

### **Agenda Item 9.3.1 : Asbestos Management in the Pacific region**

#### **Purpose of paper**

1. To seek the commitment of Members in strengthening asbestos management in the Pacific island region.

#### **Background**

2. Pacific island countries and territories have limited capacity to appropriately receive, use, store and transport hazardous materials imported into their countries. Limited access to regional hazardous waste management facilities means that in most cases, the end-of life hazardous materials are released to the environment, which poses imminent and ongoing risks to both human and environmental health.
3. The management of hazardous wastes that pose significant risk to human and environmental health, including asbestos, have been discussed in past SPREP Meetings, including discussions on bans on the importation. To date, no SPREP member country has implemented a specific ban on importation of asbestos.
4. The 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties for the Rotterdam Convention occurred in June 2022 where Parties agreed to put to the 11<sup>th</sup> COP the inclusion of Chrysotile Asbestos as a scheduled material requiring Parties to actively manage and implement bans and other controls on the use of this material.
5. The European Union Funded PacWastePlus programme (PacWastePlus) has continued the initial asbestos management work conducted by the PacWaste project and is implementing several activities that will actively remove asbestos materials in several countries, specific actions are:
  - a. Asbestos abatement work in Kiribati (specifically on Banaba Island) to safely package, transport and dispose of asbestos from the island.
  - b. Asbestos abatement work in Nauru, Niue, and Tonga, highlighting best practices for safe packaging and removal of asbestos stockpiles from derelict tar-tanks and several government managed sites.
  - c. Assessment of buildings in outer islands of Tuvalu and areas in Papua New Guinea to determine if they have asbestos containing materials present.

6. PacWastePlus has already developed an **Asbestos Management Legislative Reform Pathway** (endorsed by the 30<sup>th</sup> SPREP Meeting in 2021) that identifies the steps necessary to institute importation bans on asbestos, providing guidance to countries on steps to actively manage this hazardous material.
7. PacWastePlus has also developed a **Model Asbestos Management Policy** (WP 9.3.1/Att.1) to assist countries to establish policy grounds for future legislative instrument development, government compliance and educational activities to inform and regulate community use of asbestos containing materials.
8. PacWastePlus has also developed **A Model Code of Practice** (WP 9.3.1/Att.2) to guide the use, transport, and disposal of asbestos containing materials. The Code will support countries implementing asbestos importation bans, and provide necessary best practice guidance for home renovations, and construction and demolition companies that may encounter asbestos during the normal course of their business.
9. PacWastePlus is now working on the development of additional resources to assist countries to implement actions to reduce the health impacts on communities from this hazardous material. Resources include:
  - a. Development and delivery of appropriate training for government officials, and others on identification, the safe handling and abatement of asbestos, and the implementation of any specific legislative instruments implemented in country.
  - b. Development and release of awareness and education materials to assist communities to reduce adverse impacts and disease from legacy asbestos and asbestos containing materials.

## Recommendation

10. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
  - 1) **Support** the implementation of a *Model Asbestos Management Policy* and *Model Code of Practice for Asbestos Management*; the delivery of training for government officials on asbestos management; and the dissemination of awareness and education materials to assist communities to reduce adverse impacts and disease from legacy asbestos and asbestos containing materials.

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23 June 2022