

# COP13 news: Wetlands strengthening island resilience through renewed partnerships with SPREP

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Mexico



Ramsar Secretary General Martha Rojas-Urrego and Director General of SPREP Kosi Latu renewed a partnership on 4 December, 2016

The renewal of a partnership between the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed on the side-lines of the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 4 December, 2016.

Both Secretariats are committed to continue working together in partnership for the conservation of Pacific island wetlands and their ecosystems, which also have an important role in climate change and disaster risk reduction. Coastal wetlands such as mangroves and coral reefs help to buffer the impacts of climate-related events such as storm surges and cyclones. Inland wetlands also mitigate the impacts of natural disasters, both floods and droughts. This is a renewal of our partnership which reinforces, strengthens and enhances our collaboration and the special mention of these two key strategic issues and the role of wetlands is in line with the strategic objectives of SPREP," said Mr Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP.

"As host of the Pacific Climate Change Centre, a regional hub of collaboration on climate change which will open in 2018, we believe this enhanced relationship will bring about a positive impact for our Pacific island members, protecting our biodiversity and enhancing our island resilience."

There are currently six Pacific island signatories to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, with Papua New Guinea first signing in 1993 and Kiribati signing in 2013. Other parties include Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Palau all of whom are home to a globally recognised wetland of international importance.

"This signing today further indicates our commitment to work together, it is very timely as the Pacific region has



From left: Ramsar Secretary General Martha Rojas-Urrego, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa Fiame Naomi Mata'afa and SPREP Director General Kosi Latu

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important ecosystems including coastal areas, mangroves and seagrasses which are under threat, including the valuable ecosystem services they provide," said Ms Martha Rojas-Urrego, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

"Ecosystems provide an important shield for protection of islands in the face of climate change and natural disasters; these are also important for the Ramsar Convention and we would like to work on those with SPREP."