



**Government of
Solomon Islands**

**National Report to the United Nations Convention to
Combat Desertification
(Third Report)**

December 2006

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ARDS	Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy
AuSAID	Australian Aid for International Development
BSSE	Bismarck Solomon Seas Ecoregion
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CI	Conservation International
CITES	Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species
CNURP	Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace
COP	Conference of Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CROP	Council of Regional Organizations Programme
DAL	Department of Agriculture and Livestock
DFEC	Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation
DNPAC	Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination
ECANSI	Environment and Conservation Action Network in Solomon Islands
ECD	Environment and Conservation Division
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FTE	Fixed Term Estate
GCCG	Grand Coalition for Change Government
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-OPF	Global Environment Facility Operational Focal Point
IGO	International Government Organizations
IWP	International Waters Programme
LDC	Least Development Countries
LMMA	Locally Managed Marine Areas
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MID	Ministry of Infrastructure and Development
MPGCD	Ministry of Provincial Government and Constituency Development
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas
MSP	Medium Size Project
MTDS	Medium Term Development Strategy
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBF	National Biosafety Framework
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NBSI	National Bank of Solomon Islands
NCB	National Coordinating Body
NCSA	National Capacity Self Assessment
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NEMS	National Environmental and Management Strategy
NERRDP	National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non Government Organization
NIRDP	National Integrated Rural Development Plan
NITDP	National Infrastructure and Transport Development Plan
NSC	National Steering Committee

PACC	Pacific Adaptation for Climate Change
PACPOL	Pacific Pollution Prevention Programme
PFD	Policy Framework Document
PICCAP	Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme
PTI	Policy Translation and Implementation document
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RAP	Regional Action Plan
RDP	Rural Development Strategy
RIPEL	Russell Island Plantations Estate Limited
SGS	Small Grant Scheme
SIDAPP Programme	Solomon Islands Development Administration and Planning
SIDT	Solomon Islands Development Trust
SISDAC	Solomon Islands Sustainable Development Advisory Council
SISLAP	Solomon Islands Land Administration Programme
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SNC	Second National Communications
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SRAP	Sub Regional Action Plan
TCPB	Town and Country Planning Board
TOL	Temporary Occupation Licence
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

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1 SUMMARY

1.1 Focal point institution:

Name of focal point	Vacant	
Address including e-mail address	Department of Forestry, Environment and Conservation	
Country-specific websites relating to desertification	1.N/A	

1.2 Status of NAP

(Please provide information relevant to the status in your country only):

Date of validation	
NAP review(s)	N/A
NAP has been integrated into the poverty reduction strategy (PRSP)	N/A
NAP has been integrated into the national development strategy	N/A
NAP implementation has started with or without the conclusions of partnership agreements	N/A
Expected NAP validation	N/A
Final draft of a NAP exists	N/A
Formulation of a draft NAP is under way	
Basic guidelines for a NAP have been established	
Process has only been initiated	YES-Dept. of Agriculture and Lands has taken the initiatives to establish the draft NAP
Process has not yet started	

1.3 Member of SRAP/RAP

(Please provide information where appropriate):

Name of sub-regional and/or regional cooperation framework	Regional Cooperation Framework
1. Secretariat of the Pacific Region Environment Program (SPREP)	Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands Regional Invasive Species Strategy Regional Auifauna Conservation Strategy Strategy for the protection of the marine environment in the Pacific
2. Secretariat of the Pacific Communities (SPC)	Development of Sustainable Agriculture Program FAO Regional Food Security Programmes Pacific Regional Agriculture Program Regional Forestry and Trees Strategy

1.4 Composition of the NCB

(Indicate whether it is a Government or civil society organization, and provide information on the Representatives' gender):

Name of institution	Government (√)	NGO (√)	Male/female
1. N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

1.5 Total number of NGOs accredited to the process: N/A

Has an NGO National Coordinating Committee on desertification been established; if yes, how many NGOs or civil society organizations participate in it?	N/A
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1.6 Total number of acts and laws passed relating to the UNCCD:

(Name up to five most relevant acts and laws and/or regulations)

Title of the law	Date of adoption
1. Environment Act	1998
2. Wildlife Management and Protection Act	1998
3. Lands and Titles Act	1995 (Revised Version)

1.7 The consultative process

Number of partnership agreements that have been concluded and/or are being initiated within the framework of the UNCCD (please provide information where appropriate):

Official title of partnership	Donor(s), international organization(s), and/or agencies of the UN system involved	Date of (expected) conclusion
1. N/A	N/A	N/A
2. N/A	N/A	N/A

List of consultative meetings on UNCCD implementation (please provide information where appropriate):

Name of consultative meeting	Date/year	Donor countries involved	International organizations or agencies of the UN system involved
1. N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Name of country which has taken over the role of Chef de file
(Please provide information where appropriate): N/A

1.8 Name up to 10 projects currently under implementation which are directly or indirectly related to the UNCCD.

Name of project	Project implemented within the framework of the NAP/ SRAP/ RAP? (Yes/No)	Project implemented within the framework of	Time frame	Partners involved	Overall budget
1. Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific	RAP		2004-2010	EU/ SPC	N/A
2. Peace, community empowerment and disaster response	RAP		2004-8	RAMSI/ AusAid	\$39,000,000
3 Forestry Management Project	No		2004-07	AusAid	\$7,500,000
4 Solomon Islands Institutional Strengthening of Lands Administration Project	No		2004/05	Ausaid	\$6,200,000
5 Capacity-Building in Farming Systems Practices Project	RAP			FAO	N/A
6 South Pacific Cooperation: Food Security	RAP		2005-	PRC/ FAO/ Philippines Govt.	N/A
7 Micro-Projects Programme	No		2006-2011	EU/FAO	N/A
8 WWF Forest Strategy for Solomon Islands	No		N/A	WWF	N/A
9 Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific	RAP		N/A	SPC	N/A
10 Invasive species program	RAP			SPREP	N/A

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND

In accordance with article 26 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the decisions of its Conference of the Parties (COP), particularly decision 11/COP.1, each country Party is required to develop a NAP and communicate, through the UNCCD secretariat, national reports on measures undertaken to implement the UNCCD. The report on regional and sub-regional activities was presented at COP3. The third report from African affected parties was presented at CRIC-3 in early 2005 (decision 11/ COP.1, decision 1/ COP.5 and decision 9/ COP.6).

The objectives of the Third National Reports are to: (i) update the second national reports; (ii) provide country profiles; and (iii) report on ongoing activities and report on impacts. The non-African countries are expected to provide their Third National Reports (3NR) to CRIC-5/COP 8 which is now re scheduled to 2007. This is the Solomon Islands third national report to the convention which seeks to update the previous national report and fulfill other objectives of the third round of national reporting to the Convention.

