

Partnership between the Government of Australia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme 2021 - 2031

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Partnership Arrangement (the 'Partnership') is between the Government of Australia (GoA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and will cover a 10-year period 2021 – 2031.
- 1.2 The Partnership affirms a shared vision to promote cooperation in the Pacific region, provide assistance to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations.
- 1.3 The Partnership is not governed by international law, does not constitute or create (nor is intended to create) obligations under international or domestic law, will not give rise to legal processes, and will not be deemed to constitute or create legally binding or enforceable obligations (expressed or implied).

2. Principles

- 2.1 The following principles will underpin all aspects of the Partnership between GoA and SPREP:
 - a) **Mutual respect and responsibility**, including openness to working together and exploring new opportunities together, and resolving through open discussion any issues that emerge;
 - b) **Enhanced donor harmonisation**, including to simplify procedures, reduce the reporting and administration burden, and to avoid duplication;
 - c) **A focus on improving results and understanding impact** through joint evaluation and learning; and
 - d) **Visibility and transparency** to maximise communication and awareness of the Partnership within GoA and SPREP, and amongst other stakeholders.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 The objectives for the Partnership between GoA and SPREP for 2021 – 2031 are:
 - a) **A strong relationship between GoA and SPREP**, characterised by:
 - i. close collaboration on mutual priorities;
 - ii. effective and efficient communication and management arrangements; and
 - iii. visibility and transparency to maximise communication and awareness under the *Communications Plan: Australia and SPREP Partnership*.
 - b) **Effective and efficient program management to meet program objectives**, characterised by:
 - i. effective and efficient program planning and implementation;
 - ii. commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning;
 - iii. transparent and robust systems and processes; and
 - iv. professional and informed people.
 - c) **Enhanced SPREP capabilities (people, systems and processes)**, characterised by:

- i. transparent financial budgeting and reporting, including implementation of full cost recovery practices;
 - ii. effective corporate systems in managing resources, adopting transparency and accountability mechanisms;
 - iii. improved practices and systems to support people and programs, including monitoring, evaluation and learning, and improved planning; and
 - iv. mainstreaming of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles across SPREP.
- d) **Effective and efficient regional service delivery**, characterised by:
- i. supporting SPREP's role to coordinate with development partners;
 - ii. a focus on results and measuring impact through joint, regular and evidence-based reviews of outcomes;
 - iii. equitable service delivery across the Pacific region, delivering on member priorities; and
 - iv. an integrated regional response to common challenges through strong Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies and regional agency cooperation and collaboration, to ensure efficiency and prevent duplication.

4. Commitments

4.1 GoA hereby confirms its commitment to:

- a) articulate clear expectations of the Partnership with SPREP through regular, open dialogue;
- b) promote the value of SPREP's role in the Pacific as opportunities arise;
- c) support SPREP's program management on GoA funded programs, to ensure policy and program objectives are met; and
- d) align GoA monitoring and assessment of SPREP performance as closely as possible with SPREP's own performance measures and assessment systems.

4.2 SPREP hereby confirms its commitment to:

- a) further strengthen SPREP's planning, reporting and monitoring processes, including results based reporting and financial reporting;
- b) strengthen an integrated regional response to common challenges through stronger CROP coordination and cooperation;
- c) disburse all funds provided by GoA in accordance with the principles, terms and conditions of this Partnership; and
- d) take all reasonable steps to achieve and demonstrate value for money, in accordance with sound financial and administrative practice.

4.3 Both partners resolve to:

- a) advance regional integration, economic recovery and growth, and sustainable development in support of the objectives of SPREP's *Strategic Plan 2017-2026*;
- b) work together to support SPREP's organisational reforms to enable more effective programme and project delivery;
- c) promote a full cost recovery approach to programme and project funding;

- d) meet regularly, including on an informal basis, to share all relevant information, discuss any performance concerns as early as possible, and resolve any issues through dialogue; and
- e) involving the other partner in pertinent activities and raise awareness of each other's activities throughout the region.

5. Governance, management and review

Management on behalf of Australia

- 5.1 Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will have responsibility for the overall management of the Partnership on behalf of GoA, while Australia's Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment (DAWE) is Australia's focal point as a member organisation.
- 5.2 In consultation with DFAT and SPREP, other GoA agencies may enter into arrangements with SPREP under this Partnership for the purposes of providing funds for specific international development assistance programs. The principles of this Partnership will apply to those arrangements.

