



## GOVERNING COUNCIL 36<sup>th</sup> SESSION

Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga

22-29 November 2007

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AGENDA ITEM	TITLE
11	ESTABLISHMENT AND ADMINISTRATION
11.1	Regional Institutional Framework (RIF)
11.1 Supplementary 3	Statement from PMEG

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### Purpose of Paper

To provide advice to Council from the Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Group (PMEG) with respect to the Leaders' Communique 2007, para. 19b on the Regional Institutional Framework [RIF].

### Background

In 2004, in development of its 2005-2009 Strategic Plan, SOPAC Council agreed to a governance strategy that required a Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Group (PMEG) to meet and report annually (See paragraph 215, Agenda Item 10, Programme, Monitoring, and Evaluation, of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual SOPAC Session). A Term of Reference (TOR) was formed with members of the international scientific community being appointed by Council. Through this TOR PMEG is charged with review of the SOPAC Secretariat's Work Program, activities, and governance for the purpose of providing guidance to the Secretariat and Council on how to improve the organisation.

Attached is the Statement from the PMEG, on the implications to SOPAC of the paragraph 19b of the Communiqué from the 38<sup>th</sup> Forum Meeting in Tonga, 16-17 October 2007. It has been submitted by the Chair of the PMEG, Dr Gary Greene, to the Secretariat for circulation to Council.

### Recommendation

That Council:

- (i) invite the Chair of PMEG to introduce this paper; and
- (ii) take the advice from PMEG into consideration as part of their discussions on the Regional Institutional Framework.

**Pacific Islands Regional Organisations Institutional Review:  
Statement from the SOPAC Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Group (PMEG)**

In 2004, in development of its 2005-2009 Strategic Plan, SOPAC Council agreed to a governance strategy that required a Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Group (PMEG) to meet and report annually (See paragraph 215, Agenda Item 10, Programme, Monitoring, and Evaluation, of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual SOPAC Session). A Term of Reference (TOR) was formed with members of the international scientific community being appointed by Council. Through this TOR PMEG is charged with review of the SOPAC Secretariat's Work Program, activities, and governance for the purpose of providing guidance to the Secretariat and Council on how to improve the organization. Under this charge, PMEG is obligated to report upon any activity, internal or external, specific or inferred, that may impact the operation of SOPAC. Therefore, PMEG would be derelict in its duty if it did not comment on the implications of the paragraph 19b of the Communiqué from the 38<sup>th</sup> Forum Meeting in Tonga, 16-17 October 2007.

The meaning of paragraph 19b is not clear to the PMEG. As written no specifics are given to how "rationalization" is to take place or what is envisioned for example of "improving quality of service". This in no way means that PMEG is in disagreement with the paragraph, just that we do not know what the process would be for such "rationalization". In fact, we believe that if done properly, such reorganizations and organizational combinations can be a healthy exercise that could provide improved services. But, done without a clean and succinct process in mind, destructive fragmentation can occur.

Fragmentation of SOPAC and its Work Program into parts dispersed between two or more agencies almost certainly will result in member countries losing, not gaining, services and products. To avoid destructive fragmentation, PMEG strongly urges that a process for the rationalization of the region's government funded science program be clearly designed and communicated. We understand that this may take time, but we do not understand any need to rush into such action given the potentially dire consequences.

In regard to fragmentation and its potential to disband and scatter valuable SOPAC resources, PMEG would like to point out what it sees as unique beneficial programmes for its member countries. For example: (1) SOPAC has inherited community risk activities that no other organization has been willing or capable of undertaking. (It has taken years of advocacy to gain the trust of member countries for them to embrace disaster risk management. (2) SOPAC is proficient in mapping the sea floor and has a capacity to produce bathymetric maps, supply data for navigational purposes, and assist countries in defining their national maritime boundaries. (3) SOPAC provides community lifeline support, and assists countries in their assessment of resources, both through exploration and economic analyses for their sustainable use. These and other aspects of SOPAC's Work Program are at risk of being lost or compromised through the loss of capacity and capability if the right process for rationalization is not prepared and implemented correctly.

In particular, it is unclear to us why SOPAC is the only organization that is evidently being rationalized or scrutinized? PMEG wonders why other organizations (e.g. SPC, SPREP) that are involved in producing advice for PICs are not being considered in a like fashion? Of importance to the proposed rationalization is that SOPAC has been undergoing a comprehensive internal review of its activities by PMEG in the past three years, which is publicly and freely available. Serious and candid reviews and recommendations for internal alterations and external cooperation with other regional organizations were made. We wonder if similar critical annual reviews of work programmes have been conducted by the other organizations mentioned above and if so, if these reviews should not be compared with SOPAC reviews to better rationalize the regional science advice.

