



Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

TWENTY-FIRST SPREP MEETING

Madang, Papua New Guinea
6 – 10 September 2010

Agenda Item 11.1: Mainstreaming invasive species and biodiversity

(Paper presented by New Caledonia in collaboration with SPREP)

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Background Paper



Purpose of Paper

1. To inform members of the risks to livelihoods and ecosystems posed by invasive alien species and their predicted interactions with climate change; to seek enhanced political support for invasive species management; and to seek the meeting's approval for Secretariat to undertake a programme to increase public awareness of the value of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems and by that means raise support for improved management of threats to it, including invasive species and climate change.

The problem

2. Invasive alien species have significant impacts upon economic development, health, agriculture, tourism and trade. The estimated cost of invasive alien species impacts worldwide totals US\$1.4 trillion annually — 5% of the world economy¹.

3. Invasive species are also recognized as a major driver of biodiversity loss worldwide². Islands cover only 5% of the earth's land surface, yet they are home to c. 20% of all known terrestrial species and almost half of all endangered species. Island ecosystems are particularly fragile and vulnerable to invasive species. More than 70 % of the world's terrestrial species extinctions have occurred on islands, and most of these were caused by invasive species.

4. Islands are under further serious threat from climate change, which will interact with biological invasions and other processes in complex ways³. Sea level rise and rainfall changes threaten livelihoods and ecosystems, and undermine conservation efforts. Biodiversity is an important asset in addressing climate change through ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation⁴. There is strong evidence that healthy ecosystems are more resilient to climate change impacts, thereby helping to buffer island communities against them⁵. Invasive species management thus represents an effective form of ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.

5. At the April 2010 “Helping Islands Adapt” workshop in Auckland, discussions among the Pacific group (comprising representatives of Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, plus several international and regional organisations) determined that the fundamental problem which currently prevents adequate investment in managing the impacts of invasive species is lack of political support, consequent on the fact that modern society does not value biodiversity highly enough and does not understand the magnitude of the impacts of invasive species on economies, livelihoods and the environment.

¹ Pimentel et al, 2001. Economic and environmental threats of alien plant, animal, and microbe invasions. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 84: 1-20

² Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press.

³ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2009. *Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Report of the 2nd Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change*. Technical Series No. 41.

⁴ World Bank, 2009. *Convenient Solutions to an Inconvenient Truth: Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change*

⁵ N. Dudley, et al. (eds.), 2010. *Natural Solutions: Protected areas helping people cope with climate change*, IUCN-WCPA, TNC, UNDP, WCS, The World Bank and WWF.

Solutions

6. The Pacific group at the above-mentioned workshop determined that this fundamental problem could be addressed

- i) by direct intervention at the political level (such as at this Meeting); and
- ii) by developing a regional social marketing strategy and programme directed at raising the level of public understanding of the values of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems and of threats to it, including invasive species and climate change, while placing an emphasis on environmental education (“environmental inspiration”) with the very young, so as to work towards a generational change in society’s values and help to re-establish Pacific islanders’ traditional understanding of and respect for natural ecosystems.

Recommendation

7. The Meeting is therefore invited to:

- **reaffirm** the importance of healthy ecosystems in helping Pacific islands to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change;
- **reaffirm** that invasive species constitute a primary threat to livelihoods and ecosystems;
- **fully support** Secretariat in its search for resources to address the invasive species threat;
- **request** Secretariat to develop a social marketing strategy and programme that emphasises both political mainstreaming and environmental inspiration for the very young, to raise the level of understanding of the values of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems and of threats to it, including invasive species and climate change, and thereby generate increasing public and political support for management of these threats to livelihoods and the environment; and
- **commit** itself and all members to support such a programme within their respective jurisdictions.