

Message to the 25th meeting of the International Hydrological Programme Regional Steering Committee for Southeast Asia and the Pacific

Manila, the Philippines, 13 November 2017

We, the participants at the **UNESCO Conference on Water Security in the Pacific SIDS: Bringing UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme to the Pacific**, including the **International Initiative on Water Quality's regional consultation in the Pacific SIDS**, met in Nadi, Fiji on 23-24 October 2017 in order to review and establish water-related priorities, needs and implementation gaps in the Pacific with focus on the opportunities offered by the International Hydrological Programme (IHP).

As an outcome of two days of presentations, discussion and informal exchange, we hereby reaffirm our interest in actively engaging with IHP and the UNESCO Water Family. We take particular note of the International Hydrological Programme Regional Steering Committee for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RSC-SEAP), which over the past 25 years has served as a mechanism for exchange for the region's IHP community.

We express our interest in actively engaging with the RSC-SEAP, and thereby call upon the Committee and its Secretariat to actively pursue mechanisms through which to ensure broader Pacific representation at future meetings on a rotational basis among the Pacific States. In this regard, we take note that representatives of Papua New Guinea, as one of the founding members of RSC-SEAP, have regularly participated in RSC-SEAP's meetings, and that additional representation of the Pacific has during periods in the past been ensured on the basis of rotational representation.

With this statement, we bring to the attention of the RSC-SEAP the outcomes and results of our discussions in Nadi, in the anticipation that these may serve as entry points for engaging with IHP and for further cooperation and exchange with the Committee and its members. In this regard, we note that:

- The Pacific sub-region is home to a wide range of different contexts – from high islands to low-lying atolls, from large, centrally located island hubs to remote, outer-lying islands and with vast cultural and linguistic diversity.
- However, there is a general demographic shift to urban and peri-urban areas, creating stress on existing infrastructure and water sources.
- Pacific needs in terms of hydrological sciences and water-related services are as different as the islands that make up the sub-region. For successful planning and implementation of any intervention, this diversity must be acknowledged taken into account.

- The Pacific actively pursues cooperation and exchange in the area of water through the network of CROP agencies, the United Nations system, as well as a range of bilateral and multilateral agreements and frameworks.
- The Pacific island countries are most vulnerable to climate change, extreme events and natural hazard impacting on their water resources which are often coupled with challenges due to their geographic sizes, small water lenses and remoteness.

As an outcome of our deliberations and recognizing that UNESCO assists in mobilization of partnerships that can bring resources, both technical and financial, we propose the following as priority areas for intervention by IHP and the UNESCO Water Family in the Pacific SIDS, and invite the RSC-SEAP and its members to consider potential cooperation in these areas.

- **Hydrological data collection, storage, analysis and reporting protocols.** Recognising work that has already been done (for instance, the Pacific WMO HYCOS project) and existing regional and national platforms for collecting and storing hydrological data from remote island locations (for instance, Tonga Smart Groundwater Management and Kiri-WATSAN), we discussed the need to strengthen existing baseline hydrological data, develop replicable and simple data collection and management protocols, in parallel with the retrieval and securing of existing data records.
- **Water quality monitoring – surface and ground water resources, drinking water, including household rainwater collection systems.** With particular reference to UNESCO-IHP's International Initiative on Water Quality (IIWQ), we discussed the need to strengthen existing knowledge, regulatory frameworks and practices, develop or, in the case of already existing programmes, extend water quality monitoring and knowledge at a manageable cost based on Pacific experience and innovation. IIWQ was invited to contribute to regional efforts on water quality and wastewater together with partners such as Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (PWWA).
- **Water education and capacity-building at all levels.** We discussed the need to strengthen water education in both formal and non-formal contexts, including practical and theoretical learning from early childhood. In this regard, it was proposed to integrate water into Education for Sustainable Development programmes. We also discussed the need for capacity development for water sector professionals, as well as for outreach and engagement with communities.

- **Updating the Pacific Regional Action Plan (RAP).** We request UNESCO to provide technical support in the updating of the RAP for Sustainable Water Management in the Pacific.
- **Updating of key resource materials.** We discussed the potential benefits of updating and publishing key IHP materials of particular relevance to the Pacific, such as Tony Falkland's "Hydrology and water resources of small islands: a practical guide" (Studies and reports in hydrology Vol. 49, 1991)
- **Understanding groundwater dynamics for water security.** We discussed the need to strengthen knowledge of our groundwater resources as a basis for sustainable management of these resources.
- **Engagement with the Pacific Hydrology Services Panel.** We discussed the recent endorsement by Pacific Ministers for Meteorological Services of a Hydrology Services Panel to provide advice to the Pacific Meteorological Council, and the opportunities for UNESCO to work with this panel to progress the development and implementation of new programmes and initiatives to support the capacity needs of hydrological services in Pacific Island countries and territories.
- **Provision for technical support and science-based information on identifying and monitoring impacts of climate change on water resources in the Pacific.** We discussed the need for countries to better manage their water resources based on sound science and seek support to identify adaptation measures to increase country resilience.

Nadi, 24 October 2017