This report has been produced with assistance from the GEF funded MSP specifically formulated to assist some 35 countries to complete their third national reports. The MSP is implemented by UNDP with co-financing from the Government of Norway. Solomon Islands wishes to acknowledge the assistance from the GEF, Government of Norway and UNDP which has enable it to fulfill this reporting obligation to the Convention.

2.2 TYPES OF LAND DEGRADATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

This report will assume the definitions provided below as accepted definitions to try and categorize the types of land degradation in Solomon Islands. It is also assumed that the definitions are accepted under relevant UNEP and Convention decisions. According to the current UNEP general uses of the term, Land degradation is the temporary or permanent lowering of the productive capacity of land. It therefore covers the various forms of soil degradation, adverse human impacts on water resources, deforestation, and the lowering of the productive capacity of any useful lands.

No study or assessment of land degradation has been carried out in the Solomon Islands to ascertain the types of land degradation. The following types of land degradation are well known and are applicable in the Solomon Islands.

Water erosion – This is where soil erosion is caused, aided or triggered by water and includes sheet, rill and gully erosion. Intensified landslides caused or induced by humans through vegetation clearance, road construction, etc. is also aided by water erosion.

Soil fertility decline - This refers to the decline in the physical, chemical and biological characteristics or properties of soils. The decline in fertility is basically a major effect of erosion. The term in general refers to the lowering of soil organic matter, with associated decline in soil biological activity; degradation of soil physical properties (structure, aeration, water holding capacity), as brought about by reduced organic matter; adverse changes in soil nutrient resources, including reduction in availability of the major nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium), the onset of micronutrient deficiencies, the development of nutrient

imbalances; the buildup of toxicities, and the primarily acidification of lands through incorrect fertilizer use.

Waterlogging – This is where land productivity is lowered through the rise in groundwater close to the soil surface. It also refers to the severe form, termed ponding, where the water table rises above the surface. This situation sometimes occurs in the country during the wet season when there is continuous heavy rain resulting in the loss of food crops in the subsistence gardens and quite often brings about shortage of food in the areas affected.

Salinization – This refers to all types of soil degradation brought about by the increase of salts in the soil and covers salinization in its strict sense, the buildup of free salts; and related phenomena such as alkalization, and the development of dominance of the exchange complex by sodium. It also covers intrusion or incursion of sea water into coastal soils arising from over-abstraction of groundwater and extreme weather events such as cyclones, storm surges and sea level rise.

Lowering of the water table – This is usually brought about by the withdrawal of ground water for various purposes such as for urban and industrial uses but usually reaches the situation where it exceeds the sources' natural recharge capacity.

Deforestation – Under the usage of definitions for land degradation in the UNCCD, deforestation is a form of land degradation. The occurrence of deforestation is widespread and extremely serious in the Solomon Islands.

Forest degradation - This refers to the reduction of biological resources and the decrease in the productive capacity of forests mostly through human activities.

Soil destruction (through mining and quarrying activities etc) – A number of activities such as mining, quarrying, road constructions etc destroy soil and fail to rehabilitate the land. Urban and industrial encroachment onto agricultural land. With the projected increase in urbanization, this will continue to be a substantial cause of loss of agricultural land, but it is a different problem from land degradation.

2.3 CAUSES OF LAND DEGRADATION

The causes of land degradation are briefly examined under three basic categories: natural hazards, direct causes, and underlying causes as they relate to the Solomon Islands situation.

a Natural Hazards

The natural hazards refer to the conditions of the physical environment that lead to the existence of a high land degradation hazard. In terms of water erosion, these include high rainfall and therefore flooding which is common in the humid tropics, steep slopes of hills and mountains that make it easier for water carrying eroded soils under the influence of gravity, and soils that have low resistance to water erosion.

In terms of the decline in soil fertility, the natural hazards that exist include strong leaching in humid climates, and soils which are strongly acidic, and/or with low natural fertility. Where there is water logging, the natural hazard relates to alluvial plains or interior basins that restrict drainage of groundwater outwards. With salinization, the natural hazards specifically to Solomon Islands are low coastal areas, inhabited atolls, and extreme weather events such as cyclones, storm surges, high tides and sea level rise.

b Direct causes

This mainly refers to unsuitable and inappropriate land use and land management practices. In general direct causes would cover deforestation or removal of natural vegetation, intensive agricultural activities and over-exploitation of vegetation for domestic use.

Deforestation of unsuitable land is a type of degradation and is also a cause of other types of degradation. Deforestation itself is not necessarily degrading as without it, most productive agricultural lands would not be available for human use. It becomes a cause of degradation when the land that is cleared is steeply sloping, or has shallow or easily erodible soils. It also causes degradation where the clearance of land is not followed by good management. It is the leading cause of water erosion in steeply sloping humid environments such as in the Solomon Islands. It is also a contributory to soil fertility decline and salinization.

In the Solomon Islands, the development of large scale monoculture agriculture and forestry plantations have been the main examples of direct causes. Coconut plantations were popular in the rural areas. The most of Russell Islands was converted to coconut plantations during the colonial days and exists on today. The government with the use of stabex funds developed forest plantations through out the country. These have all been sold. The development of the Guadalcanal plains oil palm plantations became one of the largest land use project in the country taking up the largest fertile land in the country in the Guadalcanal plains. The oil palm plantation development is increasing with new areas being negotiated for new plantations.

A majority of the people of the Solomon Islands lives in the rural areas and in a subsistence lifestyle where there is significant removal of vegetation for domestic use. Even though there is increasing influence from the cash economy, the majority of the people depend on the forest for most of their basic sustenance. They depend on the natural forest for their fuel for cooking, food, medicine, traditional houses, and many other local uses. In areas where there is increasing population, this has become a real problem that needs urgent attention. The reduction and degradation of the natural forest vegetation leads to and can accelerate land degradation

Other direct causes of land degradation in Solomon Islands are: shifting cultivation without adequate fallow periods, the lack of or non-adoption of soil-conservation management practices, the use of lands that are subjected to high natural hazards, improper crop rotations, unbalanced fertilizer use, over withdrawal of groundwater, and invasive species. The invasion of the paper mulberry tree on Guadalcanal is now causing very serious concern. Local communities of Guadalcanal have said the tree depletes soil nutrients and displaces all native plant species.

c Underlying causes

This refers to the reasons why inappropriate types of land use and management are practiced. Unsuitable land use is the use of land for purposes for which it is environmentally unsuited for sustainable use and results in land degradation. Inappropriate land management practices refer to the use of land in ways which could be sustainable if properly managed, but where the necessary practices are not adopted, and therefore lead to land degradation.

