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To: CBD Secretariat
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Subject: **Comments from the Pacific region for the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention**

Comments from SPREP in relation to the Pacific region for the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention

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SPREP is the Pacific's regional environmental organisation and works with Pacific island countries on negotiation and implementation of the CBD. This brief is in relation to the 21 Member Countries of SPREP, particularly the 14 Pacific Island Countries who have ratified the CBD (Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Tonga, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Palau, Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati). Much of the content is the result of discussions at regional meetings and ongoing projects to help Pacific island countries work with the range of MEAs.

Emerging issues requiring particular attention or strengthening include key threats such as terrestrial habitat loss and degradation; terrestrial, marine and freshwater invasive alien species; over-exploitation or unsustainable use of species; loss of traditional ethno-biological knowledge; and biodiversity implications of climate change. These need to be tackled collectively in an effective cross-sectoral partnership approaches, as for example, with the Pacific Invasive Species Management Initiative and the development of a comprehensive approach to the protection of island biodiversity from invasive alien species for submission to the Global Environment Facility. As well as that information management, analysis and presentation is another major regional need to support biodiversity conservation activities.

Kate Brown
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1.a. Review of current trends in the various focal areas of the framework for evaluation of progress towards the 2010 target (a global level analysis).

At the Pacific regional level the Roundtable for Nature Conservation has secured funding from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and New Zealand AID to undertake a consultancy reporting to a regional conference in 2007 on the outcome of the Regional Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific. This will develop Pacific specific outcome indicators and a process for measuring regional progress in the Pacific's conservation priorities.

b. Review of implementation at the national level, including the establishment of national targets, the monitoring of their implementation, and their integration in to NBSAPs and sectoral and cross sectoral strategies, plans and programmes.

Progress with biodiversity conservation of the past decade, steered by the CBD has been modest given the overall deterioration in Pacific Island biodiversity. However, there have been significant contributions and potentially far-reaching gains in some areas.

Pacific island countries have started developing conservation tools that are gaining respect regionally and internationally. They are tailored to suit the unique demands of subsistence livelihoods, communal ownership of resources, environmental based cultural values and customs, and a growing need for cash incomes. The main tools are described below.

- ***Community-based conservation areas:*** while endeavours existed among SIDS to stimulate conservation through community based efforts, the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme enabled the pioneering of approaches to gain respect among villages. Case studies, pilots and sponsored conservation area projects enable fine-tuning to show alternate ways to institute conservation based on community participation and partnerships. Conventional methods of fencing sensitive areas for many decades were plagued with conflicts with neighbouring villages over boundaries, and suffered much from poaching, boundary disputes, illegal harvesting etc..
- ***Conservation enterprises:*** There has been a gradual growth of sustainable income-generating activities designed to promote conservation while providing cash income for participating families. These conservation enterprises provide at the operational level, a classic example of the conservation-economic integration with tourism related activities being the most popular.
- ***Traditional resource management methods:*** Empowerment of communities to play leading roles in biodiversity conservation has revived the use of traditional methods of resource conservation. The ‘Rau’ in the Cook Islands, ‘tabu’ areas in Fiji and Tonga, ‘tapu’ in Samoa and Niue, “mo” in the Marshall Islands - as traditional protection mechanisms are gaining mounting respect by regional and international stakeholders. They involve setting aside areas from use, and their success is based on traditional beliefs and respect for elders at the village level. They have been used for the introduction of no-take regimes in critical spawning, nesting, and roosting areas for many species.

Implementation of international agreements (MEAs) varies about the region. There has been progress in awareness building, and capacity in monitoring for the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCLOS. This however has largely been due to the access of funding from the GEF, UNEP, UNDP and the EU under the former Lome Convention, and now Contonou Agreement (ACP). Despite this and recent projects aiming at Adaptation measures through the UNFCCC, and community conservation areas through the CBD - capacity for full implementation of MEA provisions continues to be limited. There is the age-old nominated barrier of the absence of expert personnel and external funding, however practical activity is mostly limited due to a lack of basic information and enabling environments for internal coordination in decision making.

