



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Eighteenth SPREP Meeting

Apia, Samoa
11-14 September 2007

Agenda Item 8.2.1 : Strengthening GEF Support Services Within the Region

Purpose of Paper

1. To update the Meeting on developments concerning the urgent need for and approaches by the Pacific SIDS (Small Island Developing States) to have increased access to funding available through the GEF 4th Replenishment period, 2006-2010 and the placement in SPREP of a GEF support post.

Background

2. A number of evaluation reports produced since 2004 found and highlighted that Pacific SIDS lagged well behind other SIDS (for example those of the Caribbean) in their efforts to access and apply GEF funding to national and regional programmes. A report in 2004 on the performance of the GEF in the Pacific sponsored by NZAID concluded that Pacific island countries (PICs) were experiencing this difficulty. The report recommended that the GEF strengthen its coordination and support presence in the region.

3. PICs then requested this strengthened GEF coordination at the 5th Pacific Environment Ministers' Meeting in 2004. The request was repeated at the 3rd Regional Workshop on the Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS-3) in March 2005. In May 2006, the Pacific Island Forum Ambassadors Working Group in New York also endorsed the concept of a GEF regional support position. At the SPREP Meeting in September last year, the members were emphatic in their advice to the SPREP Secretariat and the relevant donors to get together urgently and put in place as quickly as possible a position to help PICs access GEF resources.

4. The report of the "Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle and Modalities" November 2006 by the GEF Evaluation Office and Implementing Agencies again highlighted the complexity of the GEF project preparation and activity cycle process, and that it was lengthy and costly. The need to streamline and simplify the cycle had also been highlighted by numerous other evaluations; by the GEF Overall Performance Studies, by the GEF Council, and by many of the GEF's partners and stakeholders. This was seen as one of the major obstacles to PICs in accessing GEF funding, and in part a reflection of their absorptive capacities.

Current Status

5. In August 2006 the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, the SPREP and the GEF Secretariat agreed that the position of GEF Support Adviser be created in the region to enhance national level engagement in GEF processes and access to GEF resources. Under this agreement, the position incumbent will be employed by the SPREP and based within the SPREP Headquarters in Apia. Australia and New Zealand agreed to provide funding support for the position. The new post was advertised soon after this agreement, with applications closing 15 December 2006. An appointment was made in March 2007.

6. The objective of the position is to improve PICs' access to funding from the GEF's 4th Replenishment. GEF provided approximately US\$86 million to 14 Pacific SIDS during the fifteen years to the end of the 3rd Replenishment in 2006. The total funding available from GEF-4 resources for Pacific SIDS is approximately US\$75 million, plus US\$24.5 million that will be disbursed during this period using GEF-3 resources, for a total currently available of approximately US\$100 million.

7. At the time of writing the GEF Secretariat was in the process of developing what it had called the Multi-Focal GEF Program For Pacific SIDS, later renamed the GEF Pacific Alliance for Sustainability, in association with GEF Implementing Agencies and SPREP. The World Bank has been nominated by the GEF Secretariat to be the Lead Agency for developing this regional programme. The GEF Secretariat had initially scheduled the consultative process with Pacific SIDS to develop the programme for submission to the November 2007 Council Meeting. This has now been postponed to the April 2008 Council Meeting.

8. The first engagement in the consultative process was a meeting between PIF Ambassadors in New York with the GEF Chief Executive Officer, and GEF officials, in Washington DC, on 18 April 2007. This was followed by the presentation of a general outline of the regional programmatic concept to Pacific Leaders who attended the 8th Pacific Island Conference of Leaders in Washington DC, 7-9 May 2007, by the GEF CEO.

9. The World Bank, as Lead Agency for developing the GEF Pacific Alliance for Sustainability programme, was tasked by the GEF Secretariat with drafting a "Concept Note" on the new regional programmatic approach, to be submitted to Implementing Agencies and SPREP for comment, and to the Pacific GEF Focal Points at the Manila Constituency Meeting 30-31 May 2007 for consideration. This 'Concept Note' formed the framework or roadmap that is guiding the programme's national and regional consultation events.

10. National and regional consultations, involving interactions between national and regional consultants guided by Terms of Reference developed by the World Bank, with national GEF Focal Points, and national and regional stakeholders, were undertaken from the second half of July through August 2007. These consultations were planned to culminate in a regional consultative workshop scheduled for 10 September, the day before the commencement of this SPREP Meeting.

11. The GEF Support Adviser has now prepared a Work Plan as required under the position Terms of Reference. At the time of writing the Work Plan was being circulated for consideration and approval by the SPREP Management and the position's Reference Group. The Reference Group comprises SPREP, the Chairperson of the PIF Working Group of Ambassadors in New York, the GEF Secretariat, AusAID and NZAID.

12. The Work Plan takes into account recent and unfolding developments outlined above, especially the anticipated outcomes and impacts of the GEF Pacific Alliance for Sustainability regional programme. The GEF Support Adviser has been closely associated with developments related to the regional programme, and continues to have constant contact with the GEF Secretariat and the World Bank in this exercise, as well as with other GEF Agencies, throughout this process.

13. Work emphasis during the remaining period of the GEF Support Adviser's three-year term will be in the areas of assisting island countries generate project ideas, and develop project concepts during the initial project processes with GEF Agencies, and help them through backstopping services related to GEF Secretariat and Council operations, processes, procedures and information sources.

Recommendation

14. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the progress made concerning strengthening GEF coordination within the region through the establishment of the new position of GEF Support Adviser in SPREP.