

Agreed the following course of action as a way forward in responding to the Leaders decision.

- (i) Agreed that a Committee of the “SOPAC Council as a Whole”, be established and adequately resourced, to guide and advise the Director during the consultative process with the Terms of Reference to be agreed at its first meeting.
- (ii) Agreed that the Director of SOPAC engage in a consultative process with the Director General of SPC and Director of SPREP, with the option of engaging the SG of PIFS as appropriate, providing regular briefings to the Chair of SOPAC Governing Council in the preparation of a draft road map to be submitted to the SOPAC Governing Council for consideration and approval with the intent of a final road map submitted to the Forum by 2010.
- (iii) Agreed that during this consultative process some of the issues to be considered will include:
 - Proposing possible options for rationalisation and possible organisational models for the new arrangements taking into account realities such as the wider range of technical programmes, the possible rationalisation of certain common support services, the geographic location, and the membership differences.
 - Examining the costs and benefits of the options considered during the process, the technical programmes, the memberships, and the external supporting agencies, identifying opportunities for improved service delivery.
 - Proposing a realistic timing for implementation that would need to be taken into account including practical, legal, contractual obligations, and or any other problems that might require prior resolution as a result of rationalisation.
 - Finding a mechanism that will enable the benefits of STAR to be continued.
- (iv) Agreed to emphasise to all stakeholders, especially members, donor partners, and Secretariat staff, that in the interim the Commission would continue with its current work and efforts to secure resources for sustained service delivery keeping in mind consultations with the Director General of SPC and Director of SPREP.
- (v) Agreed to immediately respond by writing to the Forum Chair, Chairs of the SPC and SPREP Governing Councils, Chair of STAR, donor partners and key stakeholders advising of the outcomes of its consideration of the issue at the 2007 Council Meeting.