REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

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2. Name of Initiative

A Pacific Plan for Regional Biosecurity and Management of Invasive Alien Species and Diseases

3. Background and Rationale

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

A Pacific Biosecurity Plan (PBP)

The PBP is a proposal to implement the "Pacific Commitment to strengthen efforts to prevent, control and eradicate invasive species in Forum Countries" (Forum Communique. 45th Pacific Islands Forum, July 2014).

Biosecurity and the management of invasive alien species and diseases (hereafter referred to as IAS), along with climate change, constitute priority concerns for the promotion of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the Pacific Islands Region. IAS pose a constant, extremely costly and growing threat to the health and sustainability of Pacific peoples and cultures, their food and agricultural systems, economies (including tourism, aquaculture, trade, and transport), and our unique island, freshwater and ocean ecosystems and biodiversity. In fact, the prevention of further spread, control and eradication of IAS are a critical component of efforts to enhance and maintain the health, economies and climate resilience of all PICTs. Together with Australia and New Zealand, PICTS suffer extremely serious economic, health and environmental costs from IAS and their control. If IAS are not addressed by a coherent and effective regional biosecurity plan that provides economies of scale between and across PICTS, all forms of sustainability development will be compromised. The implementation of an effective regional biosecurity plan to prevent, respond to, eradicate and control IAS is therefore central to a Pacific Regional Framework.

The lack of awareness and capacity required to control the introduction, spread and management of IAS is clearly a major obstacle to sustainable development in PICTs. This lack is also identified in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans of most Pacific island countries and is emphasized in the National Invasive Species Strategies and Action Plans developed to date. It is also acknowledged by the SPC and all health, agricultural, forestry and fisheries divisions in the Pacific. The taro leaf blight in Samoa; fruit flies the Cook Islands and New Zealand; the taro beetle in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Kiribati; the little fire ant in New Caledonia and Solomon Islands and the yellow crazy ant in Tokelau and Tuvalu; kauri dieback in New Zealand; Bovine Johne's Disease and Panama banana fungus in Queensland; rats, cats, and mongooses on many small islands; and the brown tree snake that has brought almost all birds, bats and reptiles to extinction in Guam, are just a small number of examples of the countless IAS threats that have cost the regions millions in economic, health and environmental costs.

While the threat and impacts of IAS to PICTS are demonstrably devastating, many PICTS also have unique ability to prevent and eradicate invasive species compared to many other parts of the world. With no land borders and relatively few ports of entry, many PICTS can focus most of their awareness and prevention activities in and around airports and seaports, resulting in more effective use of limited resources. At the same time, with their relatively small size, many PICTS can eradicate some invasive species completely – whereas eradication of the same species would be impossible on larger, continental areas.

The approach used to develop the PBP needs to explicitly consider multiple vectors, pathways and environments (marine, freshwater, and terrestrial systems) together, using an appropriate spatial scale at which invasions operate. The implementation of this large-scale, integrative, and cross-cutting cross-sectoral strategy should result in more effective biosecurity protection, efficiency, and consistency, compared to advancing many individual activities in isolation. By cross-cutting we refer to the fact that invasive species negatively affect most major concerns within the region such as climate change adaptation, human health, green economy development, biodiversity conservation, economic stability and growth, food and livelihood security, etc. and that by addressing IAS via a regional Pacific Biosecurity Plan we can positively address all of these priority sectoral concerns.

4. Description

Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Key Elements of A Pacific Plan for Regional Biosecurity and Management of Invasive Alien Species and Diseases

Prevention

Strengthening and coordination of regional and national efforts that seek to prevent the introduction of IAS and diseases into Forum Countries.

- *Recognizing that prevention of IAS is the most cost-effective and environmentally-sound solution to combating IAS problems among Forum Members, implement actions that prevent the introduction and spread of IAS among and within Forum Members as the highest priority.*

Early Detection and Rapid Response

Strengthening and coordination of regional and national efforts that seek to identify IAS and diseases at the earliest stage after introduction and respond rapidly to prevent their establishment and further spread.