There are more basic reasons underlying the reasons for land degradation outlined above and are applicable to all direct causes. In brief these are:

Land shortage – Not much of the land in Solomon Islands is suitable for agricultural use. As emphasis on economic developments is key to a nation's development aspirations the demand for land increases with economic growth. As the cash economy starts to affect the rural populace, demand for land is also increasing and the use of land becomes the cornerstone to any nation's development need.

Land tenure - Most land in Solomon Islands is under customary ownership and there are various reasons why tenure issues partly contribute to land degradation, amongst them is the weak control over those lands to enable their proper management.

Economic pressures and attitudes – As a nation develops, economic aspirations and the natural will to improve livelihoods becomes the number one purpose of living. This can only be achieved through the generation and accumulation of wealth which in Solomon Islands is mostly related to the increasing use of lands and its resources.

Poverty – Despite of being the second largest country in the insular Pacific and endowed with abundant natural resources, Solomon Islands has managed to drive itself to become the poorest country in the Pacific. This is due to a variety of factors, amongst them poor economic management and poor governance. Even though there is no abject poverty, indicators do show a growing poor population who start to struggle on the land to survive and to provide for their basic and social needs. This then increases pressure on the use of land and leads to increase misuse and unsuitable land use practices.

Population increase - Solomon Islands has one of the fastest growing populations in the world. In the last 1999 national population census, the growth rate was 2.8% which is a decreasing figure from the 1986 growth rate of 3.4%. Even then, the population increase is still very high and is a significant factor in the increasing pressure being exerted on the land.

External Forces – In the globalizing world, where the free market economy determines much of the world's business, nothing much can be controlled within small island countries such as Solomon Islands. Much of its economic activities and development activities are determined by external market forces, especially market demand in far away countries and cannot be controlled by domestic policies, strategies or even laws. National development attitudes, perceptions and resource use behaviour are very much influenced by what is driving external market demands.

3 STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR POLICIES

3.1 NATIONAL PLANS AND/OR POLICIES IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AREAS

3.1.1 UNCCD National Action Plan (NAP)

Solomon Islands was one of the first countries to apply for the funds from the Global Mechanism to develop the National Action Plan. Approved funds from the Global Mechanism were transferred to the UNDP Suva office for disbursement to the government of Solomon Islands but despite repeated requests from the Solomon Islands government for quick transfer of the funds from the UNDP Suva office so that work can proceed with the development of the NAP, nothing was transferred to the government until late 2005. The government through DAL, is now working to access the funds to proceed with the development of the NAP.

The draft SLM project document now being reviewed by the government and stakeholders suggests the development of the NAP concurrently with the implementation of the SLM. This will delay the NAP and will need to be reviewed urgently so that the NAP is urgently attended to and proceeds the SLM implementation as co-funding is still being negotiated for the SLM.

3.1.2 National Economic, Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP)

In 2003 the Solomon Islands produced a successor to the previous development plan, which was the Medium Term Development Strategy (MTDS). That successor is the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP) 2003 – 2006. The NERRDP is the key national policy document that guides every planning decision during this reporting period. Due to the problems arising from the ethnic tension, the development of the NERRDP had focused on rebuilding the nation, especially on the restoration of law and order and on economic recovery. The NERRDP has the government's priorities and goals for the period 2003 - 2006. A new strategic plan is being formulated to succeed the NERRDP.

The NERRDP was formulated some two years after the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) which formally ended the ethnic crisis that crippled the country to its knees from 1998 – 2000. Despite the signing of the TPA, instability and active militancy continued after the signing until the arrival of RAMSI in 2003. The formulation of the NERRDP therefore occurred during that unstable period and has much to do with the continuing security situation in the country and the long terms effects of the ethnic crisis as a whole.

a Overall Goal of the NERRDP 2003 – 2006

The overarching goal of the NERRDP is to **“enhance and improve the quality of life and the living standards of all the people in the Solomon Islands, not just some people or groups but all groups in Solomon Islands”**. In the midst of the security situation prevalent at the time of its formulation and the general consciousness of the long term effects of the ethnic crisis, the NERRDP recognized that the above goal can be achieved under certain essential conditions: that there is peace and personal safety among the people; that there are increasing incomes and their equitable distribution; and increasing the availability of

improved access to social services for all the people of Solomon Islands. It further iterated that this means equitable distribution of development between all provinces and people in each province, and between men and women. It also means giving preferential attention to the disadvantaged and marginalized groups as well as areas in the country.

b Immediate Objectives of the NERRDP

The overarching goal of the NERRDP is translated into the following immediate and major objectives:

- to improve the security environment in restoring law and order and fostering peace;
- to strengthen and improve governance institutions and good governance;
- to bring about macroeconomic stability and income growth;
- to restore basic social services in health and education; and
- to re-establish the foundations for sustained economic growth and human development.

c Key Strategic Areas or priority areas of the NERRDP

To target priority actions at all levels, the NERRDP focuses on what it refers to as Key Strategic Areas which are actually its priority areas and are as follows:

- Normalising law and order and security situation.
- Strengthening democracy, human rights and good governance
- Restoring fiscal and financial stability and reforming the public sector.
- Revitalizing the productive sector and rebuilding supporting infrastructure
- Restoring basic social services and fostering social development.

d Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes from these key strategic areas as outlined in the NERRDP are as follows:

- The law and order and security situation normalized
- Democracy deepened, human rights protected and good governance improved.
- Fiscal and financial stability restored and substantial progress made in public sector reform.
- The productive sector revitalized and supporting infrastructure rebuilt.
- Basic social services restored and social development fostered.

In terms of the UNCCD issues, the relevant sectors activities within the NERRDP as part of their revitalization of the productive sector. The activities of some of the main sectors are given below:

i Environment:

- Completing national process for gazettal and enforcement of the Environment Act 1998 and the Wildlife Management and Protection Act 1998, preparing regulations and enforcing the Acts.
- Selecting a pilot site for International Waters Programme focusing on coastal fisheries and developing the pilot site.
- Developing and implementing a NBSAP, NBF for biological safety, NCSA for the Rio Conventions
- Developing and implementing National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on POPs and the NAP for mitigating land degradation and drought
- Review the NEMS
- Draft legislation for Access benefit sharing of genetic resources

- Competing National Pollution Prevention Plan

- ii Forestry:*

- Continuing to monitor, audit and inspect logging operations and shipments and improving coordination and information sharing with customs and CBSI.
 - Enforcing the Code of Logging Practice
 - Drafting, enacting and implementing a new forests legislation and new forest policy
 - Placing moratorium on issuing of new logging licenses
 - Supporting family based reforestation initiatives
 - Encouraging community potable and small scale saw milling and eco-timber production
 - Reforming and building capacity
 - Reforming and building capacity of Environment and Conservation division

- iii Agriculture and Livestock:*

- Pursue redevelopment of Solomon Islands Plantations Limited
 - Facilitating RIPEL to restart copra and cocoa production on its plantations on Guadalcanal.
 - Supporting small holder and small-to-medium scale production of copra and coconut oil, cocoa and other agricultural crops such as rice, honey and small livestock production.
 - Strengthening agricultural extension service for women and facilitate access and training to enhance knowledge and skills in crop production and management.
 - Reforming and building capacity of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock.