To date the numerous conventions have been effective in stimulating the development of appropriate environmental policies in thematic and sectoral areas, as well as heightening awareness of the inter-relationships at stake in environmental protection and sustainable development. In addition, some PICTs have pursued legislation to implement policy. The shortcoming has been that most of these efforts have been pursued in a sectoral manner. The inter-linkages between MEAs needs to be more fully explored at the international and

regional levels. At the local level the exploration needs to contend with the wider sustainable development issues PICTs face day to day with the view to continuing capacity efforts to build under-pinning systems for holistic implementation of MEA objectives.

The lack of human, technical and financial resources assigned to environmental management is a fundamental constraint to effectively dealing with environmental problems in most Pacific island countries. Despite the recent strengthening of environment units in the 1990s, a major constraint remains the shortage of staff to perform the wide and expanding range of environmental management functions.

The under-staffing and under-resourcing of environment units is a function not only of the weak economies of many countries but also the greater emphasis given to economic growth and the perception that environmental management can be dealt with in the latter stages of economic development. Lack of resources to deal with environmental problems is compounded by the great distance, isolation and dispersed nature of most states.

There are too many gaps between regional positions, national priorities and capacities, provincial capacities, and the spread of support from the international community. The sector based approaches, poor vertical and horizontal linkages in governance, and often lack of basic information - make responding difficult.

In 2004 SPREP along with the Roundtable for Nature Conservation (a partnership amongst donors, conservation implementing organisations, regional organisations and others implementing a regional action strategy in the Pacific) held a workshop with National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Coordinators to examine issues and constraints for countries for both developing and implementing their NBSAPs and to look at how SPREP and the Roundtable could assist with this development and implementation. This meeting took place in the context of the varied levels of implementation in Pacific Island Countries - at the time of the meeting only 6 countries had completed their NBSAPs, one country was yet to start, two were stalled due to financial management issues, and three were part way through developing their NBSAPs.

The main priorities identified by participants in developing and implementing their NBSAPs were as follows:

- ❑ Improving work with Implementing Agencies
 - Countries felt that support through the add-on project should include implementation as many stakeholders felt they had been assessed more than enough
 - There was also concern about the timeliness and level of support offered by the various implementing agencies they were working with.
- ❑ Capacity, Continuity & Sustainability
 - Lack of access to financial resources, including long-term & local core funding
 - Lack of human resources, including permanent staff, consultants and local capacity
 - Concerned about how they would prepare for implementation during the planning phase
 - Mainstreaming and achieving economies of scale in advisory/coordinating bodies to improve quality and consistency of participation by government and other key stakeholders
 - Linking to existing national development activities and ensuring ownership of NBSAPS by existing government and non-government agencies
- ❑ How to get broad participation?

- Public/community/stakeholder awareness has been difficult to achieve due to limited human resources to undertake this work, transportation and communication constraints
- Community based conservation areas/local community empowerment/engagement
- Traditional knowledge issues/access & benefit sharing
- Developing a network of NBSAP Coordinators
 - Links to national, regional and international initiatives (CBD, Action Strategy, BPOA+10)
 - Lack of consistent participation/briefing for continuity in national committees
 - The need for a regional coordinator
- What is the real value of a NBSAP?/Need for a periodic evaluation of NBSAP

As well as those issues above many countries in the Pacific face the following problems:

1. Implementation of various key obligations and actions in the NBSAP are carried out under various regional and national programs in an ad hoc and unsustainable manner. This also reflects that many activities are donor driven and are not effectively implemented due to capacity constraints and low priority and relevance in the country.
2. Capacity constraints include lack of qualified human resources, lack of continuity in representation and implementation, weak information management within and among key organisations, lack of clarity in roles of different organisations and individuals in implementation.
3. Lack of appropriate legislative frameworks and policy.
4. Lack of financial resources regarding the technical nature of all Multilateral Environmental Agreements (including CBD)
5. CBD is seen as an all embracing convention but is not very evident on the ground (also seen as being more central government focussed)
6. Reporting and attending CBD related meetings can heavily reduce the ability of countries for implementation. The very heavy engagement in dialogue and negotiations in national and international meetings and heavy reporting requirements on small environmental agencies and units, can divert attention away from pressing domestic environmental concerns and actual implementation.
7. Lack of baseline data and technical capacity in-country have proved limiting for some countries in both the development and the implementation of NBSAPs.
8. Engagement in MEAs over the last decade has required Pacific island countries to instigate new environmental laws, however often these too are done in piece-meal fashion with little integration with the glut of existing laws and instruments. New laws without synthesis or merging of statutes often causes less coordination and is not the answer to integrated planning for sustainable development. In planning terms - simple, integrated and strategic legal bases are required to ensure forward planning and assessment, early public participation, local empowerment and user pays systems to stem the outflow of financial multipliers from local development. The basic legal frameworks at the national level require considerable strengthening for Pacific island countries to perform their basic functions and link essential policy and practice.

