



**3rd Meeting of the SOPAC Council Committee of the Whole (SCW)
on the Regional Institutional Framework
Banyan Room, Holiday Inn, Suva, Fiji
Wednesday, 16th July 2008**

AGENDA ITEM	TITLE
7	CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL CHAIR COVERING LETTER

Consideration of the following Cover Letter for the SOPAC Council Progress Report to the Forum

DRAFT Cover Letter for Progress Report to the 2008 PIFL Meeting

**HE Dr Feleti Vaka'uta Sevele
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga and,
Chair – Pacific Islands Forum
Office of the Prime Minister
P O Box 62, Nuku'alofa
KINGDOM OF TONGA**

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 36th Annual Session, about which I had written to you in my letter of 12th 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 as much as possible of SOPAC's Work Programme be kept or moved as a whole rather than becoming fragmented. 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 16th July 2008. The Committee intends to continue its work, and in due course report to the SOPAC Governing Council at its 37th 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 is the greatly improved platform of dialogue between the three CROP organisations. That dialogue is not only at the CEO level but also at Programme Managers level.

Perhaps if such platforms were established between CROP organisations in the past much more could have been achieved through cooperation rather than spending so much of our limited resources on being driven to regional integration. 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**