- iv Land:*

- Preparing and activating the pilot project for the recording and registration of the tribal lands, recognizing women's rights to land and in liaison with justice department, for the application of the land tribunals provisions.
 - Reviewing and amending the Land and Titles Act and tabling in Parliament for enactment.
 - Evaluating the pilot project currently in the Western province for possible national replication
 - Developing a systematic approach to converting Temporary Occupation Licenses (TOL) areas to Fixed Term ownership
 - Reviewing and amending associated Acts (Valuers Bill, Survey Act, Town and Country Planning Act etc and enacted by parliament.
 - Reforming and building capacity of Department of lands and Surveys.

- v Fisheries:*

- Facilitate the rational management and conservation of coastal fisheries and aquatic living resources through their sustainable utilization.
 - Rehabilitate and promote the privatization and commercialization of rural fisheries centres
 - Promote aquaculture development of aquatic organisms such as seaweed, pearl culture, prawns etc.
 - Promote tuna fisheries development through foreign and local investment.
 - Increase revenue through licensing of more tuna fishing vessels under access agreements and domestic licensing arrangements.

- Improve the monitoring of fish catches, their exports and value and to share such information with Customs, CBSI and related agencies.
- Review existing and formulate new fisheries legislation and management plans.
- Reforming and building capacity of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources

vi Geology, Minerals and Mining:

- Vigorously continue efforts to reopen Gold Ridge Mine
- Ensuring final prospecting activities on San Jorge and Takata lateritic nickel deposits completed as soon as possible.
- Reviewing country-wide exploration tenement status and ensuring revival and facilitation of prospecting work on all licensed areas.
- Supporting and pursuing international promotional work on geological, minerals and hydrocarbon resources potential of Solomon Islands.
- Completing the geological and geochemical surveys of San Cristobal Island.
- Establishing a Solomon Islands Mineral Resources Information system.
- Reviewing Solomon Islands seismological and volcanological surveillance and monitoring network and programs.
- Reforming capacity building and institutional strengthening of the Geology and Mines divisions

e Summary of Achievements

The government through its lead agency in strategic planning, the Department of National Planning and Aid Coordination (DNPAC), has carried out a review of the implementation of the NERRDP in September 2005 to ascertain what it has achieved in terms of its goals, objectives, key strategic areas and the expected outcomes. The implementation report compiled, concluded in general that the NERRDP made good progress in a number of the key strategic areas it focused on. These are the areas of the restoration of law and order and normalizing of the security situation, and in restoring control and stability in government finances. Both areas however require further efforts to strengthen what has already been achieved.

In the areas of good governance, the report made mention of the progress that have been made especially in enforcement and maintenance of the rule of law and management of public finances. Some progress were also made in improving transparency and accountability in the public sector but it noted that more needs to be done for the agencies ensuring transparency and accountability in government. In the area of public sector reform, it was noted that actions have been started and progress has been made with some state own enterprises but not much progress was made in the sector and required more urgent attention.

In the areas of revitalizing the productive sector, the review report of the NERRDP made mention of the focus of efforts in reviving the large scale commercial enterprises that had ceased operation during the ethnic crisis. The main concern in the sector is the unsustainable harvesting of natural forest resources which has gone unabated for the last decade. The lack of political will in the last government to introduce new legislation in the forestry sector has been the major public concern. The focus on revitalizing the small scale and rural production sector has not received much attention at all and needed further urgent improvement as it serves most of the Solomon Islands rural population. The current GCCG government is now refocusing efforts towards the rural sector with its rural development policies.

In terms of infrastructural development, actions have been taken to revitalize the essential facilities and services. In the supporting services, a number of significant interventions have been initiated. Of particular note is the introduction of the new Foreign Investment Bill to parliament last year but which has now been enacted. The lack of credit facilities for small scale and medium scale operations in the rural areas has been an issue for a long time. In the social services sector, most essential services had been restored to the pre-tension level. New policies and strategies were formulated for the education and health sector.

3.1.3 Peace Plan 2000: Programme of Action- Policy, Objectives, Strategies and Targets 2000-2002

The Peace Plan 2000 -2002 was put together by the Coalition for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (CNURP) government which was formed after the June 2000 coup. The CNURP had Hon. Manasseh Soqavare as its Prime Minister who was also the preferred choice of those who forced the then Prime Minister, Hon. Bart Ulufa'alu to resign and resulted in the change of government.

The Peace plan focused on peace building and a commitment to address root causes of the tension and increase efforts on social and economic development activities. One of the key government ministries that were set up to spear head the peace building effort is the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace. Whilst the CNURP government was able to achieve peace through the Townsville Peace Agreement in 2002, all efforts on social and development activities as outlined in the plan were a complete failure as government resources were squandered during that period.

3.1.4 The New Base: Road Map to Economic Recovery, Development and Nation Building in Solomon Islands 2003

An economic sub task force was mandated by Cabinet to facilitate the economic aspects of the RAMSI as well as the priority areas in the NERRDP. The members of the Task Force are mostly national politicians with technical assistance from a few public officers. The task force took a long term view approach as it considers the NERRDP as being taking a short term approach to development planning. Whilst the document provided useful guidance to many NERRDP strategies and other national strategic plans, it was perceived as not having a sound base to its development and was seldom referred to. As it took a long term approach, its contents are useful and continue to guide a number of initiatives.

3.1.5 Poverty Alleviation Policy

The Solomon Islands remains one of the poorest countries in the Pacific with a number of critical social and economic indicators not improving or sliding backwards. These have been exacerbated by the effects of the ethnic tension and continue into the current post conflict situation.

The government through the then Ministry of National Planning and Development and the Ministry of Economic Reform carried out a Poverty Alleviation Assessment in 2002 in the hope of developing a national policy on poverty alleviation. This was then seen as an approach to guide national efforts in addressing poverty issues in the long term. The development of the policy was however affected very much by issues relating to the ethnic crisis as resources were diverted to other priority efforts especially in peace building and

reconstruction. A poverty alleviation policy or strategy is therefore yet to be finalized and the country has yet to formulate its poverty reduction strategy.