The PMEG reviews were written to constructively improve the SOPAC organization. Nevertheless, we understand that our reviews, if taken in the wrong way, can be used to the detriment of SOPAC. Our latest review, even in light of paragraph 19b, was undertaken to constructively suggest improvements for the organization. We think it healthy to do such reviews and suggest that these reviews be used in an open-minded way.

In light of paragraph 19b, PMEG is concerned about external perceptions of the present review process. Even though PMEG is comprised of external expertise that has been associated with SOPAC in some manner in the past, it has undertaken the reviews objectively, and at times has been particularly severe in its comments. However, these reviews can be perceived as friendly reviews undertaken to protect the organization. Based on this possible perception, and for the maintenance of credibility of PMEG, we have suggested to the Secretariat, and here request Council, to consider engaging a review of PMEG and SOPAC activities by an independent external reviewer in 2008. We are confident that such a review would be positive.

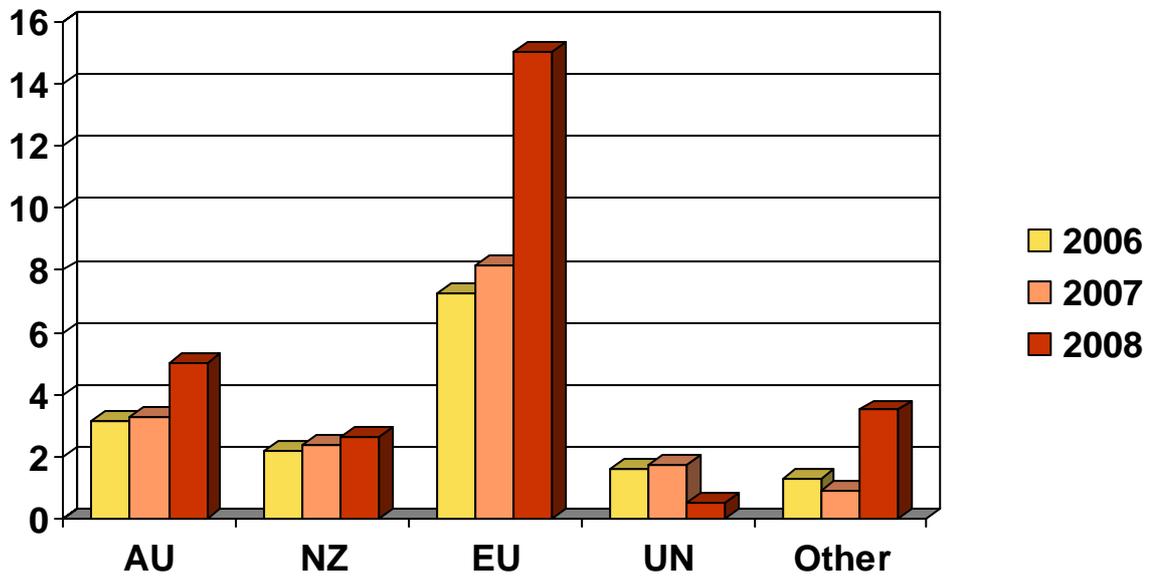
PMEG acknowledges that already the uncertainty in the future is starting to impact SOPAC and in particular the Secretariat. This has serious consequences on the organization's ability and will to move ahead. Through time SOPAC: has generated a tremendous advocacy network of donors and other organizations; has built a critical mass of in-house technical expertise with a Secretariat "can-do" attitude; has a strong creditability; enjoys diverse and expensive international support; and, has an invaluable scientific knowledge base in STAR and TAG.

The above-mentioned elements of SOPAC are irreplaceable and could be lost to member countries if improper rationalization occurs. PMEG is deeply concerned that while SOPAC is financially healthy with a \$FJ30 million budget for 2008, which is increasing, and has a multidisciplinary staff that addresses problems in a systems approach, all of this can be quickly lost through poor rationalization. The question should be "what is to be gained?" SOPAC is a known entity and its disappearance may not benefit the Pacific island nations it serves.