High level consultations

- 5.3 High Level Consultations (HLCs) will take place at least annually between senior officials of GoA and SPREP in Canberra, Australia, in the Pacific region, or virtually as required. HLCs may be held jointly with the Government of New Zealand. The HLCs, in general, will:
 - a) provide an opportunity to discuss current and emerging Pacific regional issues;
 - b) focus on how both partners can utilise their convening power and technical expertise to address complex current and emerging development challenges in the region;
 - c) review progress towards SPREP's organisational reform objectives, and GoA support for those objectives;
 - d) review, as necessary, any major risks associated with SPREP programmes and projects funded by GoA; and
 - e) review the performance and ongoing value of this Partnership.
- 5.4 GoA and SPREP will make written records of HLC decisions, which will be made available to any SPREP member on request.
- 5.5 GoA and SPREP will schedule other meetings to discuss the Partnership and other issues at mutually determined times.

Focal points and information sharing

- 5.6 GoA designates the Director, Pacific Climate Change Section (DFAT), or their nominee, as the focal point between SPREP and GoA stakeholders. In SPREP, the focal point will be the Deputy Director General, Governance and Operations, or their nominee.
- 5.7 This approach will not inhibit appropriate and ongoing collegial exchanges amongst staff and consultants employed by either partner, or substitute for program management undertaken at appropriate levels. The two focal points will facilitate consistency rather than to limit or "gate-keep" engagement.
- 5.8 GoA (or DFAT as the GoA representative) will facilitate greater information sharing with GoA stakeholders and consult on joint SPREP-GoA priorities and objectives as required. Consultation and feedback will inform the formal policy dialogue at HLC meetings.

- 5.9 GoA and SPREP will encourage collaboration between respective regional representatives, and at the design phase of new investments.

Review and amendments

- 5.10 Independent reviews of the Partnership will be undertaken based on jointly determined timing and terms of reference. Subject to confirmation at a HLC, both sides will plan to hold an evaluation in 2024. Independent reviews of SPREP's work may also be undertaken by mutual consent.
- 5.11 The partners intend that the scope of this Partnership will remain flexible over its life, and be able to incorporate new priority objectives. These may be included in the Partnership at any time by mutual determination.

Forms of funding

- 5.12 GoA's financial contribution to SPREP will take the form of contributions to core funding, programme funding and project funding. This Partnership covers all of these forms of funding.
- 5.13 GoA will commit to provide financial contributions to SPREP core and programme funding. GoA will reconfirm core and programme funding on an annual basis, subject to:
- a) documented positive progress against the Partnership's objectives for core funding, or Divisional objectives for programme funding, and
 - b) the allocation of required funding by the Australian Government agencies with which SPREP works.
- 5.14 Financial contributions from GoA to SPREP may be made through the use of a Grant Arrangement in the form at Schedule A, or another arrangement as deemed appropriate and acceptable to both partners.

Use of funds

- 5.15 SPREP's annual budget, including GoA's contribution to core, programme funds and projects, will be considered by the quarterly Audit Committee meetings.

Cost recovery and project management fee

- 5.16 Full cost recovery and the project management fee determined by SPREP's governing body will be applied to all GoA programme and project funding.

6. Performance assessment and reporting

- 6.1 GoA's investment in SPREP will be assessed and reported periodically as required by the Australian aid program's quality management processes.
- 6.2 GoA will regularly engage with SPREP on performance assessment criteria, including on financial management, organisational principles and culture, transparency and implementation of Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion principles.
- 6.3 GoA and SPREP will work to ensure that reporting provided to GoA aligns with and supports SPREP systems and processes to minimise administrative burden. This includes assessing performance against SPREP's *Strategic Plan 2017-2026*, SPREP's Performance

Implementation Plans and SPREP's *Results Framework 2017-2026* and SPREP's *Gender Policy*.

- 6.4 Separate funding arrangements entered into between GoA and SPREP may include additional assessment and reporting frameworks but will seek to minimise the reporting burden.
- 6.5 The *Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)* at Schedule B will guide GoA and SPREP's monitoring of performance and progress against the objectives of the Partnership. The PAF aligns with SPREP's *Strategic Plan 2017-2026*, SPREP's Performance Implementation Plans and SPREP's *Results Framework 2017-2026*.

7. Amendments and documentation

- 7.1 This Partnership may be revised at any time by an amendment in writing signed by GoA and SPREP.

Signed on 19th day of May 2021

For the **Government of Australia**


Senator the Hon Zed Seselja
Minister for International Development
and the Pacific

For the **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme**


Kosi Latu
Director-General