Most donor interventions in the country however targets poverty alleviation and a number of their aid programmes which have been or are being implemented have been designed to alleviate poverty especially in the rural areas where the bulk of the population are. However, despite of all donor policies having poverty alleviation as a main objective of their assistance, there have been no direct corresponding programmes from any of them to directly address poverty alleviation on the ground. The same can also be said of the government policies and programmes. The recent focus on rural development that is being promoted through a yet to be activated bottom up approach could be a trigger to progressing the alleviation of poverty.

3.1.6 National Integrated Rural Development Program (NIRDP)

The National Integrated Rural and Provincial Development Programme (NIRDP) was produced in 2001 by the Ministry of Provincial Government with funding and technical assistance from UNDP. It is the product of a large national project called the Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme (SIDAPP) which involved extensive consultations through out the country with communities, provinces, national government agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders using a bottom up approach.

The adopted vision of the program is to “Work Together to Build Communities in Solomon Islands and its mission is to increase the capabilities of provinces in improving the quality of life in village communities where majority of people live”. The main goal of NIRDP is to bring information and services to as many village people as possible so that they can participate in overall national development and ultimately share its benefits.

The NIRDP was produced prior to the last development plan (NERRDP) and had provided some direction that contributed to the development of the NERRDP. The usefulness and worth of this expensive plan is yet to be ascertained as the implementation status of the strategies in it are still not known except for the establishment of a rural development association. The NIRDP is basically not implemented and may have become redundant as other similar efforts have become a higher priority.

3.1.7 Policy Framework Document- GCCG

The Grand Coalition for Change Government (GCCG) that came into power on May 4, 2006 is made up of smaller parties that contested the last general election in early April. Its Policy Framework Document (PFD) is a collation of the ideas of all the parties that make the GCCG.

The vision of the GCCG as stated in the PFD is for an equitable and just society governed within the highest ethical standards and stronger democratic institutions with respect for diverse cultures and based on peaceful, united and progressive sovereign nation. Its mission is to achieve this vision through a holistic and bottom up approach based on the advancement of rural development strategies, the pursuit of the MDGs, revitalization of the economy, effective service delivery and the transfer of power and functions of decision making.

The first part of the document identified certain issues that need urgent attention such as constitutional reform, economic recovery, fiscal and monetary measures, reconciliation and public service. The second part of the document has the main policy framework and focuses on what it called strategic themes: Constitutional reform, Police and national security, Justice and legal affairs, National reconciliation and peace, Foreign affairs, Finance and planning, Bank and other financial institutions, Development planning and Aid coordination, Economic infrastructure and services, Social Services and Public Service

UNCCD relevant policy statements are included under sectors and thematic areas such as Agriculture, Land Ownership and Land Use, Natural Resources, Mineral Resources and Mining, Petroleum, Energy, Forestry, Environment and Conservation and Fisheries. The policy statements under agriculture and Land Ownership and Land Use are given below.

a Agriculture

- Formulate an agriculture strategy to focus on small scale commercial ventures
- Support further research into the protection and use of existing cash crops
- Improve domestic and export marketing infrastructure for agricultural products
- Ensure food security for Solomon Islanders
- Formulate an sustainable and pragmatic policy for agricultural extension services
- Re-strengthen Research and Development
- Retrieve existing research data and information to improve agricultural policies
- Re-establish the Agricultural Information Unit
- Develop small scale agro-based farming, including down stream processing
- Support development of oil palm plantation such as GPPOL and Vangunu
- Revive and further develop livestock farming
- Establish demonstration farms to enhance farm based extension services
- Establish markets outlets for locally grown rice
- Upgrade Quarantine services and facilities to comply with international requirements
- Encourage organic farming and discourage genetically modified food farming technology

b Land Ownership and Land Use

- Introduce new laws to allow customary land to be bankable and transferable commodity
- Introduce land reform for registration and open up land for economic projects
- Recognize indigenous tribes as corporate entities and as owners of land
- Offer TOL holders in crown land to convert their licenses to fixed term estate(FTE)
- Encourage developers to make full economic use of vacant crown lands
- Review the policy of returning alienated lands
- Encourage both village and town planning using the Town and Country Planning Act
- Ensuring land allocation and utilization in urban centres adheres strictly to requirements of existing regulations

3.1.8 Policy Translation and Implementation Document

Following the release of the PFD, the GCCG released what it called a Policy Translation and Implementation (PTI) document in August 2006. The PTI is basically a translation of the GCCGs' Policy Framework. The PTI is a prescription of various actions translated from the Policy framework document. The PTI has been put together by the Prime Ministers Office

and seeks to assist the various national departments to further develop refined action programs to implement at the departmental level.

The PTI comprises three main parts: part A details the actions the GCCG plans to undertake within the first 100 days, part B comprises the Rural Development Program which is one of the main policy change of the GCCG and part C covers the policy translations and implementation issues. It is obvious from the PTI that the GCCGs' emphasis is on rural development which appears to be the main objective it wanted to pursue for the country, through a bottom up approach. The model that is to be adopted for such an approach is yet to be seen though. In terms of its substance and area of focus, the PTI refers more on developing the transport and agriculture sectors in the rural areas with desired support from donors and banks.

The rural development strategy as contained within the translation document, as one of the policy foundations of the current government will be based on a bottom up approach meaning increased community engagement is necessary for its success. The government has also committed itself to making available the human resources required to implement the new strategy as outline in the PTI. The PTI promotes increased rural development activities on small holder farmers' level and increased research on various economic related activities on agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

3.2 NATIONAL PLANS AND/OR STRATEGIES RELEVANT TO LAND DEGRADATION

3.2.1 National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS)

The Solomon Islands National Environment Management Strategy (NEMS) which was produced in 1992 was funded by the ADB through technical support from SPREP. It is already out of date but remains a useful strategy for environmental management in the country in the absence of any successive strategy in the environment sector. The NEMS focuses on the following five broad strategies:

- Adopt an integrated approach to environmental policy and planning,
- Submit proposed policies , development programmes and projects to environment impact assessment,
- Introduce a comprehensive framework of national and provincial environmental law, together with the means for its enforcement in a communally acceptable manner,
- Review adequacy of institutional mechanisms and administrative controls and strengthen them as necessary, and
- Institute resource pricing in the national accounts and other economic policy for achieving sustainability.

The strategy contains a wish list of too many activities whose funding sources were never identified when the strategy was drawn up, and hence suffered implementation problems due to neglect and lack of support from donors and key players in environment and conservation. However, most of the priority activities identified in the strategy have been implemented.

Successive governments have promised to revise the NEMS but nothing has materialized. The current GCCG government has again included in it policy to review it.

3.2.2 National Disaster Management Strategy

The Solomon Islands being a coastal island state right next to the equator in the Tropical Pacific and within the Pacific “rim of fire” is vulnerable to many potential natural disasters but mainly from cyclones and earthquakes. Other potential natural disasters are floods, storm surges, landslides, volcanic eruptions epidemics, and droughts. Potential manmade disasters include aviation and maritime accidents, fires, industrial accidents, and marine pollution.

