



HIGH LEVEL SESSION STATEMENT ON 10 KEY ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE NATURE CONSERVATION OUTCOMES IN THE PACIFIC

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9th Pacific Islands Conference for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas

A. PREAMBLE

The High Level Session provided an opportunity for high level representatives from government, the private sector and civil society to comment on the proposed Ten Key Actions to support the achievement of nature conservation in the Pacific.

Pacific ecosystems provide essential and valuable resources not only for Pacific islands, but also the entire world. The essential services provided by intact Pacific ecosystems are often not fully accounted for, hidden, or unrecognised. Fisheries, tourism, coastal protection, carbon sequestration and future resilience all depend upon appropriately valuing our natural resources. Management of natural resources is as fundamental to sustainable development as education and health. The Pacific islands have small populations and economies, yet they are stewards of an immense area of ocean and its associated global ecosystem.

There is a need for greater investment in the conservation of ecosystem services, especially in light of climate change and ongoing stressors upon Pacific ecosystems (including deep sea mining, population growth, urbanisation, pollution and waste, over-exploitation, habitat degradation and invasive alien species). Nature's infrastructure and nature-based solutions for clean water, air, soils, food, medicine, construction and other services must be valued and integrated into national planning processes.

Representatives of the High Level Session of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas recognise the following ten overriding key actions that must be undertaken by Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) and partners if we are to deliver our conservation commitments by 2020:

B. TEN KEY ACTIONS

1. Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) provides the opportunity to integrate climate change adaptation with the critical non-climate change environmental issues that continue to undermine achievement of sustainable development in the Pacific Islands region. PICTs should:

- 1.1 adopt and implement EbA approaches as a critical response to climate change including watershed and forest protection, management of coral reefs and near-shore waters to protect inshore and pelagic fisheries, prevention and control of invasive alien species, control land and marine pollution;
- 1.2 apply EbA at relevant landscape scales, especially within the ridge to reef framework. The multi-partnership model being implemented in Choiseul Province, Solomon Islands is a good example of this approach.

2. Food Security – Agriculture

A high proportion of ecosystem goods and services, our resilience to change, and the conservation of biodiversity depend on the conservation and enrichment of traditional multispecies agricultural land use systems. PICTs should:

- 2.1 conserve agricultural biodiversity as a basis for food security, health, livelihoods, building resilience to global change, and managing the negative impacts of agricultural practices on the environment.
- 2.2 ensure that commercial and introduced agricultural practices are suitable for small island ecosystems, therefore action needs to be taken to avoid and mitigate losses to agricultural biodiversity.

3. Food Security – Fisheries

We recognise the critical impact of overfishing and other stressors on our marine ecosystems, food security and livelihoods. PICTs should:

- 3.1 support the implementation and monitoring of regional and national policies that coherently and adequately maintain management systems that involve all coastal communities and other resource users in partnerships to support the joint management of ecosystems and fish stocks while providing a solid foundation for food security and economic development.

4. Invasive alien species

We recognise the devastating impact of invasive alien species on biodiversity as well as on island and economic security and call for urgent action. We note that invasive alien species continue to have massive negative impacts on livelihoods, security, health, economies and sustainable development opportunities. PICTs should:

- 4.1 take urgent action through forging strong partnerships between biosecurity, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and the relevant environment sectors to prevent and control and eradicate invasive alien species.

5. Information for Decision Making

We recognise the vital role of information and data in helping our countries meet this challenge together. We also recognise that one of the most important uses of our Pacific data is to support the monitoring and evaluation of our national and regional environmental management efforts. PICTs should:

- 5.1 improve regional cooperation on knowledge management, including data collection, data storage, open access, dissemination of information and advocacy.
- 5.2 improve access of local communities to information on biodiversity.
- 5.3 strengthen the science-policy interface and build synergies between indigenous and local knowledge and science.

6. **Capacity Development**

Capacity development is critical to the effective implementation of our environmental policies, programmes and projects and by implication, the future of our islands. We note the central role of faith-based organisations with regard to sustainable development in our Pacific communities. PICTs should:

- 6.1 improve the ability of our governments, agencies, leaders and officials to meet their many responsibilities by significantly increasing the knowledge of politicians on environmental management, increasing the number of skilled people, increasing the production and employment of young graduates and providing them with the resources needed to grow professionally while strengthening the quality of our environmental management.
- 6.2 support the efforts of our regions' universities and learning institutions to address capacity and encourage our students to consider the management of our islands' environments as a career.
- 6.3 call on partners to engage with faith-based organisations in the development of appropriate programmes and activities that can lead to greater results in nature conservation through environmental stewardship.
- 6.4 develop a strong network for systematic mentoring and leadership training, including multilateral cooperation in the support for expert networks.
- 6.5 be strategic and recognise that in key priority development fields, especially species and ecological resource management, Governments must ensure sufficient capacity is available for effective management.

7. **Rigor, responsibility and enforcement**

Rigor, responsibility and enforcement are critical to management of our fisheries, forests and environment and other agreements that impact biodiversity. PICTs should:

- 7.1 be rigorous and responsible in implementing, streamlining and monitoring national, regional and international commitments for the management of our natural resources.
- 7.2 uphold and enforce our commitments.

8. **Long term Financial Mechanisms**

The engagement of communities in conservation of their natural resources requires long term commitments that must be secured with alternative financial opportunities and other benefits. PICTs should:

- 8.1 develop dedicated and innovative financial mechanisms at regional, national and local levels that can support commitments for natural resource management, such as trust funds.

9. **Blue-Green Economies**

We recognise a Blue-Green economy is a carbon-neutral, healthy and sustainable economy with healthy oceans, healthy islands and people, resilient to climate change and other stressors. In order to achieve a blue-green economy PICTs should:

- 9.1 integrate sustainable development principles into their economic development plans.
- 9.2 introduce relevant financial instruments and policies to value nature's infrastructure.
- 9.3 recognise the stewardship of landowning and local communities.

10. **Private Sector Engagement and Impacting Markets**

Private sector is a critical partner in promoting blue-green economy and for reducing impacts on biodiversity. PICTs should:

- 10.1 create an enabling environment that is conducive to encourage, promote and strengthen private sector engagements and partnership.
- 10.2 work to effectively engage private sector and local and relevant international markets to influence the impact of business practices on the environment and to reduce their carbon footprint.
- 10.3 encourage the private sector to invest in sustainable development outcomes

Leadership makes the difference.

We commit our roles in Government, our institutions, our activities and resources to support, enable and deliver conservation outcomes at a local, national and regional level, recognising that leadership is key to challenging and changing our economic pathway from one focused on short-term gains to one focused on long-term sustainable development outcomes.