

Progress since the Earth Summit

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The Earth Summit, or more officially, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992, was the culmination of over two years of international negotiations. It was also the start of a number of activities designed to implement decisions taken by the world's leaders in Rio.

The Pacific was well represented at the Summit by over 100 delegates, including nine heads of government. The preceding 18 months of preparation involved a considerable commitment and investment by the region and its partners in sustainable development (Miles 1992). Now, 18 months down the track, it is necessary to ask how this level of international attention and political commitment is affecting the path taken by Pacific island countries towards sustainable development.

To answer this question it is important to consider which issues continue to attract the attention of Pacific governments at an international level and how their involvement may influence sustainable

development in the region. It is also useful to look at progress the Pacific is making towards ratification of the new international conventions concerning climate change and the conservation of biodiversity.

At a regional level there have been many attempts to define sustainable development in the Pacific (SPREP 1992; Forum Secretariat 1992, 1993a). However, as can be seen from the principles and activities contained in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, sustainable development is as much a way of viewing the world as it is a phenomenon. Indeed, there are a number of projects at regional and international levels that have still to define comprehensive indicators of sustainable development (SPREP 1992; Dahl 1993). Nonetheless, important steps towards sustainable development may be seen in new institutional arrangements at regional and national levels. At all levels the allocation of financial resources can be used as a measure of progress.

While many initiatives have been taken by non-government organisations, the

community and other groups, the focus of this paper is limited to government and intergovernmental responses. It highlights some important institutional arrangements involving Pacific governments that may assist the transition to sustainable development in the region. The paper first looks at ongoing international negotiations involving the Pacific, and the response of certain regional organisations to UNCED and other global initiatives. Indications of national commitment to sustainable development and the allocation of financial resources for sustainable development are then discussed.

Ongoing international negotiations

Pacific island countries continue to be actively involved in international negotiations on environmental issues. Their participation in these negotiations not only brings island issues to the attention of the international community, it also involves the Pacific region in certain obligations and responsibilities concerning management of their environment and the utilisation of resources.

There are a considerable number of international negotiations related to sustainable development. When the UN General Assembly met for its 47th session in 1992 it considered the decisions taken at UNCED and identified a number of activities required to implement the Conference outcomes. In summary, the UN decided to

- establish the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD)
- commence negotiations towards a Convention on Drought and Desertification
- convene a Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Conference)
- convene a UN Conference on

Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks (Conference on High Seas Marine Resources)

- commence international discussions on land-based sources of marine pollution.

Of these, the Pacific region has become closely involved in negotiations for the Barbados Conference and the Conference on High Seas Marine Resources. Following the model used in preparation for UNCED, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is coordinating preparations for the Barbados Conference and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) is coordinating preparations for the Conference on High Seas Marine Resources.

Another international negotiation that is likely to have a significant influence is the 4th International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The relationship between population and sustainable development is receiving considerable attention in the Pacific region, including a Ministerial Meeting held recently in Port Vila, Vanuatu to prepare for the ICPD. Ministers produced a declaration on population and sustainable development which addresses the areas under negotiation for the ICPD, including the interrelationship between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development; gender equality and the empowerment of women; population growth and structure; the role of the family and its composition; reproductive rights, reproductive health and family planning; health and mortality; population distribution, urbanisation and internal migration; international migration; promotion of population information, education and communication; capacity-building; technology, research and development; national action; international cooperation; partnerships with non-governmental sectors; and preparations for and follow-up to the ICPD.

The UN Commission for Sustainable Development, with a mandate to monitor the implementation of Agenda 21, will play

an important role in the path followed at an international level towards sustainable development. It has a Governing Council of 53 UN member states, only one of which (Vanuatu) is from the Pacific. At present, as Vanuatu is also the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (an ad hoc lobby group originally established during negotiations for the Framework Convention on Climate Change), this one voice may be sufficient. In the long term, however, Pacific island countries will need to coordinate their positions carefully and lobby widely to ensure Pacific issues are adequately dealt with by the UNCSO.

These negotiations on the preparations for the Barbados Conference can be used to demonstrate how the Pacific, through its involvement in international negotiations, can influence the approach taken by the international community to sustainable development.

Barbados Conference

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Conference), to be held between 25 April and 6 May 1994, is one of the most important international meetings for Pacific island countries. It provides an opportunity to state clearly, in the wake of the Earth Summit, how the new global framework for sustainable development can be put into action in island countries. It is one of the few specific activities agreed to by the UN as a necessary follow-up to the UNCED outcomes and it is a clear recognition of the needs of small islands and the active role they are playing in international environmental negotiations.

The Conference has two specific objectives,

- to adopt and implement plans and programs to support the sustainable development and utilisation of marine and coastal resources, which includes meeting essential human needs, maintaining

biodiversity and improving the quality of life for island people

- to adopt measures which will enable small island developing states to cope effectively, creatively and sustainably with climate and other environmental changes and to mitigate impacts and reduce the threats posed to marine and coastal resources (UN 1992).