National Focal Points and Inter-Agency coordination.

- Coordination of the implementation of the CBD is facilitated by the National Focal Point. As a result of the cross-cutting nature of the CBD many governments have established national committees. Increasingly, NGOs, academics, the private sector are participating in these committees.
- Weak horizontal and vertical coordination in the implementation of the CBD;

- Unclear mandates of departments and unit leading to uncertainties in roles leading to reduced actions or inactivity to avoid conflicts or stepping over ;
- Lack of financial and human capacity leading to weak translation of policies into practice;
- When committees exist, often they do not have clear mandates and operating procedures and they tend to focus on isolated issues;
- Working level officers are not kept adequately informed of decisions and change of policies;
- The Focal Point is often the same for numerous MEAs and not just the CBD
- Disruption of the consultation process between negotiation, ratification and implementation of the CBD and other MEAs. When the link exist between negotiation, ratification and implementation, it is mostly based on personal relationships at the working level, unstable and ad hoc.

NGO Partnerships

- No formal framework and procedures for NGOs-Government cooperation and mutual information sharing (often on personal basis). NGOs think they are not consulted enough;
- Some NGOs work in parallel to the Government. (government loses this potential help to coordinate efforts at the local level.)
- Little government support including little access to information. (note that many NGO Staff are previous government officials).

Information management

- Lack of communication policy. Information management is ad hoc and left to individual initiatives and based on personal links.
- Assembling information and data analysis is not forward looking but ad hoc to satisfy immediate requests or political demands.
- Databases exist but they are often isolated within departments (incomplete, not updated, ...)
- Information gained during negotiation or implementation is often regarded as personal asset. (this prevents institutional memories which lead to the loss of information).

Awareness Raising and Public Education

- Education and awareness raising are key components of CBD implementation, to convert global environmental issues into issues of local relevance and to gain public and political support.
- Government policies are weak to explain national priorities in locally adapted language and to bring local issues into national issues and to explain the relationship between the CBD, local actions and individual behaviour. Many actors are not aware of obligations under the Conventions and how they link into actions at the national level despite the fact that many national activities are already providing for compliance. Consequently, environmental Conventions such as the CBD are considered as useless to address national environmental issues and not relevant to local circumstances.
- Need for resources and capacity to develop and deliver attractive, locally appropriate and easily understandable material for politicians, officials and community leaders describing the importance, process of CBD and responsibilities it confers.
- Need to seek more support from NGOs and private sector in developing educational materials.
- Need to establish an effective system for effective distribution of educational material to reach among others Ministers, Officials, community leaders

[In PNG for example, Police showed their willingness to undertake training in environmental regulations and to help with awareness campaigns and enforcement at the local level]

2. The impacts and effectiveness of existing processes (including in the setting of priorities) under the Convention:

a. Meetings of the Conference of the Parties

Greater Pacific island representation is happening at these meetings but ensuring consistency of representation and sharing of outcomes when they return to their countries has been difficult. SPREP and other partners were organising Pacific regional preparatory meetings prior to COPs (but not for 2002 or 2004 due to lack of funding) and these were apparently very useful for member country's in reaching regional positions and also in understanding a very complicated process. SPREP also prepares regional briefing papers in relation to the COP agenda before these meetings so that Pacific island countries are able to understand the issues as many environment departments in the Pacific do not have the number of staff or capacity to have anyone focussed on following the issues. SPREP and NGOs have taken a supportive role in preparation for and support at the actual COP meetings. There is a dependence on SPREP to provide technical briefings pertinent to the CBD.

