

APPENDIX 5

STAR CHAIR'S REPORT TO COUNCIL 2010

Honourable Chair of SOPAC, Excellencies, Distinguished National representatives and Delegation members, representatives of Institutions and Organisations, Director of SOPAC, Directors of SPREP and SPC, my TAG colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I. Introduction

Thank you for this opportunity to formally address this Council on the activities of the Science, Technology and Resources Network (STAR).

Before I begin, Honourable Chairman, speaking as Chair of STAR on behalf of all the scientists, may I thank our hosts, the Government of Australia, and the people of Fiji for their gracious hospitality and support.

As usual, STAR is indebted to staff of the SOPAC Secretariat for their cheerful and untiring efforts that make the meeting possible in the very short time frame. Vinaka. Thanks too to my scientific colleagues for their presentations, chairing of sessions, support to the Chair work on PMEGs and working groups and, in advance, contributions to the TAG sessions.

The STAR Chair, John Collen, sends his apologies for not being able to make the meeting due to a medical problem on the home front. However, we have recently heard that is all well and John using his usual organizational skill has assured that a virtual Chair of SOPAC was created.

Now please let me talk about STAR. For those of you new to the STAR meetings, on behalf of STAR I would like to brief you on the nature of the group. The STAR network is an informal and entirely voluntary grouping of scientists that acts as an interface between the SOPAC Secretariat and its member nations and the international scientific community, and it does this in several ways. At intervals, an international scientific workshop or meeting may be convened by STAR, or held under its auspices, on a theme relevant to the SOPAC region. STAR members also correspond and tender advice in the periods between the annual meetings, and this is a major though less visible part of our work. And I would like to stress here that STAR scientists are a resource

freely available to you and staff of your national organisations at any time, either directly from the relevant scientist or through the Chair.

Most obviously of all our work, each year a meeting at which scientific papers are presented and discussed, and thematic Working Groups meet, is held prior to this Annual Session of the SOPAC Governing Council. This year, the 27th meeting of STAR was held at this venue starting last week and continued through yesterday.

II. STAR Presentations

As the Honorable Telukluk of Vanuatu and the Director of SOPAC mentioned in their opening addresses this morning, the main theme of this year's STAR meeting was: "Pacific Geoscience in the Face of Dwindling Natural Resources"

Perhaps I could expand here on the rationale behind the themes of STAR. The theme has been selected each year after discussion between the host nation, the Director of SOPAC and the Chair of STAR. As the theme has the effect of attracting extra scientists working in that particular area, it is an excellent opportunity to ensure that host nations get specialist knowledge in areas that interest them and that we can also bring new developments in science to the attention of the region. Therefore, the interests of the host nation are paramount.

Presentations on any theme related to Pacific geoscience are always welcomed, though, and these expand the breadth, interest and relevance of the meeting. And sometimes it is the unexpected and unsolicited presentations that lead to important new research partnerships.

The STAR meeting occupied two days, with one day of concurrent sessions. Approximately 65 people attended and heard some 44 scientific papers presented orally. Abstracts of these, and of the poster presentations, are published in SOPAC Miscellaneous Report 717. As is always the case for STAR meetings, the information presented covered a broad range and I recommend the volume of abstracts as a guide to the material covered and as a source of much useful information. This information includes contact details for the presenters, should anyone wish to learn more about a particular item.

The Director and members of Council have discussed STAR in their presentations yesterday morning and I do not need to repeat their comments. But let me very briefly outline the scope of the presentations for you, simply to indicate the variety and relevance.

The meeting began with sessions devoted to hazards including reporting upon the Samoan tsunami, earthquakes in Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, and volcanic activity in Tonga and Vanuatu. This was followed by a session on Ocean and Climate Change where surface wave climate and sea level monitoring studies were discussed.

Other sessions included Coastal Sediments, Water, and Energy and Minerals. A special session on "Map Once – Use Many Ways" co-sponsored by STAR and the Circum-Pacific Council (CPC). STAR invited CPC to host such a session where investigators from around the Pacific including from Fiji, US, Chile, Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia would be encouraged to present the latest technologies and methodologies in mapping.

Overall, STAR topics ranged from the general, covering principles and issues of a regional, even global nature through to specific discussion of problem solving in individual countries. The papers also ranged from the theoretical to the practical, illustrating the strength of STAR that allows people researching problems from all sides to come together.

III. Working Groups and Associated Meetings

Apart from hearing presentations by researchers, the STAR Conference allows us to take advantage of the presence of experts in several other ways. Each year we have convened thematic working groups in sub-disciplines where we have a critical mass of delegates. These groups, who may not often have an opportunity to meet in person, discuss those aspects of their subjects that are relevant to the region and make recommendations of points that they feel may be of benefit to Council, and this year the Directors of SPC and SPREP, for consideration in future work programmes. This year five working groups met, to discuss aspects of tsunamis, marine benthic habitat mapping, deep-sea minerals, water, and the International Geological Congress. Below is a summary of key recommendations from each:

Habitat Mapping Working Group:

- Benthic habitat mapping efforts within SOPAC be expanded to include the fisheries sector of SPC.
- A unique and distinct marine benthic habitat project be established and initiated with the review of in-house data.
- Specifics of the vulnerable fisheries be determined and a synergy be established between SOPAC and the fisheries sector of SPC.