These objectives are not about protection of the environment but rather about what balance can be found between environment and development in island countries faced with a

narrow range of resources, excessive dependence on international trade, high population densit[ies], relatively small watersheds, costly public administration and infrastructure including transportation and communication, [due to] the small size, isolation and fragility of island ecosystems, their renowned biological diversity is among the most threatened in the world (UN 1993:para 2).

To find this balance and achieve the Conference objectives a Preparatory Committee met from 30 August to 10 September 1993. The committee was presented with a draft action program for the sustainable development of small island developing states by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). This draft action program was a consolidation of the outcomes of two regional meetings, held in Vanuatu and Trinidad / Tobago in preparation for the Conference. The action program provides a long-term perspective on sustainable development in small island developing states, and it highlights the fact that islands are faced with all the complexities of sustainable development concentrated in a limited area.

Although significant progress was made towards finalising the program of action, the Preparatory Committee did not complete its work in the one session

allocated by the United Nations. The main outstanding elements of the committee's work were agreement on the preamble and the implementation chapter of the action program. The implementation chapter will contain the most contentious elements including recommendations for effective use of the UN system, institutional arrangements for monitoring and review of the action program, and certain initiatives to commence in the short term that will assist the sustainable development of islands. Agreements on finance, the transfer of technology and trade, all requiring careful negotiation, are also included.

The important differences between this action program and the decisions taken at UNCED are, first, it focuses specifically on small islands and, second, it contains a chapter on implementation which seeks to get commitment to the next steps for islands and the international community to take. The success of the action program will be measured largely by the commitments made at all levels concerning its implementation. A poor result in this process is likely to weaken the role of island countries and, in particular, the level of Pacific involvement in future international environmental negotiations.

The negotiations during the Preparatory Committee further strengthened the role of island countries in international environment negotiations. Island countries demonstrated their ability to cooperate and coordinate as a group in negotiations and, through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), were strongly supported by the Group of all Developing Countries in the UN—commonly referred to as the G77. With a membership of 43 (roughly 20 per cent of the member states of the UN), AOSIS represents a significant ad hoc lobby group. Pacific island members of the UN including, Australia and New Zealand, caucus together as a South Pacific group referred to as SOPAC.

The developed countries, or OECD

member countries, looked to AOSIS for their views and for material that would provide the basis for negotiation. This was the first time AOSIS has dealt collectively with the broad spectrum of sustainable development issues. Previously AOSIS had focused solely on negotiations for the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

New international conventions

For those countries that signed and have now ratified the international Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, there will be meetings of the Contracting Parties to determine how these legal instruments are to be effectively implemented and enforced. This may include the development of protocols where the international conventions simply provide a framework for environmental protection. In the Pacific, seven island countries have ratified the climate change convention and five have ratified the biological diversity convention (Table 1). Ratification is an indication that countries are committed to implement the Conventions and to be parties to their implementation and enforcement.

The regional response

At the regional level three important institutional initiatives are indicative of progress towards sustainable development: (i) the rise of SPREP as an independent regional organisation; (ii) the approach taken to sustainable development by the South Pacific Forum; and (iii) the increasing level of collaboration among regional organisations.

SPREP

The strengthening of the region's lead environment organisation is an indicator of progress towards sustainable development.

Following its inception in 1982, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) steadily increased its range of projects and assistance to countries in the region. The increased international attention to environmental issues has almost certainly contributed to even faster strengthening of SPREP over the last 3 years.

SPREP member governments and administrations, recognising the importance of environmental management to the sustainable development of the region, set about establishing SPREP as an independent regional organisation in 1991. The Final Act of the SPREP Treaty which provides SPREP with its legal identity as an independent regional organisation was signed in Apia, Western Samoa, in June 1993. As of October 1993, two countries had ratified the Treaty, Fiji and Western Samoa. There has been some concern about the change in status of the French and US territories within the new independent SPREP. For reasons which seem more related to Guam's relationship to the United States than with their changed status in SPREP, Guam no longer wishes to participate in SPREP meetings. However, the remaining five territories

have shown no signs of wishing to withdraw. (For a more detailed history of the establishment of SPREP see Pearsall 1989 or A. Dahl 1992.)

The new independence of SPREP has allowed the organisation to further raise the profile of the region within international environmental negotiations and improve its access to financial resources for environmental programs. The range of programs and projects SPREP now delivers in terms of sustainable development is well documented (Miles 1993; Fuavao 1993).

