



GEF R2R/ RSC.6/ WP.05

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**Sixth Regional Steering Committee Meeting (Virtual) for the  
GEF Pacific International Waters Ridge to Reef Project entitled:**

*Ridge to Reef – Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest &  
Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon,  
Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries*

Suva, Fiji 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022

**RSTC Chair’s Report – Highlights, Challenges and  
Opportunities**

**Summary:**

The paper provides the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) Chair’s Final Report to the RSC at its final meeting. This is the last meeting of the RSTC as the project closes on 1 March 2022. The paper recognizes the hard-working members of the RSTC and members’ contributions supporting the project over the year. The report also provides an opportunity for reflection on the successes, challenges and lessons learned in delivering on the RSTC ToRs and offer suggestions on opportunities ahead.

Generally, the work of the RSTC could have been improved having suffered from limited time to meet and providing action-oriented expert support in scientific and technical aspects. This is important to facilitate the achievement of the goals and objectives of the UNDP/SPC IWR2R project, and with responsibility for:

- (i) overseeing the scientific and technical elements of the project;
- (ii) ensuring effective implementation of activities undertaken during project execution; and
- (iii) providing sound scientific and technical advice to the Project Steering Committee.

The meeting is invited to note and endorse the RSTC Chair’s final report.

The Record and outcomes of the Seventh Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) Meeting is attached as **Attachment 1**

### Overview

1. This is the last meeting of the RSTC as the project closes on 1 March 2022. Therefore, the Chair's report at this meeting is dedicated to all hard-working members of the RSTC. The report also provides an opportunity for reflection on the successes, challenges and lessons learned in delivering on the RSTC ToRs, and opportunities ahead. The science and evidence-based approach is already an international best practice, and it underpins the work of this group over the last 5-years of the IWR2R project.
2. As previously stated in the 2019 RSTC meeting, there is a fundamental principle of maintaining high quality science to frame scientific and technical advice thereby informing policy discussion and decisions at the RSC. Therefore, the role of the RSTC ought to be active and action-oriented by providing guidance through robust technical discussion on aspects of project implementation such as testing of innovative technologies, review research methods and sampling designs used, and critically assess and advise on recommended best practices and upscaling R2R investments.
3. Recall that to facilitate the achievement of the goals and objectives of the UNDP/SPC IWR2R project, the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) was established with responsibility for:
  - (i) overseeing the scientific and technical elements of the project;
  - (ii) ensuring effective implementation of activities undertaken during project execution; and
  - (iii) providing sound scientific and technical advice to the Project Steering Committee.
4. Further recall that the RSTC is responsible for ensuring that scientific and technical aspects of this project meet international standards. Specifically, the RSTC reviews the substantive activities of the project to:
  - (i) conduct diagnostic analysis of threats to priority coastal areas to guide investment in integrated environmental and natural resource management;
  - (ii) improve State of Coast reporting and it's mainstreaming in national Strategic Action Planning for Ridge to Reef approaches to Sustainable Development Planning;
  - (iii) enhance information management and knowledge management and sharing in support of the national uptake of best practice management approaches and technologies;
  - (iv) guide the establishment and operation of regionally appropriate results-based management and reporting systems, including monitoring of the effectiveness of management actions; and
  - (v) strengthen national and regional cooperation and coordination in the operation of the Pacific Ridge to Reef programme

### Achievements, Challenges & Opportunities

5. Generally, evaluating RSTC role in ensuring scientific and technical aspects of the R2R programme meet international standards is mixed and cause of concern. The group meets once annually and efforts to meet more often virtually or face to face did not work out as anticipated. There were challenges in the retention of group members and the occurrence of COVID-19 impacted efforts of the group further. However, there was improvement in scientific and technical aspects of the R2R Programme following the recruitment of new staff in 2019, and the convening of technical consultations for the RSTC and the R2R Technical Working Group. More details on the outcomes and products emanating from these efforts are accessible online.
6. A substantive activity of project component 1 is to develop a regionally appropriate method and procedure for the characterization and prioritization of PIC coastal areas for R2R investment and the conduct of diagnostic analysis to identify needs for key reforms and investments in priority areas.

There were good results and products coming out of these project works, and the corresponding reports and publications are accessible online. However, due to time limitation and challenges related to COVID-19, the development and trials of the spatial prioritization procedures and modelling were only performed in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. The trials will need to be extended to other PICs for better improvements in the methods and align the model to the context of each country.

