



THIRD REGULAR SESSION
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STAFF ESTABLISHMENT, CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND HOUSING

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Prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The main issues in relation to establishment and conditions of service matters relate to:
 - the completion by CROP¹ agencies of a triennial review of salaries, benefits, terms and conditions in 2006;
 - the experience gained in attempting to recruit and house staff during 2006; and
 - an assessment of near term staffing needs, particularly in light of the completion of a strategic review of IT systems requirements.

CROP Review

2. The triennial CROP review is important because of the regulatory association of Commission salaries and other conditions with those of the CROP agencies.
3. The CROP review, which did not directly involve the Commission, resulted in a general increase within CROP agencies of 6.6% for salary grades J – M inclusive, notwithstanding that CROP salaries prior to that increase were calculated as being below the reference benchmark² by 9.1% for Grade L and 14.8% for Grade K. The rationale given by CROP Agency Heads' for recommending the lower level of increase was "financial expediency". The CROP Heads agreed that individual organisations should manage any adjustment to bridge the gaps over two years.

¹ CROP is an acronym for the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific and includes the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, South Pacific Board for Education Assessment, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. It is a coordinating body chaired by the Pacific Islands Forum. The Commission is not a member and does not participate in its meetings.

² the average of the New Zealand and Australian public service sectors and the Fiji All Organisations Market.

4. The review reaffirmed the remainder of the CROP agencies' existing conditions and highlighted that the harmonisation principle was a flexible guideline where each CROP agency will choose its own mode of implementation resulting from its own particular situation and location.

5. Given the association of the Commission's salary and conditions with those of the CROP "harmonised" principles and conditions it is proposed that the Commission adopt the same level of salary increase as agreed by the CROP Heads, effective from 01 January 2007. The Commission may also wish, on the grounds of equitable relativity, to award a similar increase to its ED salary grade. It is estimated that in aggregate such a level of increase would cost approximately USD44,000 in 2007. Without prejudice to any decision by the Commission, this level of increase for all professional staff positions (noting the Commission has no Grades J or M positions staffed) has been incorporated into the proposed 2007 budget.

Staff recruitment

6. The Commission's ability to attract staff in 2006 was mixed. Three previously unstaffed professional positions were able to be staffed by April and two previously unstaffed support positions by July. However it was unable to contract either of the preferred candidates for the Observer Programme Coordinator position as they reported the Commission's terms and conditions to be insufficiently attractive, even when offered salary levels towards the top of the relevant salary grade. Subsequently the position was reclassified after circularising CCMs. It is hoped that a second international recruitment exercise, currently under way, will be more successful.

7. The number of quality applications for all jobs, professional and support staff have been low. The reasons for this are not completely clear, however a significant number of applicants expressed the view that the Commission's conditions of service were not particularly attractive for the level of work required and its circumstances. The Secretariat is reviewing the placement of advertisements, subject to the principles of economy and available funds, however noting that only two professional staff are accompanied by their spouses the reasons are likely to run deeper than this.

8. It is fundamentally important to the Commission's institutional strength to have competitive conditions of service. The Commission's current salary levels and conditions of service seem to be an amalgamation of either the lowest common denominator or an average of the range of CROP agencies conditions. CROP conditions have Fiji as their baseline location and have been framed to cope with individual sets of geographical, economic, social and recreational circumstances that have varying degrees of applicability to the Commission.

9. Noting the CROP harmonisation principle that each agency should tailor its conditions of service to its own particular situation and location, together with the significant negative gap that exists between certain CROP salary scales and the regional benchmark, it would be timely to arrange an independent review of the Commission's conditions of service for professional and support staff. The objective would be to assess the current set of conditions in the context of the Commission's particular circumstances, including budgetary considerations, and to make any recommendations the reviewer thinks would provide for practical improvements in terms of the Commission being able

to attract and retain suitable staff. Subject to the Commission's decision on this, funds have been included in the proposed 2007 budget to support such a review exercise. Should a review be approved, the results would be presented to WCPFC4.