South Pacific Forum

It is also important to consider the resolve of the region's leaders to implement sustainable development. The last two Forum Communiqués have contained quite specific commitments to UNCED follow-up and sustainable development. Statements made in 1992 at the 23rd South Pacific Forum in Honiara, immediately following the Earth Summit, identified a number of areas where UNCED follow-up was particularly relevant to the region. These included climate change, biodiversity, oceans and fisheries, ozone depletion, toxic and hazardous wastes, public awareness, and institutional arrangements. It was also at the 23rd South Pacific Forum that the region's leaders clearly stated that

sound environmental practices constitute an integral part of the development process and all activities pursued in the region must be both economically and ecologically sound (Forum Secretariat 1992:2).

The Forum has also recognised the importance of Pacific involvement in international negotiations to address global environmental issues. As mentioned earlier, they are a small but significant group within the UN system and their involvement in international negotiations is perceived to be of benefit to sustainable development in the region. The role of the

Table 1 **The status of Pacific island countries regarding new international conventions (as at October 1993)**

	Climate Change	Biological Diversity
Cook Islands	ratified	ratified
Micronesia, Federated States of	ratified	signed
Fiji	ratified	ratified
Kiribati	signed	
Marshall Islands	ratified	ratified
Nauru	signed	signed
Papua New Guinea	ratified	ratified
Solomon Islands	signed	signed
Tuvalu	signed	signed
Vanuatu	ratified	ratified
Western Samoa	ratified	signed

Forum Fisheries Agency in negotiations for the Conference on High Seas Marine Resources is a further example of this commitment.

At the most recent Forum in Nauru, the region's leaders supported the Barbados Conference strongly, noting it reflected the concerns of Forum island countries, especially the smaller island states, and urged representation at the highest level. The Forum called upon the international community to cooperate closely with small island developing states to ensure the Conference produced constructive and practical outcomes.

The Forum also agreed to negotiate, within two years, a Convention on the Prohibition of the Import into the South Pacific and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region. This Convention will further strengthen regional environmental governance which is emerging (Carew-Reid 1989; Cicin-Sain and Knecht 1989; Pearsall 1990).

Regional coordination

Sustainable development will require organisations with often narrow sectoral mandates to coordinate their activities and collaborate actively on projects. Since the Earth Summit, collaboration between regional organisations in the Pacific has increased.

At one level coordination between regional organisations is advanced through their participation in the sectoral meetings convened by each other. For example, SPREP has participated in a number of regional meetings to ensure the implications of Agenda 21 are taken into account within particular sectors such as energy (Regional Energy Committee Meeting convened by the Forum Secretariat, Fiji, 1992), development planning (Fourth Regional Development Planners Meeting convened by the Forum Secretariat and SPC, New Caledonia 1992) and forestry (Heads of Forestry Meeting

convened by UNDP, Fiji 1993). However, this needs to be supported by much closer collaboration on specific projects.

Examples of collaboration are starting to occur on specific technical issues. Staff of regional organisations have met recently under the auspices of the South Pacific Organisation's Coordinating Committee (SPOCC) to harmonise their efforts in preparation for the ICPD and in relation to coastal and marine resources. A coordinated response to Canadian development assistance (CSPOD II) is likely to be prepared in relation to the management of coastal and marine resources. At the same time the Forum Secretariat is to harmonise regional programs through the preparation of a regional development strategy (Forum Secretariat 1993b).

National commitment

The implementation of Agenda 21 and other UNCED outcomes will require considerable commitment at the national level. Since the Earth Summit, Pacific island countries have continued their involvement in projects to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The number and nature of these projects has often been influenced by the human resources and institutions available at a national level.

In recent years, the number of environment units throughout the region has grown (Table 2). The expansion and strengthening of environment units has been stimulated by the preparation of national environmental management strategies in twelve countries. Further work is required to determine how environmental positions are resourced and the percentage of national versus international assistance for environment personnel.

In addition to the expansion of environment units, it is important to

consider how intersectoral and inter-departmental coordination is taking place at a national level. The preparation of national environmental management strategies has also involved the establishment of national task forces. These task forces have included senior departmental officials from various government levels and often included non-government organisations. Coordination is important, but it remains to be seen how these arrangements evolve within the sectoral or ministerial approach to decision-making.

At a national level in the Pacific, the involvement of non-government organisations and other major groups in planning and implementation of projects will also be essential. It has not been possible to assess the status of non-government organisations in the region and their capacity to become more active partners in sustainable development. Like governments, non-government organisations and local communities are constrained by the high costs of infrastructure, transport and communication, and attempts are currently being made to strengthen the capacity of these major groups throughout the Pacific.

Financing sustainable development

International

The need for new and additional financial resources to cover the incremental costs of sustainable development has been cited continually by developing countries. Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 outlines the areas where financing for sustainable development can be found but no specific allocations are made. Of the US\$125 billion in 'new and additional' annual aid flows estimated by the UNCED Secretariat, only US\$2 billion was pledged at the Earth Summit (WWF 1993).