7. The RSTC reviewed and provided expert advice on the preparation of the R2R science to policy strategic framework that was approved in 2019, and a modified version approved in 2020. The Rapid Assessment of Coastal Areas (RapCA), spatial prioritization procedures, diagnostic analysis, 'State of Coasts' (SoCs) and Strategic action Frameworks (SAFs) reporting were essential steps of the science-policy framework. The production of reporting against these regionally led activities in-country vary considerably. The regional guidelines for implementing the above steps were published in 2021. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 it was not possible to hire and send international consultants project staff from Suva in-country to carry out the above technical work. Local consultants were hired, instead.

8. Investments in human capital for integrated environmental and natural resource management is one essential area of the project. The design of curricula and training materials for the regional post-graduate training programme offered through James Cook University was a 'big' success. The original intent of the programme, amongst others, was to provide regional guidance to the national 'State of Coasts' (SoCs) reporting and harmonized results reporting to be undertaken as part of component 3 and 4, respectively. Unfortunately, the plan to link JCU graduate training with development of SoCs reporting and harmonized results could have been executed better and efficiently. Accordingly, the graduate training is largely executed remotely, and the students were experiencing internet connectivity issues. Due to country lock downs and restriction of movements, the students were unable to carry out to their field research which is an important component of the course.

9. Moreover, the RSTC was earmarked to lead in the development of regionally appropriate knowledge tools to support evidence-based coastal and marine spatial planning in PICs. Unfortunately, there was little done on this by the RSTC other than providing expert advice on aspects of knowledge tools during the group's annual meeting. The two technical consultations of the RSTC were useful exercises to engage this group and other stakeholders in technical dialogue, peer review research papers and contributed to enhancing research methods and working towards improving results from range of R2R funded research.

10. The RSTC has the opportunity to deliberate and provide expert advice on a more comprehensive approach for capturing and exchanging lessons learned, good practices and impact experiences from community and stakeholder level using the Most Significant Change technique and the Participatory Video technique. These techniques and their benefits were introduced to the committee and example videos shown, recognizing several high impact events showcasing the products generated through the various modes of collecting lessons learned in 2019 and several other periods in 2020 and 2021. These events showcased, amongst others, personal verbal story-telling advocacy of R2R work amongst community and stakeholders, premiere videos and stories, hold interactive workshops with managers and stakeholders, and present community level art and crafts associated with the programme.

11. The role of RSTC was relatively limited in guiding the establishment and operation of regionally appropriate results-based management and reporting systems, including monitoring of the effectiveness of management actions. The group contributions relate more to reviewing relevant documentations presented by RPCU staff. The reporting systems and templates were prepared to enable efficiency in harmonized data collection and monitoring of management actions. A harmonized and simple results reporting system (HRR) was developed and has served the project reporting well. This was an important undertaking realigning national activity of both R2R STAR and IW projects to the GEF Focal Area Objectives, the targets specified in the logframes for GEF Focal Areas, and identify what SDGs and SDG targets the projects would deliver against, and which conventions related to these targets. The HRR provides clear relationship and overlap between several global results reporting frameworks. Apparently the RPCU experienced the need for ongoing guidance and reminders in the

course of implementing the project and its reporting requirements.

12. There was minimal experience observed and documented where RSTC plays a role to strengthen national and regional cooperation and coordination in the operation of the Pacific Ridge to Reef programme. That said, the RSTC members' level of engagement, sharing of experiences, contacts, key people and agencies previously worked often speed up efforts to cooperate and coordinate project work nationally and regionally. Most of the members have their own extensive list of collaborators already in natural resource and ecosystem research and management projects and programmes.

13. The implementation of project science workplan is often faced with operational challenges beyond the control of the RPCU. There is very little the RSTC can do to assist addressing these challenges. The commitment and engagement of lead persons and consultants undertaking technical project work vary considerably. In most cases, COVID restrictions do not allow project staff and consultants to visit specific project sites and carry out field work. The alternative platforms to engage remotely and virtually are relatively useful and speed up work, but only if internet connectivity is strong.

14. Consequently, the RSTC had observed difficulties maintaining the international standards expected in the operation of the R2R project which includes the quality of science and rigor. In this vein, several technical reports are the result of reviews, consultations, interviews and other related desktop modalities. The majority of other technical reports follow the usual necessary requirements of field work employing standard methods and sampling designs. Another similar issue relates to the availability of adequate expertise and capacity in-country and therefore arrangements were done to secure expertise outside the countries in question. A concept of establishing a centralized hub of experts to support implement scientific and technical works of the project everywhere was floated but not implemented.

## **Conclusion**

15. Overall, and given the circumstances, the RSTC had the opportunity to discharge its functions in the best way it can. Obviously, there is much more needed to be done and would have done differently if not more efficiently without the challenges outlined earlier. Nonetheless the RSTC did well adopting the alternative means of executing its ToR and support the project.

