



Contribution of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to the first part of the United Nations' Secretary-General's report on "Oceans and Law of the Sea" to the Sixteenth meeting of the Informal Consultative Process

"Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, environmental, social and economic"

Executive summary

In the field of deep sea mineral activities, the SPC, in collaboration with the EU, is currently providing scientific and technical advice and assistance to enable 15 Pacific Island countries to make informed decisions about deep sea mining within their national jurisdictions. This has led to the development of strong and comprehensive national offshore policies and legislation tailored to securing sustainable development of Pacific Island countries' deep sea mineral resources, with particular attention to the protection of the marine environment, for the benefit of present and future generations.

In the field of maritime boundaries, the SPC and its partners, assists member countries in the technical preparations of the negotiations between neighbouring countries. Maritime Boundaries are critical for the management and governance of marine resources such as fisheries, seabed minerals, biodiversity, marine spatial planning and maritime transport. Internationally, all of the Pacific Island Countries are committed to international conventions that require them to define their maritime boundaries. Six out of 14 countries have already declared their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). These EEZs have overlapping boundaries and to date almost two-thirds (70%) have been successfully negotiated and endorsed by the Leaders of the Pacific Countries. SPC and its partners continue to work with PICs to complete the remaining maritime boundaries.

In sustainable natural resource and environment management, the SPC continues to provide important oceanic and coastal fisheries scientific and capacity building services that are valued by 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), while responding to new management and development challenges and aspirations at the national, subregional and regional levels.

- (i) Information regarding the relevant activities of your Organisation fostering an integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development with regards to oceans; and**

Deep sea minerals

Launched in 2011, the SPC-EU Deep Sea Minerals (DSM) Project, a collaboration between the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the European Union (EU), aim at provide scientific and technical advice and assistance to enable 15 Pacific Island countries to make informed decisions about deep sea mining within their national jurisdictions and beyond.



Through the SPC-EU DSM Project, the SPC aims at strengthening national efforts in favour of increased economic growth for the Pacific region while advising Pacific Island countries which want to engage with DSM activities to adopt national regulatory frameworks requiring precautionary environmental management, public participation and securing reasonable and equitable arrangements. The SPC-EU DSM Project has a strong focus on a multi-stakeholder approach, and capacity-building for all Pacific islanders. This has led to the development of strong and comprehensive national offshore policies and legislation tailored to securing sustainable development of Pacific Island countries' deep sea mineral resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

Maritime Boundaries Unit

With the exception of Papua New Guinea, most of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have small land areas, as compared to the large ocean spaces, commonly known as the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and this has been proclaimed by the PICs under international law, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). For example, Tuvalu has a land area of only 26 sq.km but its EEZ area is approximately 756 400 sq. km. The ratio of the combined land areas of all 22 PICTs and the total EEZ Area is 1: 52.

The manner in which important marine resources such as fisheries, seabed minerals, biodiversity and conservation efforts, maritime transport, vessel monitoring are managed and governed within the EEZs of PICs are defined under UNCLOS. Internationally, all of the Pacific Island Countries as State Parties to UNCLOS and all PICs should deposit with the United Nations information delineating their maritime boundaries. Currently, 6 Pacific Island Countries have defined the outer limits of its EEZs. There are approximately 48 overlapping or shared EEZs, where negotiations are vital to settle the maritime boundary between their zones. Of the 48 shared boundaries, 33 maritime treaties have been successfully negotiated and signed by the Leaders of the PICs. There needs to be more work to complete the remaining 15 overlapping maritime boundaries.

The Maritime Boundaries unit at SPC provides the technical advice to the PICs in developing the technical solutions required under UNCLOS to fulfil their responsibilities to the international community in establishing the limits of the national areas of jurisdiction and to assist neighbouring countries to negotiate and resolve the adjacent boundaries with each other in a peaceful manner, and in the "Pacific Way".

Oceanic Fisheries

In the field of oceanic fisheries, the SPC continues to provide capacity building and scientific support to PICTs for the management of tuna and associated species in the following areas, (i) Stock assessments and management, (ii) improving data and data management for the tuna fishery, (ii) supporting and developing fisheries monitoring services, particularly the observer programme, and (iv) improving understanding of the oceanic ecosystem that supports the region's tuna fisheries.