- *Enhance the capacity of Forum members for surveillance to enable early detection of existing or potentially harmful invasive species introductions (e.g., ebolla virus). The sooner potential introductions are indentified and detected, the greater the chance of preventing or removing these.*

Eradication

Strengthening and coordination of regional and national efforts to eradicate IAS and diseases from Forum Countries.

- *Enhance the technical and logistical ability of Forum Members to address existing invasive species threats through eradication (when feasible)*

Control

Strengthening and coordination of regional and national efforts to limit the spread and impact of IAS and diseases within Forum Countries where eradication is not feasible.

- *Enhancing the technical and logistical ability of Forum Members to address existing invasive species threats through control methods.*

The development and implementation of a regional Pacific Biosecurity Plan (PBP) would contribute to positive change in the region by providing and over-arching framework for regional biosecurity – protecting biodiversity, ecosystems, human health and livelihoods from the negative impacts of invasive alien species (IAS).

The movement of IAS to the region and within the region is real, ongoing, and an increasing problem that must be addressed. Whereas unlike oil spills, and like climate change, IAS when and if established, rarely go away, but only get worse unless prevented, managed and in some cases eradicated. The spatial scale required for this plan is of necessity extremely broad, encompassing the major trade routes and pathways by which IAS enter and move within the Pacific region. Its successful implementation will require the broad political, economic and environmental oversight of the Pacific Islands Forum The plan should cover the broadest possible extent of habitats and taxonomic groups including terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems, agricultural systems and our cities, towns and villages.

The initiative would be implemented by national governments working through the CROP agencies and other interested bodies.

The beneficiaries of this initiative would be all people of the Pacific region and wider Oceania.

Many countries are in the process of developing harmonized biosecurity legislation so it is unlikely that major new legislative changes

would be required for this initiative to operate.

A variety of funding sources could be explored for this initiative including bilateral and multilateral donors, fees and levies on the private sector corporations that import materials that potentially harbor IAS, fines on corporations and individuals that breach biosecurity laws and green fees for visitors and tourists.

The initiative has not been carried out previously, although it would be complementary to the recently completed Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii. Although a risk analysis has not been completed for this initiative, the Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii can be seen as a model and source of lesson learned on how to implement the initiative.

The Pacific is home to some of the foremost expertise on biosecurity and IAS management issues and there are many complementary programs that are currently active and being operated by CROP agencies and national governments, including and in New Zealand and Australia. One of these is the Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii. In addition there is the proposed SPREP GEF 6 funded regional invasive species program.

The initial development of this initiative would probably take up to 3 years to complete and could be sustained through grants from bilateral and multilateral donors.

5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words

***Regional Vision**: Because PICTs share many biosecurity and IAS and disease problems and emerging threats a regional cross-sectoral approach is warranted for awareness raising, technical support and capacity development. A regional approach would ensure the much-needed economies of scale, coordination and pooling of available resources and their deployment at the national and local levels. This would directly contribute the achievement of effective biosecurity and prosperity, enabling Pacific people to lead healthy and productive lives.*

***Values**: The initiative would directly contribute to maintaining and improving the integrity of our vast ocean and our island resources. The PBP would clearly contribute in a very significant way to protecting the integrity of and improving our fragile and limited island and vast, but fragile, ocean resources. The PBP would protect and improve the health our forests, freshwater resources, agricultural areas, town and villages and reefs and oceans, all of which are currently under threat from IAS. The failure to address these IAS in a coherent regional cross-sectoral manner would result in serious erosion of food, health and livelihood security throughout PICTs.*

Principal Objectives:

- *By preventing the spread, eradicating and controlling IAS economic livelihoods and biodiversity would be better protected and enhanced and islands would be more resilient to the impacts of natural disasters and climate, environmental and economic change.*
- *Protecting the environment and natural and cultural (e.g. our species-rich agricultural systems) capital of the Pacific from the impacts of IAS would encourage and more sustainable economic growth that is inclusive and equitable.*
- *The Pacific Biosecurity Plan would lead to strengthened awareness, governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems.*
- *Preventing the spread and outbreaks of plant, animal and human diseases and other IAS would promote stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all and directly underpin sustainable development efforts.*

6. Additional Information

Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.

Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.

Underlying the lack of capacity for preventing the spread and managing invasive species in the PICTs is geographic isolation and fragmentation, lack of awareness of IAS issues, limited staff numbers dedicated to biosecurity and invasive species management, the extremely multisectoral nature of IAS threats (e.g., health, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, environment, tourism, transportation, central planning, etc.), limited cooperation and coordination between agencies within countries and between countries, and limited access to legal and technical information, expertise and best practice tools that are necessary for achieving biosecurity and invasive species management goals.

As PICTs share many IAS and disease problems and emerging threats a regional cross-sectoral approach is warranted to technical support and capacity development. A regional approach would ensure the much-needed coordination and pooling of available resources and their deployment at the national and local levels.

Much of the necessary framework is already in place. Compared with other island regions, the Pacific is at the forefront with regards to established infrastructure for technical support and capacity development at the regional level. This infrastructure has been brought together in 2008 to form the Pacific Invasives Partnership (PIP), the umbrella regional coordinating body for agencies working on biosecurity and IAS management. PIP promotes coordinated planning and assistance from regional and international agencies to meet the invasive species management needs of PICTs. PIP comprises the CROP agencies (SPREP, SPC, USP), two regional programmes (Pacific Invasive Initiative (PII) and Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN)) and other agencies working on IAS in the region. Moreover, because of its multisectoral nature and political and economic implications of the spread of IAS, biosecurity needs to be given similar priority as climate change and regional political security.

This overall approach is based on the precedent established by the Regional Biosecurity Plan (RBP) for Micronesia and Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii (Volume 1. Eds. University of Guam and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community) and would extend and complement this initiative across the Pacific region. The RBP provides science-based biosecurity recommendations for the State of Hawaii, United States Territory of Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap), Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, and the United States Departments of Defense (DoD), Agriculture, and Interior. This comprehensive plan covers freshwater marine and terrestrial invasive species threats and provides a platform for coordination and integration of interagency prevention, management and control of invasive species within and into the region. The goal of the plan is to provide recommendations that, if appropriately implemented, will minimize the harmful ecological, social, cultural, and economic impacts of IAS.

The purpose of this regional biosecurity plan is to act as a tool through which to enhance the coordination of current management efforts, identify remaining problem areas and gaps, and recommend additional actions that are needed to effectively address IAS issues within jurisdictions as well as regionally. The focus of this plan is the identification of feasible, cost-effective management practices to be implemented by appropriate authorities for the environmentally sound prevention and control of IAS in a coordinated fashion.

Similarly, as major players in the Forum and other regional organization, the increasing capacity to deal with very serious IAS issues in Australia and New Zealand have historically helped strengthen biosecurity in PICTS and could play central roles as partners in the development of an effective PBP.

Advancing a uniform and consistent multi-sectoral approach to biosecurity throughout the region is desirable, as it would be the most likely way to reduce overall effort and achieve economies of scale in costs associated with and technical expertise required for IAS control and management for the entire region and it would serve to increase awareness, clarity and possibly compliance. Thus, communication, coordination, and participation among all member countries and jurisdictions in the region are critical elements in regards to reaching the desired outcome of a better protected region.

While biosecurity can include post-border responses to new incursions and management of established invasive species, such as eradication, containment, and control, extra emphasis is usually placed on pre-border efforts that aim to prevent invasions from occurring in the first place. Prevention, or minimizing the probability and number of new invasions, is usually viewed as the most cost-effective and desirable strategy to pursue, because it can be extremely difficult to eradicate or control species once they have established. Even though prevention may be the best approach to minimizing impacts from potential IAS, other elements should not be neglected, such as early detection and rapid response for post-border situations. No border security, both between and within countries, can be 100% effective all of the time and, therefore, a good biosecurity plan will incorporate pre-border, border, and post-border elements to insure the best possible protection from potential IAS.