16. With the closure of the project and efforts to prepare a replacement R2R project, it is important for the RSTC supporting future project work that strengthen a science-based approach for the prioritization of catchment and coastal areas for integrated catchment and coastal management. The guidelines and technical reports supporting science-based approach have been developed, available and accessible online.

17. Moreover, the trialing work characterizing coastal areas and sites using the guidelines and strategic frameworks outline earlier would need to be continued. Technical people in country needs upskilling in the implementation of spatial prioritization procedures and modelling, including but not limited to:

- (i) compiling comparable information in agreed format, including sex-disaggregated data for socio-cultural characterizations,
- (ii) prepare final site characterizations for identified coastal areas for compilation into datasets, and using agreed procedures and modelling to identify priority locations, including implications for coastal and marine spatial planning, for R2R investments in PICs.
- (iii) use of remote-controlled drone were useful for taking aerial video and stills imagery. The diagnostic approach and analyses are useful means to the identification of required R2R reforms and interventions at priority locations.
- (iv) prepare diagnostic reports for priority catchment and coastal areas presented for approval by national Inter-Ministerial Committees and related authorities in-country.

## **Attachment 1**

# **Record and outcomes of the Seventh Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) Meeting**

### **Introduction**

1. The Seventh Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee for the GEF Pacific Ridge to Reef Programme (IW R2R) was held on 18 and 19 January 2022. The meeting was conducted virtually. The provisional agenda is attached as *Annex 1*.
2. Thirty-two (32) participants from GEF R2R implementing agencies in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, UNDP Pacific Office, Suva, and the Pacific Community (SPC) attended. The list of participants is attached as *Annex 2*.

### **Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening**

3. Mr Samasoni Sauni, Regional Programme Coordinator (RPC) of SPC welcomed delegates from the participating member countries, partners, representative from UN agencies. He provided the meeting with apologies from the RSTC Chair, Prof Marcus Sheeves and Co-Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula.
4. Mr Sauni sought endorsement from the RSTC to resume the Chair and Ms Rhonda Robinson as Co-Chair until such time the RSTC Chair Prof. Marcus Sheaves and/or Co-Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula joins the meeting online. The Committee accepted the arrangement proposed by Mr Sauni.
5. Mr Sauni then called the meeting to order.

#### **Agenda Item 1.1: Prayer**

6. Mr George Naboutuiloma of SPC Regional Programme Coordination Unit, delivered an opening prayer.

#### **Agenda Item 1.2: Welcome and remarks by Chair**

7. Mr Samasoni Sauni put across to the floor the last RSC meeting record and action items from 2020.

#### **Agenda Item 1.3: Opening remarks on behalf of the Secretariat**

8. Ms Rhonda Robinson, Acting Director and Deputy Director of SPC's Disaster and Community Resilience Programme in the Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (GEM) Division welcomed participants to the Seventh (and final) Ridge-to-Reef Regional Science and Technical Committee Meeting. She mentioned the undersea volcano eruption in Tonga on Saturday (15 January) that affected Tonga and parts of Fiji and other Pacific Island countries and said that their thoughts and prayers were with the Tongan people.
9. Ms Robinson recognised that it was not all is 'smooth sailing' through years of implementing the IWR2R project and thanked the RPCU at SPC, as well as the participating countries and governments, civil society and NGO/IGO partners for putting in place strategic adaptive measures that were executed in a coordinated manner. She acknowledged the RST Committee for discharging its functions, recognising difficult circumstances encountered in the early life of the project.

### **Remarks**

10. Mr Floyd Robinson of UNDP offered thoughts and prayers to the Kingdom of Tonga. Mr Robinson thanked the RSTC for its continued and valued support and technical advice over the years to the Regional Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project as well as to all the stakeholders involved in the R2R Project.

11. Mr Samasoni Sauni as Regional Programme Coordinator acknowledged the RST Committee, as the two-day meeting was their last meeting as a committee. Mr Sauni reflected on the work and the R2R Products that have come out of the R2R Project and the expert advice by the Committee provided to the RSC for their policy decision process. Mr Sauni also thanked RSTC Chair, Prof. Marcus Sheeves and Co-Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula and full members of the Committee for discharging their responsibilities of the Terms of Reference well.
12. Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat invited the speakers and panellists to switch on their videos and handed it over to the SPC technical support team to guide the team for a group photo.

