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## Project PACIOCEA: Pacific Ocean Ecosystem Analysis

PACIOCEA's general objective is to strengthen conservation and sustainable management of marine ecosystems, to foster ecosystem-based approaches and to improve climate change adaptation in the European Territories of the tropical south Pacific and the neighboring countries through the development of a suited marine spatial planning. PACIOCEA will be implemented jointly by the French Marine Protected Area Agency and the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) in close collaboration with local governments, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) and the French Institute of research for the development (IRD).



## Description of the project

As a pilot project, PACIOCEA is a first attempt to consider maritime management across the Southwestern Pacific Ocean at multi-scale, ranging from the lagoons to the whole region, in order to implement an integrated approach of marine ecosystem management, from both biological and socio-economic perspectives. The layout of the Pacific countries and territories maritime domains and the cross-border dynamic of marine ecosystems require indeed a necessary cooperation to act at the right scale. To that end, PACIOCEA offers the first opportunity to gather experts and stakeholders from various sectors and to build up a very useful technical network for addressing marine issues within, across and beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the southwestern Pacific countries and territories (PICTs). This multi dimensional approach, giving a full picture of ecological and socio-economic considerations, is a real asset for strengthening existing marine conservation programmes, as well as for maintaining healthy and resilient marine ecosystems and developing consistent climate change adaptation strategies.



The project is punctuated by the organization of three workshops to bring together representatives of PICTs, regional organizations and individual experts. These meetings are part of the participatory approach of the project.

The first workshop was held in Suva, Fiji, from November 26 to 29 2013 (in addition of two days between experts November 25 and 30). It was co-organized with the holders of two other new projects, Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries and Atolls (MACBIO) (GIZ and IUCN) and EPOG, Enhancing Pacific Oceans Governance (Direction of Environment of the Australian government, CSIRO and AusAID). The aim of this first cooperation was to align efforts and to support capacity building and participatory processes. In addition, a day of work has also been shared with the CBD and ABS meeting. This joined workshop has strengthened the visibility of PACIOCEA program and of the BEST action on the regional level.

The expected project output is to identify maritime management units. These units are areas of natural heritage interest or crossing heritage and socio-economic issues. Preferential management vocations may be different according to these areas. A study at the regional level is suitable because these areas may relate to one state (intra EEZ) or some states. In the latter case, cross-border cooperation should be developed to ensure a consistency



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of management and conservation. Determining areas of interest will take into account the aspirations and vision of the countries and territories' representatives.

Some topics of common interest identified at the first workshop:

- Will the protection and the valuation of the natural heritage of the Pacific Ocean create potential job opportunities for Pacific islands' youth?
- Management of the deep seafloor is a coming issue in the southwestern Pacific. These areas are supposed to house attractive mineral resources and a rich biodiversity heritage. The technology development worldwide will need these minerals. Should large deep seafloor MPAs be suggested for conservation purposes and could some mitigation be set up to compensate for mining impacts?
- What impacts will climate change have on biological and landscape diversity, as well as on the coastal fisheries for people's livelihood?

The program is entering its second phase with the data collation and analysis of issues. At the end of this phase, future scenarios will be explored with the stakeholders under different assumptions of management directions. Analyses and maps can support the sustainable development and definition of a network of marine protected areas by these southwestern PICTs.

### PACIOCEA in some figures:

- marine area covered by the project: 33 million km<sup>2</sup> (source French Marine Protected Areas Agency, 2013)
- Several thousand islands
- 22 countries and territories covered by the project and about six regional agencies
- 4 European territories with shared jurisdiction for governance facing 16 independent island states. The involvement of Europe and France in the Pacific is not new but the situation is different in the context of this project, which is deployed at the regional level with the objective of cooperation development

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