In addition to the main objectives of the PBP, additional cross-cutting objectives need to be established including:

- ***Public Awareness and Education:*** *Promote awareness of IAS issues among senior-level officials, policy makers, community stakeholders, industry, and the general public through media, educational curricula and other communication*

vehicles.

- ***Policy and Legislation:*** *Consistent with international conventions and agreements, encourage the development and harmonization of Forum Member economic regulatory systems by compiling model legislation and policy guidelines, identifying gaps and inconsistencies among existing systems, and highlight best practices, especially with regard to integrated cross-sectoral (e.g., agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, environment, education) which achieve economies of scale and collaborative approaches to IAS management through collaboration with all relevant institutions at the national, regional and international levels.*
- ***Research & Development:*** *Promote and support research and development activities among Forum members and sub-regions that address specific human, infrastructural and technological capacity building action needs for improving prevention, detection, eradication, control, and management of harmful IAS.*
- ***Risk Assessment:*** *Increase capacity to eneable all Forum members, either individually or collaboratively, to undertake Risk Assessments as a critical component of IAS management. Collaborate in managing transboundary IAS risks by supporting a state-of-the-art technological distribution system for risk assessment tools and awareness enhancement.*
- ***Information Sharing:*** *Assist in gathering and collating information on websites and in synthesizing information on the management of IAS (e.g., notification, prevention, eradication, control); consider developing a web portal and other appropriate media to collect and distribute information that can be accessed by Forum members (e.g., what data bases exist, experts, technologies, tools). Encourage Forum Members to provide information to established data bases.*
- ***Enforcement and Compliance:*** *encourage enforcement and compliance through national, sub-regional and pathway-specific guidelines, industry-specific best management practices, awareness programmes and national legislation.*
- ***Financial resources:*** *In response to the growing threat posed by IAS from trade pathways, increased funding for prevention and management is needed from governments, the private sector and development partners. Establsihment of a rapid response fund to enable counries to act immediately when IAS incursions are first detected.*
- ***Coordination mechanisms:*** *Coordinate the development and implementation of the Pacific Biosecurity Plan through the formation of a Pacific Invasive Alien Species Advisory Group that reports to the Forum, consisting of CROP agencies, experts and civil society stakeholders.*

Test Criteria for regional implementation

Market test
The initiative should not involve a service that markets can provide well.

Comment: The Pacific Biosecurity Plan is not a service that can be effectively be provided by the market.

Sovereignty test
The initiative should maintain the degree of effective sovereignty held by national governments (countries, not regional bodies, should decide priorities).

Comment: The Pacific Biosecurity Plan would be developed and implemented by a taskforce in consultation with relevant regional organisations (e.g., SPC, SPREP, USP, FFA) with political oversight from Pacific Forum Leaders While the Plan provides regional scale coordination and guidance, it is intended to strengthen and not replace national biosecurity systems.

Regionalism test
The initiative should meet one of the following criteria at a sub-regional or regional level, in support of national priorities and objectives:
i. establish a shared norm or standard
ii. establish a common position on an issue
iii. deliver a public or quasi-public good which is regional (or sub-regional) in its scope
iv. realise economies of scale
v. overcome national capacity constraints
vi. complement national governments where they lack capacity to provide national public goods like security or the rule of law
vii. facilitate economic or political integration

Comment: As outlined in the presentation above, the proposed PBP very strongly meets all of the above criteria. The Pacific Biosecurity Plan is designed to establish shared norms and standards for the sharing of information, expertise and resources to achieve economies of scale and effectiveness in the prevention, eradication and control of current and potentially damaging IAS across the Pacific, both between and within PICTs. It is envisaged that common positions will be adopted through this approach, building on the current efforts to establish harmonized biosecurity legislation across a number of PICTs.