## **Agenda Item 2: Organisation of the meeting**

### **Agenda Item 2.1: Meeting documents**

13. Mr Samasoni Sauni put forward to the meeting the two late papers:
  - i. Paper 1 – Investment Forum Outcomes on Deliberating the R2R Regional Guidelines and Policy Frameworks
  - ii. Paper 2 – Outcomes of case studies roundtable session

### **Agenda Item 2.2: Meeting arrangements and conduct**

14. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat advised the participants on basic housekeeping rules.

## **Agenda Item 3: Adoption of agenda**

15. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat advised participants on the working papers and information papers available online ([RSTC7](#)) on the R2R portal ([www.pacific-r2r.org](http://www.pacific-r2r.org)).
16. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda.

### **Agenda Item 3.1: Last RSC meeting record and action items**

17. Mr Sauni of the Secretariat said the paper was inviting the meeting to note the records of the last RSC meeting is a true reflection of what was discussed and the action items that emerge from those discussions are approved in this meeting.

## **Agenda Item 4: Regional IW R2R Project Final Reports**

### **Agenda Item 4.1: Chair's report 2020 – Highlights, Challenges and Opportunities**

18. In the absence of RSTC Chair Prof. Marcus Sheaves, interim Chair, Mr Samasoni Sauni gave an update on the **Chair's Report 2020**. The paper recognises the hard-working members of the RSTC and members' contributions supporting the project over the year. The report also provides an opportunity for reflections on successes, challenges and lessons learned in delivering on the RSTC ToRs and offer suggestions on opportunities ahead.

### **Agenda Item 4.2: Project Final Report**

19. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat presented to the Committee, for its information and consideration, an update of the project final report. Mr Sauni said that the detailed updates were provided in the meeting paper (available online). The paper discusses key highlights relative to the

outputs and achievements. He added that the full report will be presented to the RSC on Thursday, 20 January.

20. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat commended the team for putting together the final draft report. She said that a lot of work went into finalising the report – consolidating a lot of the learnings, findings, and reflections of the project over the years. Ms Robinson sought the input from the committee around the scientific and technical aspects that lay within the report.

#### **Agenda Item 4.3: Project closure and terminal evaluation**

21. Mr Floyd Robinson of UNDP co-presented with Luisa Katonibau to the Committee the draft highlights of the Terminal Evaluation (TE). The TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.
22. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat opened the floor for discussions.
23. Mr Ricardo Javier Dominguez Llosa, GEF FAO Vanuatu stated that in future when UNDP were looking to recruit national consultants with specialisation in evaluation, to forward the terms of reference (ToR) to GEF FAO as they were able to help UNDP look for potential candidates.
24. Mr Sauni asked UNDP if they could share with the Committee 1-2 results in view of the work that has been done so that they could frame their advice from the Committee to the RSC with respect to those preliminary results.
25. Mr Floyd Robinson of UNDP acknowledge the comment by FAO Vanuatu for future recruitments or evaluation to share the ToRs with FAO. This was normally shared between UNDP, government and SPC but UNDP will reach out to other agencies such as FAO.
26. In response to Mr Sauni's question on the terminal evaluation preliminary findings, Mr Robinson of UNDP said that they had requested it from the consultants, however, one of the challenges was getting inputs or feedback from the two national consultants. UNDP has requested that the two consultants share this with UNDP before Thursday's RSC meeting so that the UNDP and SPC teams have a chance to review these preliminary findings.
27. In response to a question from Shaleh of SPC in the zoom chat box regarding the final inception report, Mr Robinson said he would touch base with the UNDP Monitoring team to request the report be shared with the committee.
28. Another question put forward by Shaleh of SPC was on the process for conducting terminal evaluation like the one done during the mid-term review and sharing the preliminary findings from the evaluation. Mr Robinson said that he would get in touch with the focal point in office and request her to share the report. Mr Robinson stated that they were disappointed that UNDP did not receive a copy of the preliminary findings from the terminal evaluation.
29. Ms Robinson of the Secretariat agreed with the comments made by Mr Shaleh on the need to have some visibility across the findings to be able to manage that conversation with the RSC. She requested if Mr Robinson if he could get the team to provide a high-level summary of the findings.

#### **Agenda Item 4.4: JCU Course Report, 2021**

30. In the absence of RSTC Chair Prof. Marcus Sheaves, interim Chair, Mr Samasoni Sauni provided an update on the JCU-SPC teaching program on R2R Sustainable Development. The highlights of the programme are the successful completion and graduation of students in the Graduate Certificate and Diploma in R2R Sustainable Development. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the students greatly with several forced to drop off the course due to internet connectivity issues.

31. The meeting was invited to note and endorse the JCU final report with a view of supporting future R2R investments in formal and informal training, and with specific focus on continuing current academic courses on R2R Sustainable Development in the next and future R2R projects and programmes.

