



Members Report

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INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF INITIATIVE (ICRI)

General Meeting

Cozumel, Mexico, 22-23 October 2006

Reporting period: 2005

Reporter: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Dominique Benzaken

Regional Conventions and policy framework

The Pacific region's participating states include American Samoa (US), Australia, Cook Islands (New Zealand), Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia (France), Guam (US), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia (France), New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands (US), Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands (UK), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau (NZ), Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna (France).

The Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific region (Apia Convention) was adopted in 1976. The 1986 Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific region (Noumea Convention) entered into force in 1990. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) implements those conventions on behalf of its member countries and territories.

In 2002, the Pacific Islands Forum (the regional umbrella coordinating organisation) endorsed the *Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy (PIROP)*. The aim of the PIROP is to ensure the future sustainable use of oceans and their resources by Pacific Islands communities and partners. The Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Framework for Integrated strategic Action (PIROF-ISA), which implements the PIROP, serves as a guide for governments and non-state actors, provides a framework for regional consensus on priorities, regional action and a focus for regional and international institutional collaboration. The key themes for action are: improving governance of coasts and oceans, improving the understanding of the ocean; sustainably developing and managing the use of ocean resources; maintaining the health of the ocean; promoting the peaceful use of the ocean and creating partnerships and promoting cooperation. Many of SPREP activities which aligned to the objectives of PIROF-ISA activities are also relevant to the International Coral Reef Initiative objectives.

The SPREP Action Plan 2005-09, which was endorsed in 2005 identifies natural resource management, pollution prevention and climate change as its key priorities and these are reflected in SPREP Strategic Programmes (2004-2013), implemented through the SPREP Island Ecosystems and Pacific Futures operational programmes.

Key activities undertaken by SPREP include the development and implementation of regional policy frameworks and programmes aimed at assisting SPREP Member countries in protecting and managing their coastal and marine resources sustainably through supporting their participation in international fora, enhancing their technical and institutional capacity, providing technical advice, training, establishing of demonstration sites for best practice management, supporting community-based initiatives and promoting alternative sustainable livelihoods, education and awareness activities.

Summary of activities for 2005-2006

Integrated ocean and coastal management and marine managed areas

SPREP, as the regional partner of the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), provides assistance to SPREP countries and territories to coordinate and implement coastal and marine ecosystem conservation and sustainable livelihoods activities.

Since 2001, SPREP has supported the establishment of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA), community-based initiatives and associated sustainable livelihoods activities which provided the basis for sharing of lessons on best management practices between site managers and across the region. Management training (e.g., planning, monitoring, resource assessment, socio-economic assessment) and awareness raising activities have been fundamental to this approach.

The SPREP GEF-funded International Waters Project (IWP) further implemented pilot projects in 14 countries focusing on coastal fisheries, waste, freshwater, and marine protected areas, and addressed some of the governance issues associated with the coastal zone, such as fragmentation of decision-making and poor integration of coastal and marine issues in government processes, and piloted management tools such as economic valuation, and the wide use of communication and social marketing tools.

In 2005, SPREP, in collaboration with the Foundation of the Peoples of the Pacific International and the governments of Solomon Islands and Fiji, completed two studies on the financial assessment of wild harvest of coral and coral trade in those countries in response to concerns about the impacts of coral harvesting on coral reefs systems and the wide promotion of coral culture as a viable alternative.

In 2005, SPREP and NOAA jointly held a regional workshop on community based socio-economic monitoring of coral reefs to discuss the development and implementation of a regionally agreed protocol. This initiative, which complements existing coral reef monitoring activities, recently received support from the US government and will start in 2007.

The French-funded Coral Reef Initiative in the South Pacific (CRISP), which was launched at the SPREP meeting in 2004 is the latest development in coastal management. CRISP has three components: Marine Protected Areas, resource development and information management, and an institutional capacity, communication and adoption component, the latter being implemented by SPREP.

The SPREP component builds on lessons learnt from previous programmes and work with CRISP partners to enhance governance for integrated coastal and marine management, engendering support for sustainable coastal and marine management by policy makers and managers, facilitating access information, know-how and sustainable livelihoods options through continued support of regional networks such as Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA), the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), training, demonstration sites and the establishment of the ReefBase Pacific in partnership with World Fish Centre.

In 2006 SPREP ministers agreed to the development of a regional framework to support the national implementation of networks of marine managed areas as a tool for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity under an ecosystem based approach. This initiative is responding to commitments made by Pacific island countries, such as the Micronesia Challenge,

the declaration of the Kiribati Phoenix Islands and the Fiji Great Sea Reef, to bring under conservation management their marine biodiversity and resources to meet their biodiversity targets under the CBD. It is also an opportunity to integrate a broad range of regional and national initiatives, share lessons learnt and build on the region's knowledge and commitment to effectively conserve and manage both their inshore and offshore marine biodiversity, most of which is within being within their EEZs.

Wetland conservation

Since 2004, SPREP has worked with the Ramsar Secretariat and Convention partner organizations in particular Wetlands International and WWF- SPP to assist countries conserve and manage their wetlands. In 2006 SPREP and the Ramsar Secretariat formalized this collaboration with the signature of a memorandum of cooperation, the appointment of a SPREP Ramsar officer and the development of a joint programme of work.