The PBP would enhance and continue the work undertaken over the last decade including, through the GEF PAS project Prevention, control and management of invasive alien species in the Pacific Islands, the aims of which include:

a) strengthening the enabling policy and institutional environment for cross-sectoral prevention and management of invasions;
b) implementing communication and prevention strategies that emphasize a pathways and ecosystem approach to managing invasions;
c) developing and implementing appropriate risk analysis procedures for non-native species importations and protocols for identifying and prioritizing potential IAS threats not yet present and the biosecurity actions required to prevent their introduction or spread;
d) early detection and rapid response procedures for management of new invasions infestations; and
e) managing priority alien species invasions in pilot sites to ensure conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Furthermore the PBP will provide a mechanism for regional implementation and oversight of The Guidelines for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific: a Pacific strategy for managing pests, weeds and other invasive species (SPREP, 2009). The Guidelines identify nine main lines of action in three thematic areas, providing a comprehensive and integrated approach to management of pests, weeds and other invasive species across the Pacific.

The Pacific Biosecurity Plan also provides a mechanism for implementing the Pacific Invasives Species Capacity Development Strategy (PISCDS). This Strategy was approved at the SPREP Meeting 2013 in Apia and is intended to support national governments in building Pacific Island capacity to manage invasive species. They also encouraged members, partners and donors to support its implementation. To help accomplish this, the members directed SPREP to develop a regional terrestrial and marine invasive species project for submission to GEF6. The approved directive included the strengthening of SPREP's regional support infrastructure through greater technical support and advice, and to create standard operating procedures and training to support countries to increase their capability and capacity in invasive species management. The PBP would also strengthen SPCs ongoing action to address health, agricultural, forestry and fisheries IAS issues.

The time has come to bring together these various strategies, agencies and national efforts into a single over-arching regional approach – strengthening the various bodies working on biosecurity issues, providing regional oversight and presenting a unified and consistent face to international aid and development agencies.

Benefit test

The initiative should bring substantial net benefits, as demonstrated by a cost-benefit analysis. The distribution of benefits across countries and across stakeholders within the region should also be considered—particularly with respect to:
· The relative costs and benefits for smaller island states (an "SIS test").
· How inclusive the proposal is of all stakeholders who might benefit from regionalism.

Comment: IAS (including diseases) represent an enormous and growing threat in the Pacific: not only do they strongly affect biodiversity, but they also potentially affect the economic, social, and cultural well-being of Pacific peoples, particularly health, food and livelihood security in the face of climate, environmental, economic and social change. Invasive species can be managed and their impacts can be avoided, eliminated, or reduced. However, neither the costs nor the numerous benefits of management are well understood in the Pacific. Nevertheless, in at least one study it was found that the benefits of management often exceed the costs by a wide margin, arguing for a more concerted effort to control the spread of invasive species in the Pacific.

Political oversight test

The initiative should require the Leaders' attention and input (as opposed to being within the mandate of Ministers or other governing bodies).

Comment: The PBP requires oversight from PIF leaders. While many aspects of the PBP implementation fall under the mandate of Ministers or other governing bodies, the need for high level coordination and collaboration between different ministries and agencies, including health, custom, agriculture, trade, transport, and environment agencies, which can best be achieved by PIFL oversight and engagement.

The PBP will contribute to implementation of the 2012 and 2014 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Communique, which reaffirmed the importance of dealing effectively with invasive species at both national and regional levels and requested SPREP and SPC to

increase their efforts in this area.

Risk and sustainability test

The initiative should demonstrate a robust risk and sustainability evaluation, be based on a sound implementation plan, be supported by some identified funding, and demonstrate available capacity and experience for successful implementation.

Comment: The development of the PBP will include the preparation of an implementation plan identifying sources of funding and the available capacity and experience for successful implementation. The development of the PBP will draw on experience gained and lessons learned from the preparation of the Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii.

Duplication test

The initiative should not be currently under progress by another organisation or process, and there should be no duplication of effort.

Comment: There is no organisation with the mandate to develop and deliver a Pacific – wide, comprehensive and multi-sectoral biosecurity plan.

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7. Uploading initiatives to the Forum Secretariat website

In line with the process outlined in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, please note that all initiatives will be uploaded to the Forum Secretariat website at the close of the call for initiatives, i.e. 12 June 2015.

8. Contact Details

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