#### Agenda Item 4.5: Discussion & Decisions

32. Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP suggested if a more concrete collaboration could be established between JCU and USP, for USP to offer this programme. He noted from the presentation, one of the challenges students dropped out was due to internet connectivity issues and further suggested if USP was to deliver the course, it would ensure that students/universities don't lose out on the modules that has been developed and therefor sustain the human resources that can be developed in this field.
33. Mr Samasoni Sauni acknowledged the excellent point raise by Dr Korovulavula and stated that it was an important discussion to have not only between the two institutions for service delivery on training but also in terms of accessibility and the infrastructure that is more Intune to the Pacific Island students who are using USP's infrastructure remotely. Mr Sauni added that the meetings on Thursday and Friday would capture some of the project concept outputs.
34. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat stated that they had talked around the point raised by Dr Korovulavula in previous RSTC and acknowledged the importance of connecting and collaborating. She added that from a technical perspective and alongside that in project design, they needed to consider how if they are building in partnerships with specific agencies, for example, between USP and SPC and other crop agencies or other entities that they factor that into the program design in terms of partnership delivery models that might work for the benefit of member countries; in this case the delivery of these capacity development programs in the region.

#### Agenda Item 5: Looking ahead post R2R and COVID-19

##### Agenda Item 5.3: EU project concept (highlights)

35. Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo of the Secretariat presented a brief concept that may potentially be considered for EU Funding, entitled, ***Highlands to High Seas (H2H): Integrated (nexus) resource management and governance for climate resilience and sustainable development of Small Island and Large Ocean States (SILOS)*** an integrated programmatic initiative outlining challenges, lessons, stakeholders and proposed H2H Framework for implementation for the consideration of the Regional Steering Committee. Focusing on 'nexus' management and governance, the concept is designed to expand the scope beyond the reef, to the High Seas, and be driven by the national and regional priorities that will realise local to global sustainable development benefits.
36. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat acknowledged and recognised that the high seas aspect of the proposal does need to be considered a lot more deeply as these were very preliminary thoughts. She added that those thoughts were also shared internally with the SPC executive team, awaiting feedback to give an indication as to whether this is something that as an organization, we'd be able to get behind, including broadening out the consultation process beyond the GEM division.

Dr. Mangisi-Mafileo added that the concept briefing and preliminary consultations had been undertaken across SPC: Land Resources Division, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division, Human Rights and Social Development Division, and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the South Pacific Tourism Organization and several participating R2R countries.

37. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo acknowledged the R2R STAR Project Coordinator Jennifer De Brum comments in the chat box that H2H is a great project concept.
38. GEF-FAO Vanuatu, Ricardo Javier Dominguez Llosa – with the DSM, will the old deposits with nuclear waste that we have in the region be considered?



39. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo responded that this was preliminary conceptual thinking and there has been discussion around pollution and looking at land based and marine pollution from industrial and agricultural waste. She said that if they were looking at that type of pollution, it would be unearthed in further consultations with the broader range of stakeholders Emphasizing, the Regional Steering Committee will be invited to review and endorse the Brief Concept for co-development with national and development partners for co-implementation, and if endorsed scoping with stakeholders will be undertaken (including other participating countries and other CROP agencies, including SPREP).
40. The committee welcomed the Highlands to High Seas (H2H) concept noting the intent and purpose which are like that of the R2R but extend to waters beyond the reef. The Committee recommends that the paper is further considered for approval at the RSC meeting.

#### Agenda Item 5.2: GCF project concept & PFF (highlights)

41. Mr Luke Moore presented on preliminary results of a current consultancy commissioned by the RPCU-SPC to formulate a project concept targeting the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** for the R2R that replaces the current IW R2R project. It addresses key areas identified by the IW R2R project where additional technical assistance is required, and aligns with PICs needs, SPC's strategic goals maintaining ecosystem goods and services, and finally, alignment to GCF's mandate and current priorities. The project concept and PFF is expected to be ready for submission in February 2022.
42. The Committee noted the paper and recommended that it is further considered for approval at the RSC meeting.