There are key problems with the interaction of Pacific Island Countries with the COP which are as follows:

- Lack or weak national consultation between the different agencies and other stakeholders in the preparation of negotiation. Such a preparation when it exists is ad hoc and/or depends on individual initiative of the relevant officers or does not take place in a meaningful manner.
- Lack of physical capacity of the lead agency. Officials are often unavailable due to extensive overseas travel leading to the non-circulation of information on upcoming negotiations in a timely manner or not at all. This leads to a lack of action during negotiations, the lack of feed back and debriefing of other stakeholders and the lack of proper implementation.
- Lack of feedback mechanism from other Ministries and other stakeholders, in particular those that will be involved in implementation.
- Not enough notice before meetings. As a result of this, often the views of the lead agency becomes de facto the national position that might not reflect the whole national position. Also, SPREP regional position can become the national position.
- Problem of small countries getting voices heard on larger bodies such as the COP.
- Many countries find it too difficult and expensive to attend all the COPs - and at times they do not have the human resource capacity (context: eg Tuvalu has only two people working in their Environment Unit).

b. SBSTTA and AHTEGs

Very few Pacific island countries take part consistently in SBSTTA or AHTEGs. For the AHTEG on island biodiversity SPREP did a lot of work to encourage participation as well as seeking funding to support this effort through getting wide input from other stakeholders in the region. We also funded one extra person from 8 of our member countries to attend the SBSTTA 10 with the result that there were 21 Pacific Island Delegates. The benefits of having more than one person in the delegations, particularly one experienced and one not so experienced, was enormous.

c. Ad hoc Open-ended Working Groups

No comment - only one or two countries really take part in these - those with some experience in the CBD system. SPREP will be working with the SCBD and member countries to ensure the Pacific has representation at these and upcoming AHTEGs.

d. National Focal Points

Variable performance. Some are covering more than one MEA. Often information is not filtering to those who need it or it is late making preparation in time for CBD meetings difficult.

e. The Secretariat

From SPREP's perspective the Secretariat has been really useful in making sure we (and thus the region) are informed and able to participate. SPREP has signed an MOU with the SCBD and are developing a Programme of Work in relation to this.

For countries there is a lack of understanding of the SCBD roles.

Another issue recently brought up by countries is the dependence the Convention has on internet based communication with countries - particularly meeting papers and online information sources. Many environment/biodiversity officers in government departments in the region have limited access to email and the internet and are not able to download information in this format or to view websites.

f. The Clearing House Mechanism

g. The financial mechanism and additional financial resources

At the previously mentioned NBSAP meeting countries also identified concerns about aspects of GEF funding to the region. These were expressed through a brief to the GEF Council that focused on access to funding and relationships with implementing agencies. Some countries feel that the process of accessing funds is overly donor driven and that the Pacific needs to take better advantage of funds available for the environment from the GEF.

The brief to GEF Council highlighted the following:

- Request to GEF to apply their rules of access and simplify their disbursement procedures so as to take into account the special circumstances of SIDS to implement actions.
- Request the GEF to provide fast-disbursement of resources as needed to support country-driven early action in SIDS to implement the CBD programme of work on protected areas
- Urge the international community to actively address, during the 4th GEF replenishment round, the financial requirements for the implementation of a Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity.

SPREP has also highlighted the need for increased capacity of Pacific SIDS to access GEF funding, including:

- Ability to draft national or regional project proposals,
- Monitoring and tracking proposals in the GEF process,
- Strategically making the links between COP decisions and direction to the GEF Council for development of windows for funding,
- Collaboratively having input to the GEF Council through effective briefing support to Pacific Representation in the GEF Council.

As a region the Pacific has not accessed all that was available to it from the financial mechanism. The Pacific region falls far behind the Caribbean region in terms of accessing GEF funding and this seems to relate primarily there being a greater number of regional initiatives in the Caribbean (1/3 of available funds to the Pacific and 2/3 to the Caribbean).

