

## **SPC Press Release**

### **Council of Pacific Arts examines efforts to strengthen cultural sector**

*Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Noumea, New Caledonia, Tuesday, 23 March 2010* — Culture representatives from around the Pacific have gathered this week to discuss ways to enhance the profile of culture in the region.

The 23rd meeting of the Council of Pacific Arts (CPA) begins today at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia.

Over the next two and a half days, delegates from 20 Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) as well as Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, will discuss a number of issues related to the strengthening of the cultural sector, including developing a regional cultural strategy; incorporating culture into the education sector; building partnerships nationally, regionally and internationally; and accessing funds for culture.

They will also focus on preparations for the 11<sup>th</sup> Festival of Pacific Arts, which will be held in Solomon Islands in 2012. Delegates will hear from Solomon Islands on the status of festival preparations. In addition, they will be presented with outcomes and recommendations of an evaluation of the Festival of Pacific Arts that was commissioned last year by SPC's Human Development Programme (HDP) in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The festival evaluation will assist CPA, SPC and UNESCO to assess the festival's contribution to the region and determine how to improve the event, says SPC Human Development Adviser (Culture), Dr Elise Huffer. 'The evaluation was designed to relate to the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage, so as to enable improved safeguarding of intangible heritage through the festival,' she says.

Another important aspect of the meeting is to strengthen partnerships and networks. A number of regional and international cultural specialists are attending the meeting and will speak of examples and experiences from other regions and networks around the world.

'Partnerships are important not only for tapping into funding but also for widening horizons and creating opportunities for Pacific artists and cultural practitioners,' says Dr Huffer. 'Partnerships with tertiary institutions such as the University of the South Pacific and the Australian National University are also being enhanced in order to build further capacity in the cultural sector.'

The CPA meeting will be followed by a cultural policy workshop (25–27 March), which aims to provide guidelines to the delegates on the cultural mapping, planning and policy process. This stems from a recently initiated €713,474 project aimed at strengthening the cultural sector. The project, entitled 'Structuring the Cultural Sector', has been funded by the European Union and will be implemented by SPC.

#### **Side events**

A book launch and photo exhibition will be held on Wednesday 24 March (by invitation only). The book, *The civilisation of the yam: The yam – an essential part of indigenous traditional knowledge systems in the Pacific*, by Raoul Bouacou, is a joint SPC-New Caledonia Customary Senate publication. The photo exhibition, *Impressions on the 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of Pacific Arts*, features a selection of photographs of the 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of Pacific

Arts, held in American Samoa (20 July–2 August 2008), by SPC photographer Carla Appel and New Caledonia photographer Jules Hmaloko.

A screening of the Pacific International Documentary Film Festival (FIFO) Grand Prize winner for 2010, *There once was an island: Te Henua e Noho*, directed by Briar March, will take place at SPC on Thursday 24 March. This event will be open to the public.

### **Meeting participants**

PICTs represented at the meeting are: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

Representatives from partner organisations and institutions include: the cultural support programme of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the Pacific Arts Alliance, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), UNESCO, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA).

A [media kit](#) including biographies of a number of key speakers is available at: [http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=73&Itemid=44](http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=73&Itemid=44)

Download a copy of the official [meeting programme](#)

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