The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), in the Ministry of Home Affairs is the main government agency responsible for disaster management. An Act of parliament which establishes the National Disaster Council governs disaster management. Under current arrangements and available resources, disaster management programs and activities have focused almost exclusively on response and recovery from natural disasters, particularly cyclones. Existing disaster management legislation plans and organizational arrangements have also been set up within the bounds of the above activities. Due to constraints relating to resources, there has been little progress made in the areas of preparedness, prevention and mitigation, especially in reducing the underlying risks to sustainable development. Even the current legislation was designed to respond to immediate risks, response, relief and recovery management.

The NDMO is now advocating the view that since disaster management is a cross cutting issue and has a critical role in supporting and promoting sustainable development, it needs to be placed strategically within the government national structures and systems to enable it to influence national policy development instead of being regarded as an adjunct to a particular Ministry or government agency. For this reason, the NDMO now prefers that a new national initiative will have to commence to address the following thematic areas: Governance; Knowledge, information, public awareness and education; Analysis and evaluation of hazards, vulnerabilities and elements of risk; Planning for effective preparedness, response and recovery; Effective, integrated and people focused early warning systems; and Reduction of underlying risks.

The above thematic areas, can only be addressed through a new National Disaster Management Plan, changes or amendment to current disaster management legislation, adoption of a relevant disaster risk management organizational structure, agreement on the roles of relevant supporting committees and the strengthening of the institutional capacity of certain key government agencies to that ensure that national risk reduction policies, strategies and programmes are developed and implemented to support an integrated government approach to disaster management.

3.2.3 UNFCCC National Implementation Strategy 2004

The National Implementation Strategy of the UNFCCC, which has been formulated under the PICCAP enabling activity, is still one of the most relevant policy documents in terms of the UNCCD implementation. This document is still in draft form but will provide a wider coverage of issues that are relevant to the UNCCD. This effort was led by the Meteorological Services under the PICCAP Country Team.

Since the second report, this document has not been finalized nor updated and will therefore need to be revised in the light of new initiatives under the UNFCCC such as the SNC, NAPA, and PACC.

3.2.4 The Revised Solomon Islands Code of Logging Practice

Large scale logging which is continuing at unsustainable levels continues to be the major causes of land degradation in the Solomon Islands. The government had finalized a logging code of conduct in 1996 after extensive consultation with communities, forest industry, NGOs and other stakeholders to help address many of the negative effects of this destructive industry. The code incorporates best practice within the forest industry and promotes high environmental standards. In terms of land degradation and the objectives of the convention, the code has a land use management requirement and hopes to minimize soil damage (erosion, compaction, fertility decline); prevent downstream flooding due to increased run off; prevent land slips; maintain stream systems and water quality, marine and freshwater aquatic habitats, forests habitats and its regeneration capacity, and rare species and biodiversity.

In 2002, the government revised the 1996 code and came up with a new revised code. The revised code focuses on key standards which have been identified as the highest priority. These include the following: guidelines for harvesting protected and exclusion areas, location of roads and landings, width of roadlines, rules for roading, landing size, felling and skidding within buffers, temporary crossings, rules for skidding, maximizing log value and avoidance of timber wastes, weather restrictions, decommissioning of skid tracks, landings and log ponds; and monitoring of logging operations.

Additional standards were said to be added to improve the quality of logging operations in the country. The lack of capacity continues to plague the Department of Forestry in terms of field monitoring and evaluation of the industry's compliance to the code as well as enforcement of relevant regulation and legislation and which of course contributes and further leads to increased degradation of the forest and land degradation.

3.2.5 National Forest Policy Statement

The Solomon Islands forestry sector has become the most significant revenue earner for the country basically through round log exports. The log exports came from the logging of the natural forest which itself has become a great concern. The responsibility for the management of forest rests with the Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation. Due to the concerns on the unsustainable harvesting of country's natural forest, the government then adopted a forest policy statement which it hoped would enable it to exert some control especially on the commercial harvest of the natural forest. The policy statement adopted the following five major policy areas:

- To adopt a long term view of the forestry sector,
- To protect future economic forestry options as a basis for sustainable economic growth,
- To facilitate and promote increased local level participation in forestry administration, harvesting and resource replenishment,
- To promote strong support for the protection of the environment and ecological sustainability, and
- To leave commercial scale plantation development and sawn timber production as decisions for the private sector to make.

3.2.6 Agricultural Rural Development Strategy (ARDS)

A major study focusing on small holder rural production has been completed with assistance from the World Bank. Further assessment work is currently ongoing which will hopefully contribute towards the formulation of an agricultural rural development strategy and probably relate to the strategies of the NERRDP or any new plan that might succeed it. In terms of the NERRDP, this will relate to the fourth key strategic or priority area on the revitalization of the productive sector and rebuilding of supporting infrastructure.

The Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (ARDS) is being prepared by the DNPAC, DAL, MPGCD in partnership with donors which are mainly The World Bank, EU and AusAID. It is being prepared to identify a programme of reforms, investment and other initiatives to revitalize the rural economy. The majority of rural households depend on subsistence agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for their livelihood. The ARDS will have a Rural Development Program (RDP) component whose main objective is to increase the participation of the rural people in sustainable economic development in order to increase the level of security of their livelihood. The RDP focuses on five main areas:

- Support for the delivery of rural services and infrastructure in the provinces
- Support for village development
- Strengthening the institutional framework for agricultural development
- Support for agricultural and rural innovation, and
- The management, monitoring and evaluation of the RDP

The approach of the ARDS and its RDP is to strengthen provincial government and public administration to improve rural service delivery through more participatory and bottom approaches. There is a need to support the partnership between the governments, sector agencies, rural communities and service providers and to progressively improve and bring coherence into the framework for the delivery of rural services.

The formulation of the ARDS and its RDP follows on from some major study carried into various aspects of agriculture in the rural areas. Even though the ARDS itself is still to be finalized and the RDP is yet to be developed, it is expected that the ARDS will have direct impacts or relevance on UNCCD issues as there is the basic aim to promote economic activities which means more use of the land and its resources.

3.2.7 National Transport and Infrastructure Development Plan (NTIDP)

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Development (MID) has finalized a National Transport and Infrastructure Development Plan (NTIDP). Transport and infrastructures are essential pre-requisites for all national developmental purposes. In terms of the NERRDP, the role of the transport and infrastructure sector is especially relevant on the fourth and fifth Key Strategic Areas referred to in section six which are on revitalization of the productive sector and rebuilding of supporting infrastructures; and the restoration of basic social services and fostering of social developments.