Only a few medium sized GEF grants have been allocated to the region and there are a whole range of issues that have been identified in managing these projects. In the area of full-scale GEF projects only Papua New Guinea has developed and implemented a full scale project nationally. All other full size projects in the Pacific region have been through UN led mega-regional projects (South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, Pacific Islands Climate Change Action Programme, International Waters Programme) which were often dominated by global ambitions, high levels of bureaucracy and the 'trickle down' of technical and financial resource delivery.

The use of Pacific island GEF Capacity building assistance and training has not been strong and with a high staff turnover and outward migration this is an ongoing process. There is also a lack of awareness, knowledge and ability to access GEF (including requirements and developing skills around assessing incremental costs, co-financing and performance management.)

3. Reporting mechanisms under the Convention and other conventions.

The last decade has also seen the dominance of reporting to global mechanisms rather than capacity building to bridge data gaps, improve enabling environments for implementation, and benchmarking and monitoring of capacity.

Many SPREP member countries have highlighted the pressure they face at the national level due to the level of reporting they must undertake. Due to the size of the relevant government agencies, reporting can significantly impact on the ability of Pacific island countries to implement.

4. Cooperation with other conventions and organisations.

Our work has shown that there is not the capacity at the national level to have the MEAs or any other global agreements work in isolation from one another and that our member countries need extra support to enable them to be effective. We believe that the NCSA process will be of great assistance in developing coherent policy at the national level. SPREP would support the option of a global partnership for biodiversity in principle as we believe that partnerships are a critical way to ensure conservation action. SPREP facilitates a very successful Pacific partnership called the Roundtable for Nature Conservation which brings together all stakeholders involved in implementing the regional Action Strategy for Nature Conservation to improve coordination and collaboration. This partnership is critical to improving the impact of the range of organisations in the partnership on agreed priorities.

More work needs to be undertaken in this region to involve the private sector and the Roundtable is investigating how to do this effectively in the Pacific.

Indigenous and local communities are critical stakeholders in this region both because of the land tenure situation but also because they have the greatest ability to make a difference to implementing the CBD.

5. Ways and means of identifying and overcoming obstacles to the effective implementation of the Convention, in particular at the national level.

Strengthening national positions for the COP and other processes:

- It is necessary to clarify the process of preparation for CBD. This can be done through the development of guidelines describing how consultation should take place prior to negotiation. Such guidelines could include:
 - Core set of relevant agencies (flowchart)

- Units and participants to be involved,
- Timeframe for preparation
- Minimum of meetings required
- Expected outputs
- Clear information dissemination procedures to other line agencies
- Estimation of budget needed for ratification and implementation
- Need series of preparatory planning meetings (to invite) to promote the active participation of the relevant government and non governmental stakeholders involved in the various phases of CBD implementation and management in order to formulate a national position that takes into account the various capacities, concerns, constraints, priorities of all levels of the society. It is at this stage that potentially conflicting or overlapping activities can be identified at early stages.
- Lead agency has to ensure that the obligations under CBD are properly linked to local issues. Usually, the role of the lead agencies in negotiations ends after the actual negotiations themselves. It is critical that a process is set to ensure that proper actions can be taken to translate these obligations to activities on the ground.
- Lead agency must take a visionary approach for possible new issues or upcoming priorities. Preparation for negotiation represents an opportunity to conduct a thorough assessment on how new international commitments would contribute to national commitments versus national legislation.
- Need to ensure the direct participation of legal experts in the negotiation process. At least they should be involved during the preparation process.
- Need to ensure the inclusion of input of technical officers from the line agency into the process of negotiation. In light of the general difficulties for having a well equipped adequately sized delegation, the technical people should have an opportunity to brief the lead agency prior to the negotiation.
- Need to develop selection criteria for national delegations. This will promote consistency of national delegations and confidence of delegates during negotiations.

Lack of feedback and debriefings following COPs

- Need guidelines/Ministerial Memo/Departmental directive to:
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders;
 - Address the high turn over: individual experience to institutional memory.
- Need the development of a distribution list or a flow chart within relevant departments and Units to which key information and outcomes of meeting and negotiations need to be reported (reports, Email, face-to-face meetings)
- Need to establish a centralized point of reference within each department (little budgetary impact)
- Need to develop a culture of information sharing (is not information given away).

