

# Prime Minister of Samoa reiterates Pacific leaders' commitment to the protection of environment

*04 September 2023, Apia Samoa* - The gathering of SPREP members, partners and donors in Samoa this week embodies the collective commitment and priority Pacific leaders have placed on the protection and management of environment resources of our blue Pacific for the present and future generations.

The point was made by Samoa's Prime Minister, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, on Monday night when she opened the 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting of Officials and Associated meetings at Taumeasina Island Resort from 04-08 September 2023. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of SPREP since it was established by a Treaty in 1993.

"I wish to congratulate SPREP on its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and to thank SPREP sincerely for its valuable contribution to Samoa's development. My government is privileged to work and partner with SPREP on many occasions in support of our sustainable development aspirations. I look forward to further strengthening our joint effort including in Samoa's role as AOSIS Chair," Prime Minister Hon. Fiame said.

The 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting of Officials and Associated meetings are taking place in exceptional times and circumstances, Prime Minister Hon. Fiame noted, where many of the "socio economic and environmental problems we face are global in nature, but not of our making."

"Climate change remains the single greatest existential threat facing the Blue Pacific. Our Pacific Leaders have also declared that the Pacific is facing a Climate Emergency that threatens the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of our people and ecosystems, backed by the latest science and the daily lived realities in Pacific communities," the Prime Minister reminded. "The evidence of the latest IPCC report is irrefutable. We will not be able to stave off the worst consequences of climate change, if we do not immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

As AOSIS chair, Prime Minister Hon. Fiame reassured that Samoa will continue to advocate for more ambitious targets and urgent follow through in the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are countries' self-defined national climate pledges under the Paris Agreement detailing what they will do to help meet the global goal to pursue 1.5°C, adapt to climate impacts and ensure sufficient finance to support these efforts

"I acknowledge SPREP's technical support and advice to Pacific SIDS and in leading the One CROP team in preparations for COP28 in Dubai, we look forward to your continued support."

The meetings this week are preceded by the Noumea and Waigani Conventions last week. All meeting are guided by the theme: "SPREP 30th Sustainable, transformative and resilient for a Blue Pacific." Prime Minister Fiame highlighted the value of partnerships to strengthen institutional capacities, competencies and to provide a sustainable funding base.

"We cannot do it alone," she said. "I firmly believe there is a high degree of ownership among all our countries in our sustainable development efforts, these can be re-enforced by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent to respond to the unique challenges that our region faces, including environment and sustainable development.

“Our actions and resolve as a collective in ensuring timely responses to the critical needs of our region and peoples, and in addressing the existential threat of climate change and all related challenges, remain critical.”

SPREP’s Director General, Mr Sefanaia Nawadra, acknowledged Samoa’s support for SPREP, and welcomed all SPREP Members, partners and donors who are in Samoa for the meetings.

“Samoa has been a wonderful host country and government for us. Samoa has always made us feel welcomed, you have always supported us and you have nurtured us over and beyond what a host country is normally expected to do,” he said.

“The best example is the Pacific Climate Change Centre. Samoa willingly gave what was supposed to be bilateral assistance to a regional organisation, this is something I know we will always appreciate. I want to acknowledge the leadership of the Samoan government, the current administration and the past administration, have always been a strong supporter of SPREP.”

The 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP Meeting and associated meetings kicked off on Monday with the first SPREP Partnership Dialogue.

“One of the strengths of SPREP is our ability to convene, to convene our partners in a number of different networks and communities of practise but that’s only possible if the partners are willing,” Mr Nawadra said. “We look forward to continuing to work together with our SPREP members, partners and donors to serve our Pacific communities.”

The official opening started with a devotion led by Reverend Nu’uausala Siutaia Siaosi, of the Apia Protestant Church, and featured a montage slideshow of SPREP’s journey in the last 30 years, and concluded with a welcoming reception.

***The 31st SPREP Meeting of Officials and associated meetings are taking place at Taumeasina Island Resort in Samoa this week, from 4-8 September 2023. The meetings are guided by the theme: “SPREP@30th Sustainable, transformative and resilient for a Blue Pacific.”***

***The 31st SPREP Meeting of Officials and associated meetings bring together SPREP's 21 Pacific Island Member countries, 5 Metropolitan Members and partners to discuss strategic issues pertaining to the organisation, and to approve the 2024-2025 work plan. The 21 Pacific Island Member countries and territories of SPREP are: American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna. The five Metropolitan members of SPREP are: Australia, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States of America.***

***In our efforts to fulfil our vision of ‘a resilient Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures’, SPREP is extremely grateful to our valued Members, development partners, donors, our CROP family, and stakeholders.***

***For more information on the 31SM, please contact: [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org)***