The vision of the NTIDP states, “Sustained economic growth and social development in the Solomon Islands supported by effective infrastructure and transport services”. Its mission states, “to enhance the prosperity and participation of the community by providing an

integrated, efficient and affordable infrastructure and transport system supported by ethical, professional and valued staff”.

The policies as contained in the plan are as follows:

- to determine clear priorities for investment in, and maintenance of, infrastructure and transport services to meet the economic, social and security needs of the country and all its people,
- to recognize and provide for the special needs of the disabled, of poor communities and HIV/AIDS issues,
- to provide for effective and efficient regulation and private and management of transport infrastructure and services by the public and private sector as most appropriate,
- to establish dependable, adequate and predictable funding mechanisms for transport infrastructure maintenance, rehabilitation and development
- to establish maintenance of government owned infrastructure and mobile equipment (road vehicles, marine vessels and aircraft) as a routine activity,
- to ensure rehabilitation, reconstruction and development of transport sector infrastructure serves the social, economic and security development needs of the nation
- to provide financial assistance for sustaining essential transport services which cannot be provided on a commercial basis,
- to implement measures to improve the safety, quality and reliability of transport services being provided,
- to ensure that communities in all provinces are provided with transport infrastructure and services on an equitable basis,
- to ensure that transparency and accountability to all the nations people are introduced with respect to investment and maintenance decisions made by SIG.

As can be seen from the above in the transport sector, there is going to be increase roads and wharves etc to stimulate economic growth through out the country. This means increasing issues for the UNCCD and thereby the need to put in place relevant national plans. There is also a need for the implementers of such sectoral national plans to be aware of relevant UNCCD issues that affects their areas of responsibilities.

3.2.8 WWF Forests Strategy for Solomon Islands 2006 -2011

In 2005, WWF formulated what it called a Forest Strategy for Solomon Islands and has approved funding under the Stabex arrangements to fund the activities of the strategy. In the absence of any formal sizable assistance programme for conservation, this will be the most significant assistance ever given to conservation under any nationally determined arrangements.

The goal of the strategy is to support Solomon Island peoples to conserve biodiversity and to ensure sustainable forest management through the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and improved forest governance. The strategy is based on three thematic areas: Protected areas, Sustainable Forests Management through Market Mechanisms and Community Enterprise, and Forest Governance.

The theme on protected areas will involve establishment of a network of protected areas at the community level. The second theme on sustainable forest management will focus on

harnessing market mechanisms to promote sustainable forest management. The third theme on forests governance will strengthen forest governance in collaboration with other partners and targets four main geographic areas: Kolombangara-Vila River Catchment to Coastal Zone at Ringi, Tetepari- Hele Islands Complex, Mt. Maetambe-South Choiseul Forests Complex, Bauro Highlands and Three Sisters-Makira Province, and Komarindi Catchment on Guadalcanal.

4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO IMPLEMENT CCD

4.1 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1.1 Environment Act 1998

After five years, it was enacted by parliament in 1998, the Environment Act was finally gazetted in 2003. Whilst legally establishing the Environment and Conservation division with defined functions, the Act focuses on development control through an established EIA process, and the control of pollution. The Act also establishes an Environmental Advisory Committee whose function is to advise the Division on environment and conservation matters referred to it by the Director or the Minister. It also requires that a State of the country's Environment report be produced every three years to be submitted for parliament debate.

In considering the controls in development activities and for purposes of pursuing sustainable development, the Act incorporates four basic sustainable development principles: the precautionary principle; fairness to future generations; conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity; and improved valuation and pricing of environmental resources. Even though seen as being mostly reactive, the Act is also proactive in that it can issue advice and performance targets to public authorities in respect of matters that may have direct or indirect bearing on the functions of the division.

The Act is a powerful Act as it prevails in circumstances where there are inconsistencies with other Acts. The regulations to the Act are yet to be completed and enforcement issues have not improved due to reduced capacity within the ECD and the lack of resources. Despite these current weaknesses the Act potentially remains one of the key pieces of legislation that can effectively address UNCCD issues.

4.1.2 The Forestry Bill 2004

The Forestry Bill 2004 is a draft bill that has been the result of more than two decades of efforts to put in place a new law to replace the outdated and now commonly unpopular Forest and Timber Utilisation Act 1969 and all its confused amendments which has been the main source of all the problems currently experienced in the forestry industry. The Forestry Bill 2004 provides for the conservation of forests and the improved management of forest resources, control of timber harvesting, encouragement and facilitation of sustainable forestry activities, establishment of plantations, and, domestic processing of timber. The most relevant UNCCD requirements of the bill, *inter alia*, is the requirement for the establishment of national forests and forest reserves.

Even though the bill has been subjected to considerable public consultation, it has been seen as lacking satisfactory landowner consultation, and thus has been perceived as lacking local ownership as well, as it has been driven too much by foreigners. It has therefore suffered undue political dissection.

4.1.3 Wildlife Management and Protection Act 1998

The Wildlife Management and Protection Act 1998 provides for the protection, conservation and management of wildlife in Solomon Islands by regulating the export and import of

certain animals and plants. It also enables Solomon Islands to comply with the obligations under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). One of the features of the act is that it also provides the opportunity for the development of species management plans which can include the protection of a specie habitat.

The required regulations of the Act are yet to be developed and therefore the act is yet to be effectively implemented. Otherwise, capacity issues within the ECD add understandable difficulties in terms of its implementation. Whilst the acts' main aim is to enable Solomon Islands comply with CITES, the country is yet to become a party to the convention. This however does not mean that Solomon Islands is not complying to CITES requirements as it is currently doing so.

4.1.4 Lands and Titles Act 1970

The Land and Titles Act 1970 is one of the old Acts that is still one of the most important pieces of legislation in Solomon Islands. It covers the management of land, especially crown land, but is also applicable in certain circumstances in non crown land. The Act has been reviewed and a draft bill is being circulated for consultation.

4.1.5 Town and Country Planning Act 1979

The Town and Country Planning Act 1979 apply only to urban areas. This covers Honiara, the capital city and the provincial towns. The Act operates on the basis of specific planning functions which have been devolved to the Honiara and Provincial Town and Country Planning Boards (TCPB). The TCPBs have been given power under the Act to plan as well as manage urban and rural planning. They are also responsible for controlling the development of acquired lands.

4.1.6 Fisheries Act 1998

The Fisheries Act 1998 provides the legal framework for fisheries management and development in Solomon Islands. Its main objective is to ensure the long term conservation and the sustainable utilization of the fishery resources of Solomon Islands for the benefit of Solomon Islanders. The Act is one of the new legislations that were developed in the late nineties and integrates sustainable development principles. The required regulations have been drafted and are undergoing vetting but are still to be finalized.