Ratifying and understanding CBD Obligations

- Need for a much greater level of coordination between departments and agencies. This will give a chance to the relevant departments to earlier identify the activities and responsibilities to be undertaken in each department. This will also allow for the early identification of potential legislative and regulatory inconsistencies.
- Need to better utilize information already available in the country and therefore need better access to legal libraries where they exist by NGOs and officers from the different departments.
- Need broader availability of CD Rom and Handbook relating to the CBD. It is difficult to even have access to Convention texts. Internet access might be restricted to senior officers and is often expensive. Many Pacific island countries are not able to download

information from the internet, which can make even preparing for Convention meetings and SBSTTA very difficult.

- Need to synchronise national legislation within the context of a large national development strategy (NSDS).
- Need a body on solid institutional ground to avoid erosion resulting from political changes and to promote broad stakeholder inclusion.
- Need more active collaboration with NGOs in relation to compliance and enforcement. This does not mean the transfer of government responsibilities.
- Need to institutionalize the collaboration between the government, the civil society and the private sector
- Need to correct the lack of political commitment and the failure to prioritise the environment.
- Little acknowledgement at the senior level that MEAs such as the CBD are designated to provide a framework of international cooperation and support that help countries address very distinct and highly localised domestic environmental issues.
- Need the establishment of a network between judiciaries, the legal professions and law faculties to share information.
- A well-coordinated interaction between the judiciary, the police and environmental line agency is necessary to achieve results on the ground.

Improving national focal points and inter agency collaboration

- Need to strengthen the role of National Focal Points through the improvement of coordination between all relevant stakeholders
- Need to improve the involvement of National Focal Points in sustainable development planning as they are key actors to implement the CBD.
- Need for early consideration of upcoming coordination requirements that would allow for allocation of responsibilities among different agencies. This might lead to assessing the human, technical and financial resources required to undertake respective tasks for implementation.
- Different government agencies must keep themselves updated with legislative changes.
- Need for early notice of potential changes that will provide the opportunity to build up the capacity and infrastructure needed to implement new responsibilities.
- Need to know exactly the extent and limits of their general mandate, new responsibilities related to new international obligations and how this fits into the institutional framework specially in relation with other departments (to improve collaboration).
- Need to clarify the coordination task of the NFP, including the task of each officer within the department, then to other departments together with clear procedures of dissemination of information between the departments.
- NFP should act as central networking knots to coordinate and oversee implementation.
- Establishment of standing inter-agency committees to deal with multiple issues and conventions (this will release desk officers from attending numerous meetings dealing separately with inter-linked issues which can be dealt in a collegial manner. Then, technical officers would be in a position to identify and take advantages of the potential synergies between departments.)
- Need to increase national consultation with regional organizations.

NGOs and partnerships

- Need a formal framework for cooperation between the government and civil society in order for the government to better take advantage of what NGOs and other stakeholders can offer.

- Need a consistent and better involvement of NGOs in the development of policies and implementation framework that will help to strengthen compliance and enforcement.
- Clear and consistent laws can help to back up NGOs in their efforts to discourage unsuitable practice.
- Open and strategic planning can help in allowing stakeholders to identify potential problems and needs for effective implementation. (ex. the police..)

Information management

- Need to develop a national information strategy to foster environmental policy to be later extended to social and economic data;
- Effort of each department to strengthen information management could be fostered by coordination and consultation between departments to synchronize activities.
- Need to access existing information (where and who is in charge of it) which might be available but scattered, hidden or inaccessible, incomplete and often outdated.. When done it need to be supplemented by regional and international data.
- Great need for training in data analysis and storage and in computerized database given the human and technical capacity.
- Need to determine how and to whom to distribute existing and upcoming information (list of department..)
- Need to develop a culture of information sharing (information shared is not information given away).

Funding

- Each department must consider budgeting issues as early as possible during strategic planning processes. This might be more imperative for an inter-agency committee.
- National focal Points need to increase their efforts to engage relevant economic and financial planning authorities and identify how CBD commitments fit into the national sustainable development framework.
- Many programmes and projects need to be coordinated at the regional scale as countries face similar problems
- Need good information system for funding opportunities.

