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## Second Meeting of the SOPAC Division Noumea, New Caledonia, 3-9 November 2012 (SOPAC-2)

AGENDA ITEM	TITLE
2.	REPORTS
2.5	PMEG Reports
2.5.5	Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Group Report on Cross-cutting Issues

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### **PMEG Chair's Report on Crosscutting Issues (2012)**

Matters and issues relating to the SOPAC Division of SPC work program delivery that are crosscutting in nature and common to all three technical programs within the Division, including support functions that affect the transition of the SOPAC into SPC are presented below:

**Morale** – Generally, morale continues to be high with positive attitudes. Productivity within the Division is very high, with positive attitudes, an exceptional quality given the many distracting activities associated with the merger into a new organization. However, banding and promotion issues still exist and a persistent feeling of lack of equality in job descriptions and pay scales is of concern.

**Recommendation** – Continue to monitor morale with a focus on easing paper work overloads once the Division settles more into the SPC routine.

**Human Resources** – A need still exists within the Division to have an HR person available to handle the multitude of problems occurring during the transition period and in the future. Such recurring problems as the perception of inequality within pay scales of the Division and SPC in general and a lack of understanding how promotions are given needs to be addressed in a standard manner. This is a critical communications problem.

**Recommendation** – SPC needs to install a Human Resources specialist with a background in sociology, with good people skills, able to work with the contractual and legal staff of Corporate Services. This specialist should be able to work independently across SPC Divisions and hired at a level equivalent to a Division Chief to oversee all of the HR related activities including OH&S services, recruitment and general staff concerns within the Fiji SPC facilities. Senior management is presently addressing this item.

**Corporate Services** – As expected some erosion of autonomy within Corporate Services has occurred to the detriment of rapid and efficient delivery to staff on such activities as providing

per diems, issuing air tickets and purchase orders. A lot of the previous Corporate Services functions have been transferred to a centralized department within SPC thus requiring more time and explanation for financial and other corporate requests.

**Recommendations** – Implement the recommendation of the Independent External Review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (June 2012) in decentralizing the Corporate Services and allow more autonomy in decision-making and flexibility in dispersal of funds.

**Sustainable Funding Initiative (“Core Funding”)** – In the past PMEG recommended that core funding be enhanced to provide the opportunity of SOPAC staff to write proposals, prepare articles for peer-review journals, attend workshops and other professional enhancement activities, and respond to potential and actual country emergencies. With the loss of overhead funds to the Division it is more critical than ever to establish core funds that can be used to retain staff, react to emergencies and purchase computers and other equipment needed for efficient deliverables but not covered under project funds.

**Recommendation** – Consider providing funds through the Sustainable Funding Initiative or other mechanisms to cover time for staff to write proposals and to attend professional development activities that would bring enhanced skills to bear upon significant projects deemed worthy by SPC member countries.

**Communications** – Again, substantial progress in communications has occurred in the past year internally within the Division with regular staff meetings and with other SPC Divisions.

**Recommendation** – Continue the good efforts to improve communication both internally and externally. As suggested last year PMEG suggests that each program within the SOPAC Division select a communications point person who can communicate activities of its program within the Division and with other SPC Divisions as deemed necessary by the Program Managers and Division Head.

**Fragmentation** – Throughout this year’s PMEG review concern was expressed that significant fragmentation of the SOPAC Division was being considered in regard to moving the Water and Sanitation Program of SOPAC Division into an Infrastructure Division of SPC, as recommended in the Independent External Review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (June 2012). The Division staff felt that this would be a mistake because of the existing synergy between the SOPAC programs and would lead to diminution in services to the countries. Consequently PMEG has been informed that a decision by the Director General of SPC has been made to leave the Program in place in SOPAC Division for the time being until further evaluation can be made.

**Recommendation** – PMEG endorses the Director General’s decision and encourages the Water and Sanitation program to continue providing their excellent services to SPC member countries.

## **PMEG Introspection**

Last year the PMEG suggested a couple of action items that would be helpful in undertaking the Division review and response to these actions follows:

- The work program be sent to PMEG two months before the scheduled review – This was done.
- PMEG construct questions to be asked during the interview and select projects it would particularly like to review and contact Program Managers in regard to the questions and review – this was requested of PMEG this year and done
- Organize the review on island outputs – this is ongoing at this meeting
- Encourage the SOPAC Division to have country representatives present at the last day of the review so that country outcomes can be discussed – the reporting procedure has been focused on island nations rather than program focused to address this suggestion
- Spend at least three days in the review process including the discussions with country representatives – this is ongoing at this meeting where the Chair of PMEG is consulting with member country representatives in regard to impacts. The remarks provided by the Honorable Prime Minister of the Cook Islands highlighted the impacts that the SOPAC Division has had on the Cook Islands and should be a testament to the good services being provided.