

# SOPAC

## PACIFIC ISLANDS APPLIED GEOSCIENCE COMMISSION

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16 July 2008

Honourable Dr Feleti Vaka'uta Sevele  
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga and,  
Chair – Pacific Islands Forum  
Office of the Prime Minister  
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KINGDOM OF TONGA

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**Dear Honourable Prime Minister**

I have the honour to write to you about the present status of SOPAC's efforts to respond positively to Paragraph 19(b) of the Leaders Communiqué after the 2007 Forum meeting in Tonga. It is a report of work in progress in relation to the SOPAC Governing Council decision, following their consideration of Paragraph 19(b) at their 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, about which I had written to you in my letter of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

As stated in that letter, the SOPAC Governing Council felt it imperative to address the decision but through due process, to ensure that what the Leaders agreed, can be achieved. Furthermore it is undertaken transparently, it follows the principles of good governance as proclaimed by the Leaders; it achieves excellence in quality and relevance of service provided or delivered and, it is within an environment of sound economic modality. Moreover, as you are no doubt aware, the SOPAC Council also preferred that if rationalisation and absorption becomes a fact sui generis that rationalisation neither disrupt service delivery; nor subject SOPAC's current work programmes to fragmentation; and that the excellent science being mobilised through the STAR network must be retained as a highly valued resource for the region. Even more important is that the critical core function of SOPAC's applied scientific and technical services continue to be appreciated and must be protected and developed.

I believe that the Progress Report submitted with this letter is a succinct executive summary of the issues, challenges and developments of the SOPAC response to the Leaders Communiqué. This report of work in progress was finalised at the third meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The Committee intends to continue its work, and in due course report to the SOPAC Governing Council at its 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Session in October 2007. The Council will submit its findings to the Forum and other participating stakeholders, following its next meeting.

In my humble opinion one of the most positive outcomes of this exercise thus far is the greatly improved dialogue among the three CROP organisations. That dialogue is not only at the CEO level but also at Programme Managers level. I hasten to commend to the Forum Leaders to encourage this along.

Perhaps if such platforms were established between CROP organisations in the past much more could have been achieved through cooperation. The 2004 Eminent Persons Group Report to the Leaders that recommended the establishment of the Pacific Plan, you will recall, never called for the reduction in the number of regional organisations. Rather it simply stated "*We consider it a strength of the region that it includes a wide range of regional organisations with different roles and structures. CROP agencies reflect the diversity and rich history of the Pacific. We see no practical value in replacing these agencies with one "super organisation," as some have suggested.*"

I would like to assure you Sir that the SOPAC Committee has worked diligently on this critical issue for the countries and people of the Pacific. It is the SOPAC Governing Council's sincere hope that the outcome of the task undertaken will contribute to the achievement of the Leader's Vision of a "*Pacific that can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony and security and economic prosperity so that all of its people can lead free and worthwhile lives*".

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the Committee members to commend this report to you, and wish you well with the upcoming Forum Meeting in Niue.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.

**Yours faithfully**



**Honourable Siosaia Tuita  
Minister for Lands, Survey, Natural Resources  
Government of the Kingdom of Tonga &  
Chair of SOPAC Governing Council**

**Copy to :**

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