Financial Mechanism

SPREP and other regional partners are currently exploring a possible Medium Sized Project to GEF to support Pacific island countries. This was a result of discussions at the 15th SPREP Meeting in 2004 and an offer from UNDP/GEF and UNEP to support an MSP to provide for regional technical backstopping and advisory services to service growing demands from a range of MEA and GEF related activities (CBD, FCCC, CCD, NCSA etc) UNDP/GEF Executive Coordinator Frank Pinto stated during the Pacific Environment Ministers discussion at the SPREP Meeting that the prospect of a medium sized multi-focus GEF project of up to five (5) years can be explored, and should be possible, to provide this regional support without compromising Pacific island country allocations. He suggested this could cover:

- assistance and capacity development in national and regional project proposals and in planning for implementation;
- programme/project implementation advisory services;

SPREP is also urging that GEF consider establishing a SIDS focal point within the GEF Secretariat who can assist in developing the capacity of SIDS and their regional organizations to access and effectively implement GEF Resources, in line with the recognized "special case of SIDS". This focal point could assist with disseminating appropriate information affecting SIDS before and during governing councils to ensure SIDS

are abreast and able to participate in all aspects of the Governing Councils decision making process. As well as this we would like to see the GEF base a person in the region or improving the understanding of the regional organisations to assist countries.

There have also been suggestions about recognising the practical reality and scale of the Pacific and possibly adapting the Small Grants Programme so that government agencies are eligible. For the NBSAPs this would have a significant impact on implementation.

The GEF Secretariat should be encouraged to improve access to information about GEF (not necessarily via implementing agencies), give more transparency and information about the processes of decision-making, and information and assistance in the preparation of proposals based on incremental costs and clarify the new performance based approach for GEF.

Reporting

There is a need for a Pacific assistance mechanism to assist countries to do reporting for conventions and other obligations (eg. SPREP Action Plan, MDGs, JPOI and Mauritius Strategy Implementation). This could include multicountry reporting.

There has also been a suggestion to look at a Pacific wide reporting structure for periodic reporting - one country coordinates and assembles reports and then shares them with other countries to allow comparisons and assistance.

SPREP's Action Plan 2001-2004 and The Action Strategy for Nature Conservation (2003-2007) highlight a number of actions that are required to improve the knowledge and understanding of the state of the Pacific's natural environment and biodiversity. Such actions include the development of standardized indicators and monitoring methods for ecosystems and natural resources, compiling regular state of the environment reports, documenting and disseminating lessons learned from initiatives and traditional knowledge, and identifying research needs to address data and knowledge gaps in key areas of environmental management. It is important to note here that Pacific Regional Policy and reporting is beginning to incorporate global targets and develop harmonized indicators for measuring them over time. This should provide a basis towards collective regional reporting to the COP's where PIC's are unable to complete national reporting on time. Another important task is to integrate and consolidate existing data and information whether it is spatial, textual, scientific or reference orientated. Simple GIS and database systems are required at the national and regional level to aggregate data and simplify the means to disseminate it throughout the Pacific. The intention should be to design these systems in a manner that reduces country's burden of reporting to MEAs, the JPOI, MDGs and others.

In terms of regional policy coordination the Pacific Regional agencies led by SPREP intend to use the NCSA review as the spearhead mechanism to reduce the burden of reporting to multiple MEAs, and reduce the resultant plethora of regional and national based strategies, policies and plans that have eventuated from individual MEAs or their derivatives. The ultimate intention is to advocate for the use of the National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs), which are to be completed by 2005 under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), as the delivery platforms of outcomes of the NCSA work, and like assessments, such as that for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The NSDSs should become the pivotal national policy link between environmental needs assessments and that accomplished for social and economic coordination.