#### Agenda Item 5.1: GEF-8 project concept & PIF (highlights)

43. Mr Herman Timmermans presented the highlights of a proposal for a 'next phase' project for GEF-8 financing titled **"Strengthening community resilience in a post-covid world: Mainstreaming integrated ridge to reef ecosystem-based management along the land-sea continuum in Pacific Island countries"**. Based on past RSC decisions and brief consultations with stakeholders during the consultancy, the next new project is expected to focus on five components to deliver on the overall goal and objectives, as follows:
- Component 1 – Strengthening governance arrangements
  - Component 2 – Strengthening the science
  - Component 3 – Conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable livelihood projects and innovations
  - Component 4 – Communications
  - Component 5 – Regional coordination and enabling activities

The next four-year funding cycle of GEF-8 will formally launch and start in July 2022 and project concepts and PIFs considered in the 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the GEF Council schedule to occur 5-9 December 2022.

44. The meeting was invited to discuss and provide clear advice and recommendations to the RSC as:
- (i) Approve with no further work to enhance the concept and PIF
  - (ii) Approve with enhancements based on outcomes of discussions
  - (iii) Not approve the concept and PIF
45. Mr Senson Mark of Papua New Guinea (PNG) commended the consultant for the presentation, capturing all aspects after the first phase. He added that PNG is happy to participate as indicated as it was an opportunity not to be missed.
46. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat said that they were mindful of the many projects and programs associated with natural resource management happening in country, not only at the national and international level, but also sub-regionally and so having that in mind that this project as RSC approved

in the past to explore the continuation of the current projects but focus a lot more to scaling up and to replicating current testing initiatives and innovations.

47. Mr Erie Sami from Vanuatu and Ms Jennifer deBrum of the Republic of Marshall Islands thanked the consultant for the presentation and approved recommendation (i).

#### **Agenda Item 5.4: Discussion & Decisions**

48. Mr Conway Pene, Fiji, put forward questions: 1. Spatial prioritization as a modelling approach to inform decision making and drive change. Need to be able to scale this up from projects to standard practice; there is a stream of work here to move the emphasis from technical spatial modelling to embedding modelling outcomes in decision and change process. 2. Spatial modelling is a good driver for better data infrastructure, which remains a perennial problem in the region; projects/programmes need to harmonize and drive this in the same way they harmonize project delivery, project financial standards etc.
49. Mr Samasoni Sauni of the Secretariat in responding to Mr Pene said that they were already seeing countries using the procedures being developed and the guidelines that come with it. In the case of Fiji, they are already working on using the special prioritization procedures to selectively identify priority areas or sites within a particular catchment that can be protected. Hopefully that level of assistance will continue to other countries as well.
50. Ms Rhonda Robinson of the Secretariat thanked the attendees for taking their time to participate in the meeting and seeing there were no further comment, called the meeting to a close.
51. The meeting welcomed the project concept and PIF and recommended that it be further considered and approved by the RSC meeting.

#### **Day 2**

52. RSTC Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP, welcomed delegates to the second and final day of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC).
53. Mr John Carreon of SPC GEM, delivered an opening prayer.
54. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC gave apologies for those unable to join the meeting due to connectivity issues. He invited the Committee to consider the inclusion of two papers:
- (i) Stress Reduction Targets of the IWR2R project (revised update)
  - (ii) Digital Earth Pacific (DEP) - Operational Data Infrastructure
55. RSTC Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula highlighted the responsibilities of the RSTC, which are:
- (i) overseeing the scientific and technical elements of the project;
  - (ii) ensuring effective implementation of activities undertaken during project execution; and
  - (iii) providing sound scientific and technical advice to the Project Steering Committee.
56. The meeting noted and endorsed the RSTC Chair's final report.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Investment Forum Outcomes**

57. A joint presentation by Mr Samasoni Sauni and Dr Fononga Vainga Mangisi-Mafileo of SPC. The presents the outcomes of the Investment Forum and Roundtable Panel Discussion. There was general support and appreciation of the range of R2R products generated by the GEF Pacific R2R Programme and covering both STAR and IW R2R child projects. The participants also welcomed the proposed declaration and framework for mainstreaming R2R for sustainable development in Pacific Island Countries. The highlight of the Investment Forum was the high-level Panel Discussion with a keynote

address from Samoa Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and Welcome Remarks by the Deputy Director General of the Pacific Community Dr. Paula Vivili. The record of the Investment Forum is appended as **Annex 3**.

58. The meeting was invited to use the outcomes to inform further discussion and decisions specific to the utility of R2R products, the proposed declaration & framework for mainstreaming R2R, and the next R2R project concepts and proposals.

#### Agenda Item 5.1: Outcomes of case studies roundtable session (*late paper*)

#### Agenda Item 5.2: Declaration for R2R Natural Resource Management Governance, Sustainable USE and Climate Resilience

59. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC presented the 'zero draft' declaration to the Committee.

