



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Twenty-Second SPREP Meeting

Apia, Samoa
13 – 15 September 2011



Agenda Item 8.2.6: Pacific Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)

Purpose

1. The Paper presents a brief summary on the Pacific preparations for UNCSD or Rio+20 as it is commonly referred. It seeks the Meeting's endorsement of the Outcomes Documents of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20 held in Apia, Samoa 22nd July 2011.

Background

2. The Rio+20 Conference will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, to review progress in respect of commitments made through Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) during and since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The Secretariat for the Conference is the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

3. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 64/236 provides the mandate for the Rio+20 Conference and guidance on the preparatory work. The key operative paragraphs are:

- (i) 20 agreeing to convene the Conference in 2012;
- (ii) 20 (a) defining the two themes "to be discussed and refined during the preparatory process" as:
 - *a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and*
 - *institutional framework for sustainable development;*
- (iii) 20 (e) outlining the different levels of "preparations at the local, national, regional and international levels by Governments and the United Nations system"; and
- (iv) 25 (d) clarifying the preparation at the regional level i.e., "Regional implementation meetings will become the regional preparatory meetings for the Conference in 2011". The regional implementation meetings are the meetings organised and hosted by the UN regional commissions and regional organisations, which for the Asia-Pacific region is proposed for October 2011. The Pacific Preparatory meeting held in July 22nd in Apia, Samoa produced an Outcomes Document that will assist countries in their national preparation, feed into the Asia-Pacific regional meeting as well as to other relevant Preparatory Meetings.



4. In addition, the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) through their United Nations Permanent Missions raised the issue that for the Pacific a “green economy” is in fact a “blue economy” focussing attention on issues relating to oceans, coasts and islands. This has emerged as a key Pacific input during the Rio+20 preparatory process.

Key Outcomes of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting for Rio+20

5. The Meeting agreed on an Outcomes Document (attachment 1) that will assist our member countries in their preparations for Rio+20. At the meeting it was agreed that the following three key Pacific messages were to be conveyed to the international community during the preparatory process and at Rio+20:

- I. As reflected in the discussions and decisions of the Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting, the Pacific is renewing its own political commitment for sustainable development by adopting a “green economy in a blue world” approach as an inclusive and practical way of promoting the right kind of growth and achieving the delicate balance between the three dimensions or pillars of sustainable development. It’s an approach that will also help the Pacific adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change which the Pacific regards as its most critical challenge. The initiatives described and the decisions contained in this Meeting outcomes document can all be showcased at Rio+20 to underscore the renewed commitment that the Pacific has made towards sustainable development. Valuable lessons could also be learnt from the sustainable lifestyles that have long been practiced by the people of the Pacific region, whose wellbeing and cultures are intrinsically linked to the natural resources and biodiversity of their islands. For example, the stewardship of the Pacific Ocean for present and future generations is ingrained within Pacific island cultures¹. This has been supported by national and regional efforts to sustainably manage and conserve Pacific oceans and marine resources and a desire for more equitable sharing of benefits. The Pacific urges the international community to take steps to strengthen the governance of oceans so that the global community can sustainably manage this global resource.
- II. The Small Pacific island developing states are acutely aware that although they are not responsible for climate change, its major impact will be felt by them. They recognize that they have little control over the carbon emissions that result from unsustainable production and consumption patterns in industrialized countries. They are deeply concerned that current levels of economic activity will cause a temperature rise of greater than 1.5 degrees which will not only destroy coral reefs and ecosystems, and undermine sources of livelihood for Pacific peoples, but will also threaten the very existence of some of the Pacific countries. As a region, the Pacific is committed to pursuing a green economy transformation, including through all relevant climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. However, the international community must accept that it bears the moral responsibility, and in turn the financial burden, for mitigation and adaptation. The Pacific insists that the international community take immediate action in its own backyard as well as support Pacific efforts to build their own resilience to climate change and global economic shocks.

¹ This was also clearly recognised by Leaders when they gave affect to the Pacific Plan through the Auckland Declaration of 2004 – “the peoples of the Pacific are custodians of the largest, most peaceful and abundant ocean...”.



- III. The special consideration given to SIDS has been a prominent feature of both the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the World Summit for Sustainable Development. The Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy have provided a framework by which SIDS have taken significant steps to address their sustainable development challenges. However as evidenced by the recent Pacific regional report for the 5 year review of the Mauritius Strategy, the special vulnerabilities of Pacific SIDS remain and in some cases have increased as a result of climate change impact, natural disasters and the recent financial, food and fuel crises. Pacific SIDS reaffirms the need to maintain a special consideration of SIDS at Rio+20. In this regard, while there has been a considerable development of global financing mechanisms, by and large, developed nations have not met their commitments to funding sustainable development or climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition, funds that have been channelled through global funding architecture have not been designed to accommodate the capacity constraints of SIDS. As a result SIDS countries have not been able to access these effectively. Pacific SIDS seeks agreement by the international community to improve access to funds for the transformation of their economies and to ease the burden of reporting on small island administrations.

6. The Outcomes Document will be also be submitted to other CROP Governing Councils and the Asia Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting in October. The Meeting was also part of a series of preparatory meetings for the three SIDS regions and the Outcomes will also go to the Inter-regional SIDS Meeting in October. A number of informal fora such as the Nature Conservation Roundtable and the inaugural Pacific Environment Forum provided further opportunities for discussions and their outcomes can be considered by countries in their preparations for Rio+20. Members are reminded that the 1st of November 2011 is the deadline for submissions of issues to be discussed at Rio+20.

Recommendations

7. The Meeting is invited to:
- **note** the preparations for Rio+20; and
 - **endorse** the Outcomes of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting
8. Members are invited to:
- **consider** the Outcomes of the Pacific Preparatory Meeting in the preparation of their national positions for Rio+20
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23 August 2011