Coastal Fisheries

In the field of coastal fisheries, the SPC provides capacity building and scientific support services to 22 PICTs for (i) the management of coastal fisheries resources, (ii) sustainable development of near shore resources, (iii) all aspects of aquaculture and mariculture, and (iv) education, awareness raising materials and the provision of information on the importance and management of inshore fisheries.

The Marine Sector Working Group

There are a number of regional organizations operating in the Pacific to support their respective members implement regional and national policy activities that contribute towards the sustainable development, management and conservation of the ocean resources. The Marine Sector Working Group (MSWG) was established to improve coordination and collaboration amongst regional organisations and to advise their Executives on marine and coastal issues. The MSWG has been operating since around 2003 and its members include those regional organisations with mandates in ocean-related fields, namely the:

- Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS)
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP)
- Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
- University of the South Pacific (USP)

SPC and FFA Co-Chair the MSWG and it includes a number of observers from other organizations, including UN System, donors and civil society.

- (ii) **Challenges and opportunities in integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in that regard, including matters which may require further consideration with a view to fostering integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development with regards to oceans, with an emphasis on areas where coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels could be enhanced.**

Deep sea minerals

Securing sustainable development of Pacific Island countries' deep sea mineral resources requires a long term approach. Emphasis should be given to build in-country capacity in geology, legal and environment sciences as a means to support the development and implementation of strong and effective policies, legislation, and management measures for this emerging sector. To this end, SPC through its internship and capacity building scheme with regards to deep sea mineral activities, has been able to provide short and long term placements to 42 recent graduates and government officials from 12 Pacific Island countries. Particular attention has been given to young Pacific Islanders and women. Although significant progress has been made, further work needs to be done with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of such initiatives. It is anticipated that strengthening regional and international cooperation between intergovernmental organizations, academics, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners will be of critical importance to support such development priority.



Maritime Boundaries Unit

Given the renewed interest by foreign mining companies in the region for exploration or exploitation of deep sea minerals, as well as reporting of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities in the region, the Leaders of the PICs are beginning to re-emphasise the importance of formally establishing their national maritime boundaries in a legal manner.

Maritime boundary delimitation can only be undertaken by sovereign countries, and the Maritime Boundaries Unit at SPC continues to provide member countries with the knowledge, tools and support to develop enduring solutions in accordance with international law. This is only possible through close coordination with a large consortium of specialists and partners including the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Geoscience Australia, The Commonwealth Secretariat, UN Environment Programme GRID-Arendal, Australian Attorney-General's Department, and the University of Sydney. This collaborative effort led by SPC provides the foundation for improved ocean governance and management and for securing rights over fisheries, deep sea minerals and other resources that provide economic development and food security opportunities.

Oceanic Fisheries

The Oceanic fisheries resources of the Pacific, particularly the tuna fishery is not just big - it is huge - and vitally important to the PICTs. The status of stocks for skipjack, albacore and yellowfin tunas are not in an overfished state, however, fishing effort/pressure on the resource continues to increase. The bigeye tuna stock is in an overfished state. Total tuna catch in the western and central Pacific was over 2.6 million metric tons in 2013. Management of the fishery continues to be a challenge, but improvements are possible through the use of management frameworks, including the specification of objectives, reference points and the implementation of harvest control rules.

The SPC with funding support from its donor partners and in collaboration with the Western and Central Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) continue to play an active and important role in providing the WCPFC with vital stock assessment data and scientific advice to enable the WCPFC make proactive decisions on effective conservation and management measures for tuna fisheries. The SPC with funding support from the World Bank will provide technical assistance to the Party to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) countries to develop reference points and harvest control rules for the management of the skipjack tuna fishery within their waters.

Coastal Fisheries Programme

Securing sustainable management of PICTs coastal fisheries resources continues to be a challenge and therefore requires a long term strategic approach and financial commitment by national governments, regional and international partners. The coastal fisheries resources are of fundamental importance to PICTs. Much of the PICTs nutrition, welfare, culture, employment, and recreation are based on the living resources in the zone between the shoreline and the outer reefs.

The SPC through its coastal fisheries programme with funding support from its donor partners continues to strive to provide technical assistance and support to strengthen national fisheries institutions and capacity building at the national level, national legal frameworks, national coastal fisheries policies, and coastal fisheries management measures.