*To better strengthen and coordinate future R2R planning and investments, a zero draft declaration has been prepared to support and add value on resource mobilization demonstrating resilience, commitments and affirmations across stakeholders, institutions, and communities to integrate and mainstream R2R in domestic policy and legislative frameworks.*

*A final revised version will be presented to the RSC. The declaration is intended to seek support and signatures from participating agencies and countries at this meeting and other interested parties at all levels of society. The declaration will be accessible online the R2R website for others who may wish to submit their support and signatures.*

60. The meeting was invited to review and endorse the final draft of the declaration and thereby opens for signatures.

#### Agenda Item 5.3: Mainstreaming the Ridge to Reef Approach for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Region – *Conceptual Framework*

61. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC introduced a framework to mainstream the R2R approach analytically and showcasing clear guidance on the intent, conceptual distinctions in several variations and contexts particularly between strategic building blocks, before implementing an approved R2R related plan.
62. Shaleh Antonio of SPC elaborated on the two reports/documents. (i). That the framework is linked to a technical report documenting options for mainstreaming R2R and can be accessed [here](#). The technical report provides the bases on the various entry points pivotal to securing ecosystems goods and services, ensuring food security, and enhancing climate resilience of communities. (ii). Mainstreaming a Ridge to Reef Approach for Sustainable Development in the Pacific *A Practitioners' Guide* and can be accessed [here](#).

#### Agenda Item 5.4: Launching & handing over of R2R products & SPC publications to PICs

63. Dr Mangisi-Mafileo of SPC presented on the end of project results from the implementation of the Knowledge Management Strategy. It outlined the performance of the online platform, and the publications produced by the Regional R2R Project in partnership with the R2R national and demonstration projects to be launched during the Sixth Regional Steering Committee.
64. The meeting was invited to note these results, the partnership effort, and knowledge sharing critical to facilitate future investments and R2R planning and policy processes to facilitate the adoption of ICM/IWRM practices supporting sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience among Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS).

65. The RSTC noted the commendation by PNG Mr. Senson congratulating the Communications and Knowledge Management Team for the excellent results, and the Chair's comments to support that intervention.

## Presentations

### Paper 1

66. Mr John Carreon of SPC presented the **IW R2R National Demonstrations Stress Reduction Targets – An Update**. The paper provides verification and assessment of the achievements of the update end of project stress reduction targets. The paper also provides details on the National IW Project countries and the final implementation of specific activities towards achieving their stress reduction targets in five key areas namely:

- (i) Municipal Waste Pollution Reduction
- (ii) Aquifer Pollution Reduction
- (iii) Habitat Restoration
- (iv) Catchment Protection
- (v) Conserved/Protected Fish Refugia

67. RSTC Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula said that it was important to note the impact of those targets on the surrounding ecological systems. We can reduce the pollutants by making a change in the surrounding ecological systems and that needs to be understood as part of the stress reduction issues. He added that they used demonstration sites that do upscaling different scenarios to understand the baseline information of those systems.

68. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC said that establishing baselines is important to understand the condition prior to implementation and the attributable intervention of the project and is a key step in the monitoring and evaluation process.

### Paper 2

69. Nicholas (Nick) Metherall and Sachindra Singh presented on the Digital Earth Pacific (DEP).  
Digital Earth Pacific is a regional public good of the Pacific Community (SPC), offering and operational data infrastructure that makes current and historical, analysis-ready satellite data and derived products freely available and openly accessible for the Blue Pacific continent, to inform policy and drive action at community, national and regional levels.

70. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC said that as they close the project, SPC is working towards making a stability to member countries in terms of the information and spatial data sets that we hold on to on your behalf. He added if people wanted to know more about the projects that Nick and the Sachindra, are working on to contact them directly with respect to that information.

71. Ms Rhonda Robinson of SPC mentioned that the Digital Earth Pacific project is handled by SPC's Director General's office who has been a champion for digital earth work for SPC. She added that the GEM Division was consolidating a lot of the geospatial information across the various platforms and calling it the "Pacific Resilience Nexus", which will be launched in the first quarter of this year.

72. Conway Pene of Fiji asked on the reflections on the science portal site <https://www.pacific-r2r.org/r2r-science-portal>, it usefulness and sustainability?