Housing

10. The Secretariat undertook at WCPFC2 to report to the Commission on the issue of staff housing. The options under consideration were to rent from landlords or to lease land and develop a housing complex. A study of the feasibility of both approaches was undertaken by a capable independent long term resident of Pohnpei. The study confirmed that there are good arguments in support of both approaches.

11. A housing complex would require a large initial outlay and commitment of funds. In terms of renting houses from landlords, the availability of executive style housing as envisaged by the Commission's regulations remains extremely limited. The Secretariat, after putting in place some less than ideal interim arrangements, was able to arrange suitable housing for expatriate staff recruited in 2006. It also appears likely to be able secure suitable houses for the staff expected to be recruited in the near future, although this will be dependent on the timely completion of houses under construction, the satisfactory negotiation of leases, and their acceptance by the yet to be recruited staff concerned. Therefore on balance and for at least the immediate future it is proposed that the Secretariat pursue a rental policy and monitor the availability and cost of housing.

12. One matter that is clear is that the cost of suitable housing is rising due, amongst other factors, to the demand for the few dwellings available and the landlords' borrowing costs. Demand comes from the staff of the Commission as well as from staff of other organisations and businesses such as SPC, Dong Won, Deloitte and the banks, each of which appear to be increasing their local staff numbers. In addition there is the tendency for landlords to seek to recover their increasing costs. The annual review of rent payable showed that the 2007 ceiling for monthly rental should be set at USD1,500 (USD1,200 in 2006). The assistance level set by the Commission's Staff Regulations is 75% of the annually adjusted figure. Provision for this has been made in the proposed 2007 budget.

2007 Staffing

13. Subject to funding approval through the 2007 budget, the Commission expects to recruit to the professional positions of Observer Programme Coordinator, ITC Manager (Officer) and Data Administrator, as well as to the support positions of Treasury Assistant and Executive Secretary. In addition it is anticipated that a Northern Committee Liaison Officer will be provided by Japan for a temporary fixed term. The Observer Programme Coordinator position has been advertised with applications closing on 17 November. It is hoped the successful applicant will be able to commence in early 2007. The other positions, except for the Northern Committee Liaison Officer and ITC Officer, are expected to be advertised in early 2007 with recruitment shortly thereafter. The ITC Officer is expected to be recruited in the middle of 2007 in line with the development needs of the Commission's IT systems and infrastructure. The Northern Committee Liaison Officer is expected to arrive in May 2007.

14. Anticipated staffing arrangements for 2007 are shown in the table at Attachment 1.

Recommendations

15. The Committee is invited to note the paper and to approve:
 - i) An increase of 6.6% to professional staff salary levels J, K, L, M and ED;
and
 - ii) An independent review of the Commission's terms and conditions

Attachment 1

**Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Staffing Table for 2007
(anticipated)**

Position	Occupant	Classification	Nationality
Executive Director	Andrew Wright (m)	ED	Australian
Science Manager	SungKwon Soh (m)	Grade L	Republic of Korea
Compliance Manager	Andrew Richards (m)	Grade L	Papua New Guinea
Finance & Administration Officer	Ken Smithson (m)	Grade L	British
Northern Committee Liaison Officer	To be advised by Japan	Grade K equivalent (anticipated)	Japan
Observer Program Coordinator	Recruitment in train	Grade K	member state (anticipated)
ICT Manager/Officer	Recruitment anticipated in mid 2007	Grade L	member state (anticipated)
Database Administrator	Recruitment anticipated in early 2007	Grade K	member state (anticipated)
Office Manager	Herolyn Movick (f)	Support Staff	Federated States of Micronesia
Executive Secretary	Recruitment anticipated in early 2007	Support Staff	Federated States of Micronesia (anticipated)
Treasury Assistant	Recruitment anticipated in early 2007	Support Staff	Federated States of Micronesia (anticipated)
Secretary/Receptionist	Lisa Lucios (f)	Support Staff	Federated States of Micronesia