

Seventh Steering Committee

21 March 2024

Inclusion of Cook Islands and Niue as SOFF beneficiaries with SIDS status

Draft Decision 7.5

Systematic Observations
Financing Facility

**Weather
and climate
data for
resilience**



Draft Decision 7.5: Adoption of inclusion of Cook Islands and Niue as SOFF beneficiaries with SIDS status

The SOFF Steering Committee

Acknowledges the status of Cook Islands and Niue as SIDS according to the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Notes that in the initial SOFF beneficiary list, Cook Islands and Niue were not included as SIDS eligible for SOFF support as they are not United Nations Member States.

Notes the request from the Steering Committee of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) “Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean” programme, funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to consider the eligibility of Cook Islands and Niue for SOFF support to ensure the sustainability of GBON investments funded through this programme.

Notes that the GCF-funded programme was designed with the expectation that SOFF would support operations and maintenance of GBON stations after the lifespan of the programme, as reflected in the funding approved by the GCF Board.

Decides to update the SOFF beneficiary countries list to include Cook Islands and Niue as SIDS eligible for Readiness, Investment and Compliance support.

Requests

- the SOFF Secretariat to update the list of SOFF beneficiary countries to reflect this decision and make the updated beneficiary country list publicly available on the SOFF website.
- Respond positively to letter from the UNEP Programme Steering Committee, communicating this decision.
- Include Cook Islands and Niue in the next round of SOFF country programming for consideration at the 8th SOFF Steering Committee meeting.

This document contains the request for the SOFF Steering Committee to consider inclusion of Cook Islands and Niue as SOFF eligible countries with SIDS status.

Inclusion of Cook Islands and Niue as SOFF beneficiaries with SIDS status

1. Context

While Cook Islands and Niue are not United Nations Member States, both are included in the [UN list of Small Island Developing States](#) (SIDS) and maintain full and independent membership of WMO, its affiliates and their programmes and projects.

In the initial list of SOFF SIDS beneficiary countries (see [SOFF Terms of Reference](#), Annex 2 SOFF eligible countries), Cook Islands and Niue were not included, given their United Nations Member State status, yet Niue was included as being eligible for SOFF Readiness support, given its classification as country eligible for Official Development Assistance.

On 20 September 2023 the Steering Committee of UNEP's GCF-funded programme on "Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean" requested the SOFF Steering Committee to consider the eligibility of Cook Islands and Niue to access SOFF resource to ensure the sustainability of the GCF-funded programme (Annex 1).

In line with the criteria for SOFF eligibility, the SOFF Secretariat proposes inclusion of Cook Islands and Niue as SOFF eligible countries, to be considered for programming at the 8th SOFF Steering Committee meeting.

Annex 1: Statement on the eligibility of Cook Islands and Niue for SOFF for the sustainability of the GCF-funded programme on “Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean”.



Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean: UNEP CIS-Pac5

Date: 20 September 2023
Reference: UNEP/GCF/FP147/PSC/04/01

Re: Statement on the eligibility of Cook Islands and Niue for the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) for the sustainability of the GCF-funded programme on “Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean”

The Programme Steering Committee (PSC) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) “Enhancing Climate Information and Knowledge Services for resilience in 5 island countries of the Pacific Ocean” programme, hereinafter referred to as UNEP CIS-Pac5, funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), is a consensus-based decision-making body within the Programme governance structure that provides high-level oversight, strategic leadership, and guidance for the implementation of the Programme. The PSC is composed of the GCF National Designated Authorities (NDA) from the Cook Islands, Niue, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, and a representative from the Accredited Entity UNEP.

The PSC recognizes that UNEP CIS-Pac5 will strengthen weather observation networks and support the five beneficiary countries (Cook Islands, Niue, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu) to achieve GBON compliance. The programme was designed in consultation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) with the expectation that the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) would support the maintenance of GBON standards in the five Small Island Developing States (SIDS) after the programme’s lifespan. This is reflected in the approved Funding Proposal as part of the sustainability strategy. This is in line with SOFF’s mandate to provide long-term finance and technical assistance to developing countries to achieve and maintain GBON compliance and data sharing at the global level, which will in turn translate to better weather forecasts, early warnings, and climate information products essential for effective climate action. The PSC highlights that the observations from SIDS are of high value for the global observing network, with the SOFF having previously reported that optimal observations data in the southwest Pacific are estimated to account for 17% of global forecast improvements. The Pacific SIDS are unique in that they have small land masses and vast marine areas (the land area of Cook Islands, 240 km², constitutes just 0.012% of its EEZ, 1,947,760 km²).

The PSC notes that Cook Islands and Niue are currently ineligible to access SOFF, as they are not United Nations Member States. However, the PSC also notes that Cook Islands and Niue both maintain full and independent membership of WMO, its affiliates and their programmes and projects.

Given these circumstances, the PSC is concerned that sustainability of the UNEP CIS-Pac5 interventions intended to be supported by SOFF is now unable to be accessed by two countries beyond the programme implementation period. The concern creates an inequality amongst and between country partners that requires addressing, at a range of levels, including this PSC, and the SOFF Steering Committee.

Acknowledging these circumstances, the PSC requests the SOFF Steering Committee to urgently consider the special circumstances and eligibility criteria for the Cook Islands and Niue to access the SOFF.

This statement is adopted unanimously by the PSC members at the 4th meeting of the Programme Steering Committee held virtually on 20 September 2023.