In 2005, a regional Capacity building workshop on wetland wise use took place to review regional priorities for wetlands conservation, the workshop outcomes formed the basis of the Oceania Regional Initiative which was endorsed by the Ramsar COP9. The Third Oceania Regional Preparatory meeting was held concurrently with the support of Australia and New Zealand. Contracting parties to the Ramsar convention include PNG, Marshall islands, Palau, Samoa, with Fiji joining in 2006. Further assistance was provided by SPREP to Cook Islands and Tonga to complete their accession.

SPREP collaborated with UNEP Regional Seas in the assessment of impacts of climate change on mangroves (Pacific Islands mangroves in a changing Climate and Rising sea, UNEP Regional Seas report and Studies no 179) and the Symposium on Mangrove responses to relative sea level rise and other climate change effects (July 2006).

Marine species management

In 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region under the convention on Migratory species of wild Animals (CMS) was signed by 10 SPREP countries. This joint efforts of the governments of Samoa, Australia and New Zealand, the CMS Secretariat, SPREP and partners organizations, builds on the SPREP Whales and Dolphin Action plan 2003-2007 which is currently under review. The MoU is a significant commitment to the conservation of cetaceans and their habitats in the region and builds on existing protected measures such as national sanctuaries and regulations in place to protect whales in the EEZs Pacific Island countries. The MoU and Action Plan focus on threat reduction, habitat protection, research and monitoring, education, information exchange, capacity building sustainable cetacean based tourism and international cooperation. Regional training in cetaceans conservation and entanglements took place in New Zealand in September/ October 2006 Two training workshops

The development of the SPREP Regional Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System (TREDS) is an important activity of the SPREP Turtle Action Plan 2003-2007 This collaborative initiative between the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, The Queensland Government and NOAA fisheries, the southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community relies on region wide tagging as well as historical data to build up a regional picture of turtle populations and migration. SPREP provides tags, training and process the information collected. Support is also provided to targeted activities such as turtle nesting surveys (for example in PNG and in Samoa).

The year of the sea turtle 2006 aimed at raising awareness of turtle conservation across the Pacific Region with the central theme of protect sea turtles protect our heritage focuses on community support government action and partnership for conservation. Resources were secured from New Zealand to fund a campaign coordinator.

Marine pollution and waste management

In 2004, SPREP initiated a project on the implementation of UNEP's Global Programme for Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land based Sources of Pollution (GPA/UNEP) in the Pacific region, with collaboration from SOPAC. The regional project aims to raise awareness of GPA related issues and support the development and implementation of pilot projects in 4 countries, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Kiribati. Each pilot project includes a case study based on a key theme of the GPA objectives and programme and countries priorities and activities, leading to the development of national action plans to be integrated into national strategies and plans. It is anticipated that the pilot projects will lead to greater integration of water resource management and coastal zone management.

A training course for wastewater management was jointly developed by UNEP's Global Programme for Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land based Sources of Pollution (GPA/UNEP) with the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education. The wastewater training course is addressing one of the Guiding Principles of the Pacific Wastewater Policy and Framework for Action and has been implemented by a consortium of SOPAC, USP-IAS, IOI, collaboration with SPREP, UNESCO-IHE, GPA/UNEP and UN/DOALOS. Using UN/DOALOS Train-Sea-Coast standards as well as the GPA Strategic Action Plan on Municipal Wastewater and the UNEP/WHO/UNHABITAT/ WSSCC Guidelines on Municipal Wastewater Management.

The training will provide participants with analytical tools, substantive information and skills on how to select plan and finance appropriate and environmentally sound municipal wastewater management systems. The programme is designed to build capacity within the water/wastewater sector and will be focused at manager or senior supervisor level. Climate change

The primary expected outcome is to increase capacity to identify and formulate feasible projects to improve wastewater management that are cost-effective and can in practical be financed, operated and maintained. The first training was run from 24-29 October, 2005 in Suva, Fiji Islands and the second training took place in Guam, from 5 - 10 June, 2006. The third training course was held in Papua New Guinea from June 26- 29, 2006

Solid waste management

Year of Action Against Waste 2005: the regional campaign encouraged new and existing national and community initiatives, and showcased regional best practices to support governments in their planning process for solid waste management. The Year of Action was utilised New Zealand international development assistance and SPREP resources in supporting SPREP Members to develop campaigns based on their national solid waste priorities such as the "Cash for Trash" recycling initiative in Fiji; waste collection improvements in the Solomon Islands; and assisting with a move towards banning plastic bags in Samoa. The Year of Action promoted the integration of strategic communications into national solid waste management plans, as well as the need for ongoing initiatives beyond 2005 to sustain the initiatives put into place.

SPPEP Member countries adopted a Regional Solid Waste Management Strategy and an Action Plan to prioritise implementation, which was produced by the representatives of all Pacific Island countries. Highest priority actions were to develop National Strategies, minimise waste disposal on atolls and low islands and explore mechanisms to handle difficult wastes such as automobiles and plastic.

Marine litter

SPREP has been involved in advising on plastic bag reduction such as the ban on non-biodegradable bags in Samoa. This will be followed by complementary approaches using taxation or outright bans in some other atoll-based countries over the next two years. SPREP has also initiated a partnership with the ANZ Bank (a commercial bank that operates within the region) and other private companies to sponsor re-usable shopping bags using the Year of the Sea Turtle as a motivator for social change. This is complemented by an extensive media and retailer, shopper and school-focused education campaign.