

## Pacific Community strengthens ties with peak Asian geoscience body

Written by Zarin Khan

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Strengthened cooperation between the Pacific Community (SPC) and a peak Asian applied geoscience body will further the use of geoscience to guide sustainable development in the Pacific Islands region.

A memorandum of understanding between SPC and the [Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia](#) (CCOP) has been formalised today by the Director of the CCOP Technical Secretariat, Dr Adichat Surinkum, and SPC's Geoscience Division Director, Professor Mike Petterson, during the [52nd annual session of CCOP](#) in Bangkok, Thailand.

"This new agreement provides SPC an opportunity to work with some of the best applied geoscience organisations in Asia on critical areas for inclusive Pacific development, such as deep sea minerals and geothermal energy," Prof Petterson said.

Based in Bangkok, CCOP is an intergovernmental organisation whose mission involves facilitating the implementation of applied geoscience programmes in East and Southeast Asia to contribute to economic development and improve people's quality of life in the region.

To this end, CCOP promotes capacity building, technology transfer, exchange of information and institutional linkages for sustainable resource development, management of geo-information, geo-hazard mitigation and protection of the environment.

Since the mid-1990s, many aid donors have shifted their focus away from science, leading to a depletion of geoscience capacity. Lately, Pacific regional organisations have made limited headway in expanding their scientific capacity.

SPC plays a significant role in helping the region attract geoscience-related aid funding and stitching the dispersed geoscience communities together, Prof Petterson said. Universities in the region, assisted by geoscientists abroad and private employers, are also playing a role.

At the CCOP session, Prof Petterson presented examples of how geoscience can contribute to inclusive Pacific development, and encouraged the Asian organisations to take a greater interest in the Pacific and support its development.

One example explored deep-sea minerals as a potential new source of wealth generation and the challenges the region faces in developing capacity and addressing the environmental and social concerns of this emerging sector.

A second project in Kiribati has moved aggregate extraction from beaches only 3 metres above sea level to sediment-rich lagoons, providing new options for the future.

Prof Petterson also presented on the promises and benefits of sustainable geothermal and

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ocean thermal technology for the Pacific, including highlighting the results of a wave power study concluded by SPC in mid-2016.

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### **About the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia:**

The Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP) has 14 member countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. It is supported by fourteen cooperating countries namely Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America. For more information on CCOP visit [www.ccop.or.th](http://www.ccop.or.th).

### **About the Pacific Community:**

The Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, supporting development since 1947. Through its Geoscience Division, SPC provides vital applied ocean, island and coastal geoscience services to assist island members to better govern and develop their natural resources, increase their resilience to natural hazards and access data-based approaches to adaptation. See [www.spc.int](http://www.spc.int).