SPREP has also worked on developing a country template for reporting particularly for the SPREP Action Plan (which includes the target of reducing biodiversity loss by 2010) that could be expanded. The objective of this effort is as follows:

- To have a National Profile that relates the goals and outcomes of the SPREP Action Plan to the unique context of each member Country and Territory.
- To provide a mechanism to monitor the progress, at the National level over time, towards achieving agreed outcomes in the SPREP Action Plan.
- to have ability to monitor and guide the assistance of the Secretariat (SPREP) directly at the National Level.
- To document institutional memory at the National level, on the status of the country against the SPREP Action Plan and other important environmental goals and targets.

Participation

In the Pacific it is critical to involve local communities through adequate consultation. Local communities, due to the unique land tenure system in many Pacific island countries, have much more control over land than the government of the country and need to be. Therefore there is a need to develop means of learning from experiences and sharing these experiences between communities - lessons learned and case studies.

Interlinking conventions

- Implementation of action plans arising from the National Capacity Self Assessment process will lead to improved linkages for Pacific island countries and improved understanding of what they need for implementation. It will allow countries to identify capacity development needs and efforts required to expedite the achievement of linked MEA objectives.
- The National Sustainable Development Strategies that countries are currently developing give a vehicle for the coordinated implementation of MEAs such as the CBD and should incorporate the outcomes of the NCSA process.

Legal Frameworks

The basic legal frameworks at the national level require considerable strengthening for PICTs to perform their basic functions and link essential policy and practice. Resources are needed from regional and international stakeholders to undertake this.

Communications with the SCBD

- Suggested that the SCBD allocate a specific contact person to the Pacific to allow for direct contact and advice.
- Also suggest that the SCBD consider ways of means of communicating with Pacific island countries relevant to their ability to access the internet and electronic forms of communications. SPREP could assist with this.

Role for Regional Organisations (SPREP and other regional organisations)

- Need to define roles for SPREP and other regional organisations in supporting countries to implement the CBD.
- Need these agencies to coordinate support for Pacific island countries at all levels of CBD processes.
- Recognition of the poor coordination amongst regional organisations has increased and is now a major rationale for the development of a number of new partnerships and networks, stemming from the WSSD.
- Need financial support to continue to play a role in supporting countries to prepare for the CBD COPs and SBSTTA as well as to enable engagement and sharing of lessons and experiences between countries.

Role of other supporters

- Need to define and promote the roles of countries that traditionally support Pacific island countries (Australia, Canada, Europe, France, Japan, New Zealand, USA and others)
- Need to define and promote the roles of other agencies (UNDP, World Bank, GEF, FAO, UNU etc).

Capacity Building

Promoting capacity building in developing countries to assist them to implement development activities in ways that are consistent with the CBD as a contribution to the MDG's is an issue that a country may address through its national capacity self assessment (NCSA). Assistance will be available to assist countries to address the capacity building priorities identified in the assessments consistent with the strategic approach to capacity building. Very important to note that the Pacific SIDS are behind the rest of the world in developing these and therefore may be last in line for assistance of capacity building priorities.

In conclusion:

Pacific island countries will continue to seek support to:

- Develop, where necessary, SIDS specific implementation programs under MEA's such as the decision of the CBD to develop a special programme on islands;
- Improve the representation of Pacific island countries at the political level within the MEAs;
- Pursue the synthesis of MEAs at the international and regional level.
- Streamline international sustainable development reporting requirements.

Pacific island countries are asking for more local driven emphasis and delivery to be placed in policy and programme initiatives, as well as regional solidarity, technical backstopping and knowledge management. They are seeking less emphasis on thematics, prevalent over the last ten (10) years, toward more multi-focus initiatives and holistic implementation mechanisms. Pacific island countries have an interest in addressing the constraints and barriers to sustainable development of islands related to land resources, catchment, coastal management, resource exploitation, development, biological and climate related issues. Their small landmasses, high population concentrations, fragile ecosystems and overwhelming socio-economic pressures - dictate a holistic approach.

The request is for the mutual addressing of these crucial implementation components - not the reduction in efforts to improve biodiversity conservation, climate change and waste management capacity.

SPREP believes that the new draft Island Biodiversity Programme of Work offers a significant opportunity for this region to start implementing the Convention in their own context and to start to leverage the financial resources to make that happen. We will be undertaking a range of activities prior to and after COP 8 to make sure that the Pacific will be able to start implementing the Programme of Work.