73. Mr Samasoni Sauni of SPC said that the infrastructure and the platform have been established to store all the data and information collected by the project and that was not just from the international waters project but the star projects as well. He then handed it to Sachindra to talk about the platform itself in terms of how we see into the future, as we close the project.
74. Mr Sachindra Singh of SPC said that the <http://r2r.spc.int> platform was developed for the IWRM and STAR partners for them to upload their data sets themselves without any organizational oversight from SPC. However, as mentioned by Dr Mangisi-Mafileo earlier, as the project finishes most of the data sets will be archived in the best to Pacific Data Hub platform for sustainability and the dynamic data sets will be made available in the Nexus platform. Mr Singh added that the <http://r2r.spc.int> will still be maintained because there's some pending data sets that needed to be uploaded and moving forward to the future, everything will be centralised in the Nexus platform.
75. Mr Pene commented in terms of the ever-changing nature of the underlying technologies and underlying focuses of these platforms, he suggested future iterations of such programs put in place a more robust monitoring and utilisation metrics and usefulness metrics on these types of platforms that are tied directly to project outcomes and project successes.

#### Agenda Item 9: Closing remarks – Chair

76. RSTC Chair, Dr Isoa Korovulavula of USP thanked Mr Samasoni Sauni and his team for a very fruitful and well organised meeting. He highlighted that communication was critical in this type of initiative – How accurately the information can be sent in terms of its relevance to whoever was reading it, or taking it on, particularly with policymakers. He commended the work done by the Communications and Knowledge Management team for their exemplary efforts and the strategic importance of this work. He also highlighted the capacity building process from all the lessons in the scientific area, that the next generation can take it on, rather than re-inventing the wheel.
77. Mr Floyd Robinson of UNDP thanked all the presenters for their informative presentations and said that this reflected on the work behind the scenes. He showed appreciation to the science and technical committee for its continued leadership in providing technical advice – If there's been a building block in terms of making informed decision making it's been the science that's been of great help. He also showed appreciation to the SPC management for its continued leadership and particularly to the regional program coordination unit for working tirelessly throughout the life of this project, despite obstacles, such as COVID-19. Mr Robinson hoped that the closure of this project will open windows of opportunities for future projects.
78. Ms Rhonda Robinson thanked Dr Isoa Korovulavula for his chairmanship this year and last year and his role in supporting the process. She acknowledged the committee members who were there from the beginning particularly Prof. Marcus Sheaves, Dr Korovulavula and Conway Pene. She also acknowledged Floyd Robinson and UNDP and the consistency of representation by him on the committee meetings and the RSC governance structure as he was the one that carried the message internally within the UN family. Lastly, she acknowledged the leadership of Mr Samasoni Sauni and the team for their commitment and consistency in getting things done.
79. Mr Sauni asked the participants to take a group photo and complete the meeting evaluation. He then drew the meeting to a close.

**Annex 1 RSTC 7  
Provisional Agenda**

<b>Start Time</b>	<b>End Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Who?</b>
<b>DAY 1</b>				
<b>Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>				
9.30am			Delegates log in and undertake audio/ video check	-
10.00	10.20	1	Welcome and Opening	-
		1.1	Prayer	TBC
		1.2	Welcome and remarks by Chair	Chair
		1.3	Opening remarks on behalf of the Secretariat	SPC
10.20	10.35	2	Organisation of the meeting	
		2.1	Meeting documents	SPC
		2.2	Meeting arrangements and conduct	SPC
10.35	10.45	3	Adoption of agenda	
		3.1	Last RSC meeting record and action items	SPC
10.45	12.00	4	Regional IW R2R Project Final Reports	
		4.1	Chair's report 2020 – Highlights, Challenges and Opportunities	Chair
		4.2	Project Final Report	SPC
		4.3	JCU Course Report, 2021	JCU Rep.
		4.4	Project closure and terminal evaluation	UNDP (Floyd)
		4.5	<i>Discussion &amp; Decisions</i>	
12.00	13.00	5	Looking ahead post R2R & COVID-19	
		5.1	GEF-8 project concept & PIF (highlights)	SPC Consultant
		5.2	GCF project concept & PFF (highlights)	SPC Consultant
		5.3	EU project concept (highlights)	SPC
13.00	13.30	5.4	<i>Discussion &amp; Decisions</i>	
<b>DAY 2</b>				
<b>Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>				
9.30am			Delegates sign in and undertake audio/ video check	
10.00	12.00	5	Investment Forum Outcomes	
		5.1	Outcomes of case studies roundtable session ( <i>late paper</i> )	SPC
		5.2	Declaration for R2R Natural Resource Management Governance, Sustainable Use and Climate Resilience	SPC
		5.3	Regional R2R Framework for Natural Resource Management Governance, Sustainable Use and Climate Resilience in Tropical Islands Setting	SPC
		5.4	Launching & handing over of R2R products & publications to PICs	SPC
		5.5	<i>Discussion and Decisions</i>	
12.00	12.10	8	Any other business	
12.10	12.30	9	Closing remarks by Chair	Sam

**Annex 2**  
**List of Participants**