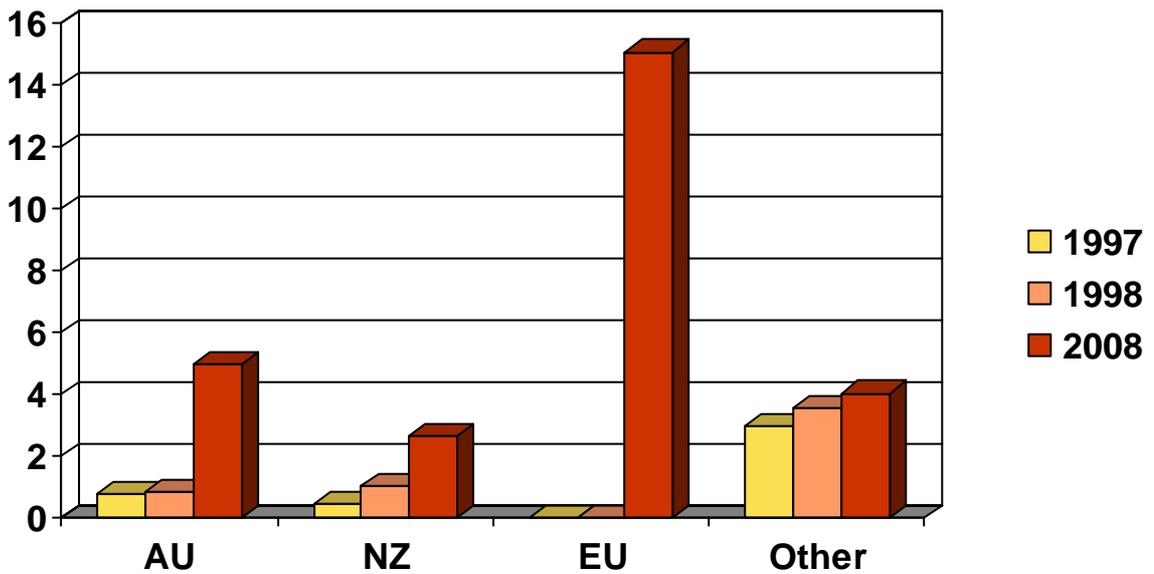
PMEG concludes that the Council meeting in Honiara last year identified most of the concerns mentioned above in their consideration of the RIF process. PMEG is of the view that a year later very little, if any, new information is on hand that addresses these concerns in a satisfactory manner.

Finally, PMEG is an indicator of good governance and exists solely to provide Council with facts and considered thought that may be of use while contemplating the ramifications of paragraph 19b. We hope that Council would take the initiative to define a clear and concise process for a way forward that would assure your respective countries of not losing services and products that are of value to you, and for elaboration of the process to be available without undue delay in order to minimize adverse impacts to SOPAC.

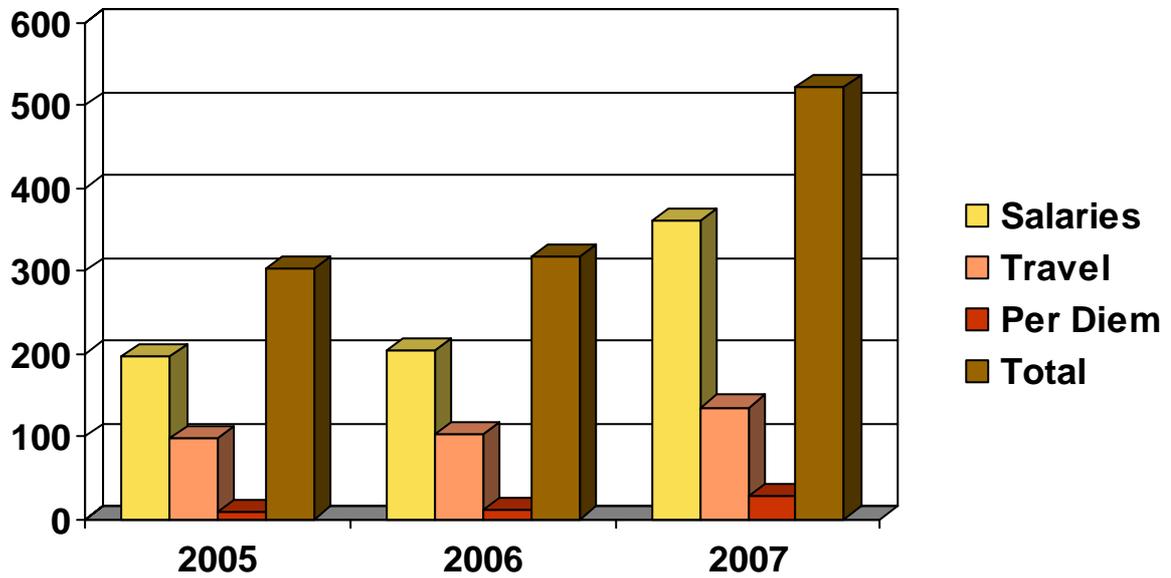
## SOPAC Income



## SOPAC Income Ten Year Comparison



## STAR Contributions in \$1,000US



## STAR External Contributions

### STAR External Contributions

