



**Brussels, 19 October 2018  
(OR. en)**

**13168/18**

**COASI 244  
ACP 97  
PTOM 31**

**'I/A' ITEM NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council

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Subject: Participation of the European Union as Permanent Observer in the Pacific Community (SPC)  
- Approval

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1. On 6 August 2018 the Commission submitted to the Council a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament - Participation of the European Union as a Permanent Observer in the Pacific Community (SPC) (doc. 11695/18).
2. The Pacific Community (SPC) was established under the Canberra Agreement in 1947. It is the main regional implementing organisation and plays an active role for inclusive regional development, cooperation and integration in the Pacific. It currently counts 26 members: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

3. The Commission and SPC have developed a longstanding cooperation to support development in Pacific Island Countries and Territories. EU activities supported through the Pacific Community have so far enabled to address challenges in the areas of climate change, disaster risk reduction, fisheries, trade development, sustainable energy, culture, human rights and deep sea minerals.
4. In 2017, about EUR 160 million were committed by the EU in development programmes for the Pacific States. SPC is by far the EU's largest implementing partner in the Pacific and a key regional organisation to advance mutual interests. On an annual basis, the EU provides on average EUR 30 million to SPC. In 2016, this represented nearly 40% of SPC annual expenditure.
5. Overall, the Permanent Observer status represents an opportunity for the EU to increase the coherence and efficiency, as well as to enhance the quality, visibility and impact of the activities of the Union and SPC. It would also help reinforcing the Commission's policy dialogue with SPC on regional issues. Moreover, the Permanent Observer status would strengthen EU cooperation with the Pacific Community, which might be of mutual interest in view of the upcoming negotiations on the post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement with the ACP countries.
6. The formal request that will be addressed to the Director-General of the Secretariat will expressly include the condition that the obligation to contribute financially to the Pacific Community budget is waived by the Conference.
7. It is necessary that the Council approves the participation of the Union as a Permanent Observer in the Pacific Community.
8. Having examined the Communication, the Asia-Oceania Working Party agreed on the proposal on 10 October 2018.
9. Coreper is invited to recommend that the Council approves the participation of the Union as a Permanent Observer in the Pacific Community.