At the international level, support has increased for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the principal funding mechanism for projects of global environmental benefit, but the definition of global benefit is still under debate among GEF participants. Support is also contingent upon a series of international negotiations to restructure and replenish the GEF. It is considered that the GEF, run jointly by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), should be more transparent and accountable, and involve all relevant actors equitably in decisions about allocation of the funds. Funds of approximately US\$10 million over five years are currently flowing from the GEF to the Pacific for the conservation of biodiversity.

The examples of the commitment of new and additional financial resources post-UNCED are few. Almost all UN agencies have been kept to zero growth budgets, including the UNEP, which is considered to have a primary role in UNCED follow-up within the UN system. UNDP's funding initiative, Capacity 21, was only formally approved by the Governing Council mid-1993 and at levels lower than expected. Capacity 21 is a 'seed' fund focusing on projects which build the capacity of developing countries

Table 2 **Change in staffing levels of environment units in selected Pacific island countries, 1990-93**

Country	1990	1993
Kiribati	1	3
Niue	0	1
Tokelau	0	5 ^a
Tuvalu	0	1
Western Samoa	1	13

^aIncludes three atoll coordinators.

Source: Wendt, N., Team Leader, National Environment Strategies, SPREP, Samoa.

to implement programs for sustainable development.

Regional

At a regional level SPREP's financial resources have increased steadily over the past two years although these are projected to stabilise over the next few years (Figure 1). It appears that new funds are available for specific environment activities. The stand-off between industrial and developing countries over the allocation of financial resources at an international level is less obvious in the Pacific region.

As a measure of their commitment to the environment and sustainable development, in 1991, the 26 member countries of SPREP agreed to increase the total of their voluntary contributions from US\$250,000 to US\$500,000. The balance of the funds shown in Figure 1 comprises extra-budgetary contributions. Over the next five years considerable extra-budgetary support is likely from Australia, New Zealand, UNDP, Canada, the European Community and the GEF.

National

At a national level it is difficult to ascertain what financial resources are being allocated towards environmental management or sustainable development. Indeed during the Regional Technical Meeting for the

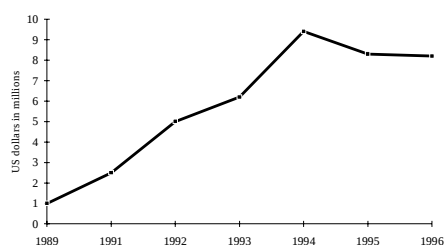
Indian and Pacific Oceans (SPREP 1993) the need to determine national expenditure on the environment highlighted improved national and regional monitoring of environmental expenditure by environmental offices, sectoral departments and agencies and non-governmental organisations in order to obtain

- a more complete evaluation of total real expenditure on the environment by SIDS
- greater appreciation of environmental inputs to the process of government by direct and indirect means.

Clearly, the establishment and staffing of environment units has required governments to commit financial resources to address issues of sustainable development. Some of the new staff are currently funded by development assistance, however, in many cases these positions are to be funded by the recipient government once the assistance has been completed.

The participation by Pacific governments in international environmental negotiations is also a measure of their commitment. Although they rarely have the funds for international travel (these are often provided by donors to the region), the absence of environment and foreign affairs officials is a significant drain on national resources.

Figure 1 **Financial resources used by SPREP to implement its work program, 1989-93**



Source: SPREP, 1989-93, 1989-93. *Reports of SPREP Intergovernmental Meetings*, SPREP, Samoa.

Beyond the Earth Summit

From the information available, the level of international attention and political commitment demonstrated during the Earth Summit has been an integral part of efforts within the region to move towards sustainable development. The new institutional arrangements and increased levels of human and financial resources available, indicate that investment in environmental management and sustainable development is continuing in

the region. More work may be required to determine whether this investment is having a demonstrable impact on efforts to protect the environment in the Pacific at a local level. However, more people and more money, and better coordination at national and regional levels, are certainly important precursors to sustainable development.

The Pacific involvement in international negotiations, and the ratification of new international conventions, also demonstrates government willingness to influence the path sustainable development is taking and a determination not to let a new international framework be delivered without Pacific input. There is a considerable volume of international negotiation in the 'pipeline' that will continue to involve the Pacific in environmental issues of global concern. This involvement is supported by the South Pacific Forum and will involve debate on a number of key economic issues relevant to the region such as fisheries and coastal management. The Barbados Conference, for example, may be used to stimulate the international community's interest and involvement in key economic issues, such as tourism and trade, that must be addressed as part of sustainable development in the Pacific.

While these efforts may only scratch the surface of what is required to move towards sustainable development in the Pacific, they are significant steps. The evolution of the region may require improved coordination between regional organisations, within governments and between governments and the community. It will also depend, among other things, upon the will of governments to actively 'mainstream' the consideration of environmental concerns within their decision-making processes.

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