



To Working Group on Environmental Auditing - Steering Committee

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Date 25 March 2008 File refs: ER02-0011; ER02-0030

Subject **Update on ACAG/SPASAI RWGEA activities for the INTOSAI WGEA Steering committee meeting – Tallinn, Estonia, May 2008**

1 Introduction

This is to provide an update on activities of the ACAG/SPASAI Regional Working Group on Environmental Auditing (RWGEA).¹

2 Background

The ACAG/SPASAI RWGEA was formed in 2002. The New Zealand Office of the Auditor-General is the regional coordinator for the RWGEA.

The New Zealand Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment was a member of the RWGEA. The new Commissioner has decided not to continue with membership.

The Regional Working Group has met four times since it was formed. All meetings have been in Australia, hosted by Australian audit offices. The emphasis of the first three meetings was training and workshops. The 4th meeting, held in Canberra in October 2006, considered the role of auditors in sustainable development.

This note provides information on the upcoming meeting of the ACAG/SPASAI Regional Working Group on Environmental Auditing (RWGEA). An update will be provided at the Steering Committee meeting.

3 5th meeting of the RWGEA

The meeting is to be held in Melbourne from 21-23 April 2008, hosted by the Victorian Auditor-General.

Around 25 representatives from audit offices in the following countries/states are to attend the meeting:

- Estonia
- Australia – Australian National Audit Office, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia, Victorian, Tasmania

¹ The working group is a joint ACAG/SPASAI group to enable the Australian state audit offices to be involved.

- New Zealand
- SPASAI - Fiji, Tonga, French Polynesia, Papua New Guinea, Palau.

We are pleased to report that some countries/states have not attended RWGEA meetings previously (Tasmania, Palau, French Polynesia) are attending the RWGEA meeting in Melbourne.

The themes of the meeting are climate change and biodiversity. The objectives of the meeting include:

- closer integration of the activities of the RWGEA with the INTOSAI WGEA – Tõnis Saar and Olavi Tammemäe from the WGEA secretariat in Estonia are attending the meeting. The timing of the meeting - shortly before the WGEA steering committee in Tallinn, Estonia in early May – is intentional.
- input from our region into the WGEA work plan for 2008-10 – the Estonian delegates will lead a session on the work plan for 2008-10. This will allow RWGEA members to provide input into the draft project plans in the work plan on climate change, sustainable energy, and auditing natural resources, to ensure that the WGEA products are useful for our region.
- discussion of the proposed WGEA co-ordinated audit of climate change.
- discussion of the proposed regional co-ordinated audit for the ACAG/SPASAI region – views of participants, possible topics and approaches.

The meeting will also include presentations from member offices on auditing climate change and auditing biodiversity, as well as recent audits/mandate issues, including:

- Western Australian – topic selection, impact evaluation and adding value;
- Fiji – the new powers of the Auditor-General under the Environment Management Act;
- Australian National Audit Office – recent biodiversity audit;
- Tasmania – the WGEA meeting in Tanzania in 2007.

4 Update on Pacific Regional Audit Initiative

SPASAI, in conjunction with the Asian Development Bank, has been working on a Pacific Regional Audit Initiative (PRAI) which is intended to strengthen Pacific public sector auditing. The PRAI has included diagnostic studies of each SPASAI. The SPASAI congress, held in the Cook Islands in April 2008, considered recommendations from the PRAI, including a proposed regional auditing approach (sharing of audit resources by smaller island states) and a strengthened SPASAI secretariat.

An update will be provided at the steering committee meeting.