Ocean Surface Wave Climate Working Group:

- SOPAC to become active in collating existing wave climate data that can augment and strengthen the existing datasets of sea levels rise and coastal shoreline change. This is to be built upon our knowledge base on drivers of coastal change.
- SOPAC to take a pro-active role in coordinating applied research on wave impact on the coastal zone that is currently taking place around the Region, in order to ensure that existing research is focused toward filling critical knowledge gaps.
- SOPAC to actively seek funding to undertake work that takes existing information on historical wave information, as well as projected wave climate under greenhouse gas emission scenarios, and ensure that it is applicable at island-scales. This downscaling will ensure that information is available for decision making at national governments.

Deep Sea Minerals Working Group:

- A long-term regional program for the management of marine minerals in the Pacific Islands region should be devised starting with the DSM Project. This initiative should also encompass coastal and terrestrial minerals (i.e. industrial and metalliferous minerals).
- A marine minerals stakeholder network should be established in the region. Following this, an ad hoc STAR Advisory Group that can be consulted on a regular basis should be set up.
- A regional mineral database should be established within SOPAC and regularly backed up elsewhere to ensure the safety of the data/information.

Tsunami Working Group:

- Encourage and support the conduct of hazard and risk assessments to identify the most tsunami vulnerable communities.
- Organize and assist countries to develop tsunami warning and response capacities through training, twinning, and other means of skills building.
- Facilitate a coordinated approach for Post-Tsunami Science Surveys that are conducted immediately after destructive tsunamis to assemble lessons learned and capture data to validate risk assessment models following the guidance of the revised IOC Post-Tsunami Field Survey Guide and organise a Special Session at the International Geological Congress in Brisbane in August 2012 on the Samoan Islands tsunami and other recent and historical events effecting Pacific Island Countries.

IGC Working Group:

- Endorsed initiatives that were proposed by the Circum-Pacific Council (CPC) during their meeting conducted concurrently with the STAR meeting and recommended SOPAC coordination with CPC.
- Chair of CPC, the Director of SOPAC, and the Chair of STAR should be the focal point for Pacific regional participation.
- Ensure that those regional organizations like Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS-New Zealand), Geoscience Australia (GA-Australia) and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM-Australia), as well as representatives from regional funding agencies (e.g. NZAID and AusAID) are positively involved in the process to ensure financial resources are available to allow regional participation.

Water Working Group:

- Provide support to the development of national strategies, priorities or positions on water, in technical areas and also with critical skills in cost benefit analysis, communication and indicators
- Prepare and implement a roadmap for presenting a revision of the Pacific position on water to the Pacific Forum Leaders, Asia Pacific Water Summit and World Water Forum, and facilitate a process of consultations to develop the Pacific position.

Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Groups

I should also mention that 2005 saw the introduction of the Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Groups (PMEG) as the result of a STAR initiative. These groups of scientists again met with SOPAC Programme Managers in Suva immediately prior to this STAR meeting. As PMEG Chair, I will report on this process to Council later in the meeting.

IV. STAR Business Meeting

The STAR Business Meeting was well attended and the future of STAR was discussed. All present were supportive of the continuation of STAR and expressed a desire to improve and expand upon the group. The offer by Cook Islands to host the next STAR meeting in 2011 was enthusiastically endorsed. In addition, much support was shown for the participation of SOPAC in the upcoming IGC meeting to take place in Brisbane, Australia in 2012 and it was decided that points of contacts, including the CPC, and efforts be made to prepare sessions under the Oceania theme. Appreciation for the involvement of the CPC was expressed at the meeting and all were hopefully that a good synergetic relationship between CPC and the SOPAC Division of SPC would continue. John Collen was elected as the Chair of Star for the coming year and Keu Mataroa of the Cook Islands was elected Vice Chair.

V. Concluding Remarks

I would like to thank the host of this years SOPAC meeting, Australia, for their generosity in supporting STAR and look forward to their continuing support under the SPC banner. Special thanks goes to the SOPAC Secretariat for their always cheerful and efficient assistance in organizing and convening STAR. Without this help STAR just would not take place. Of course one-of the most critical component of the organization are the participants, both in region and externally with many who come from long distances, and without support, to contribute to the science of the region. Lastly, I thank the hotel staff for their responsiveness and Fiji for their warm hospitality.

That concludes my address. Thank you all for your time.

H. Gary Greene

Acting Chair, Science Technology and Resources Network, Nadi, Fiji, 20th October 2010