Some of the requirements of the Act which are relevant to UNCCD issues include the opportunity to develop Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Coastal Management Plans. The Act however faces major implementation constraints which are not only administrative but also legal.

4.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

As a global multilateral environmental agreement or convention, the UNCCD has established requirements for institutional and administrative arrangements at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels. As with other similar MEAs, the global institutional and administrative arrangements are more effective than the national arrangements. The required national arrangements in Solomon Islands are discussed below.

4.2.1 UNCCD National Focal Point

As the government agency responsible for attending to the matters relating to the development of the UNCCD during the multilateral negotiations that eventually saw the conclusion and adoption of the convention at the international level and being the government agency responsible for environmental matters, the Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation, remains designated as the National Focal Point. Since 1999 when the Solomon Islands acceded to the convention, the Director of the ECD was designated the National Focal Point, as the division responsible for all substantive matters of the convention. A new Permanent Secretary of DFEC who came in 2004, shifted that function to himself following advice from a former foreign Environment Manager in the UNDP Honiara sub-office. Since that Permanent Secretary has now left, arrangements are now underway to designate a new National Focal Point which is now preferred to be the ECD again.

4.2.2 National Executing Agency

Even though the Department of Forests, Environment and Conservation has been recognized as the appropriate government agency to perform the functions of the National Focal Point, it is also understood that other government departments do have the mandate to perform other statutory functions relevant to the requirements of the convention. One such agency is the DAL, especially in the thematic area of land degradation and drought, and their national functions in land use planning and management. The DAL has therefore been designated the main National Executing Agency for UNCCD matters and given the responsibility to execute projects proposed under the thematic area of land degradation. As the national executing agency, the DAL is expected to work closely with the NFP especially in considering proposals and implementation of projects.

4.2.3 National Steering Committee

The Solomon Islands has yet to produce a National Action Plan for Land Degradation and Drought and has hence not established any National Coordinating Body as required. A National Steering Committee (NSC) is envisaged as an equivalent body to take up the functions of an NCB for the time being whilst the NAP is being developed. The NSC or any similar mechanism will be established to provide oversight for any projects under the UNCCD. Whilst there is yet to be established a formal body, the current practice of having an *ad hoc* coordinating mechanism such as that established under the NCSA project is preferred as experience has shown that such bodies established under such *ad hoc* arrangements seem to be working effectively. It is hoped that the body will work closely with national coordinators and consultants engaged by projects in providing policy guidance. The members of the NSC are hoped to be drawn from relevant government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, provinces and communities.

4.2.4 GEF National Operational Focal Point (GEF-OFP)

The GEF-OFP is part of the global institutional arrangements of the GEF at the national level and has a critical role to play in the implementation of the UNCCD as the GEF has been designated as its Financial Mechanism. The Operational Strategy of the GEF had always

included Land Degradation and Drought as one of its major operational focal area and thereby the direct linkage between the Financial Mechanism and the convention.

The role of the GEF-OFP is in the most part technical than administrative and thereby the need to ensure that the GEF-OFP is vested in an institution that is well versed with the GEF and its functions and procedures. Any institution, agency, or officer designated as the GEF-OFP must also have satisfactory understanding of the issues, processes, procedures, programmes etc of the other treaties whose financial mechanism is the GEF. These others are UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, CBD and its Cartagena Protocol, Stockholm (POPS) Convention and Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances.

In 2004, the then Permanent Secretary of DFEC shifted the function of the GEF-OFP from the Director of ECD, to himself. In less than a year in 2005, the GEF-OFP was then moved to the Permanent Secretary of the DNPAC under its Aid Coordination port folio. There has been some confusion though on the rationale for the relocation of the GEF-OFP to the DNPAC and efforts have been initiated to shift the focal point back to the ECD due to a number of issues which have been of concern to the DFEC and other main players of convention related focal areas including focal points.

4.2.5 Resources

Issues relating to resources are common through the government system in Solomon Islands and nothing much has changed since the last national report. In fact two of the key agencies involved in UNCCD implementation have suffered institutional capacity problems. The ECD has suffered reduced capacity due to staff turn over and termination. DAL has also been affected by similar problems including the “disappearance” of the Land Use Planning division with no single officer having any responsibility on land use planning. DAL is currently working to re-establish the unit.

In terms of financial resources, the Solomon Islands situation has not improved since the last report as it is still in a post conflict situation. Whilst the current RAMSI efforts has made tremendous improvement in terms of general financial management, the gains are yet to be seen in the agencies dealing with UNCCD issues. However, indication of increasing support to human resources in relation to these agencies may be starting to show signs of improvement in that perspective. Such indications have been a positive practice in the past and as long as there is no increase in the number of officers in the concerned agencies, that support would remain merely indicative. The responsible agencies and organization need to pursue and advocate the need to recruit more staff as there is also an increase in the number of new graduates in the field who should be taken in to assist.

Resources accorded to NGOs dealing with UNCCD related issues is different from state related agencies as donors increase support to non state actors in some focal areas and in many ways prefer to sideline government and provincial authorities to implement activities on the ground. The EU and AusAID have now provided direct funding to NGOs or non state actors. The Solomon Islands government has now started the process to benefit from the GEF Small Grant Programme as it was previously not included as a beneficiary of the scheme.

4.2.6 Research and Technology

The Solomon Islands still has very few institutions involved in UNCCD relevant research. With the destruction of the Agricultural Research facility at Dodo Creek on East Guadalcanal, there is little left in terms of the most relevant research on UNCCD issues. Some agencies and organizations however continue to collect relevant data and carry out research. The Meteorological service continues to collect rainfall and other weather data. Water resources division does some specific work on water monitoring and assessment. The Research section of the Fisheries division still does collect data relating to specific projects especially on coastal resources. The World Fish Center at Gizo in the Western Province concentrates on research on coastal fisheries resources. The environmental health division does have some assessment and monitoring capacity in terms of water quality assessment. Some NGOs have also established some monitoring capability in project related sites and do collect relevant data. This includes the major work on Tetepari Islands by WWF and the Tetepari Descendants Association (TDA) who have established some research and monitoring capability at Tetepari in the Western province.

There is no relevant national research programme due basically to the lack of resources and weak capacity at all levels. Most research work done at present are on an *ad hoc* basis and are project based. Their focus on specific project objectives however effectively serves to achieve those objectives. In the absence of any national research programmes, the current project based research is the only effective approach to conducting any research in the country as these are also mostly funded with outside assistance. Independent researchers from overseas research institutions and universities have also filled the gap on any formal national research programmes and have continued to add new knowledge to the country which otherwise could have not have happened due to resources constraints. The current NCSA effort has identified and confirmed these capacity issues and will need to formulate focused strategic plans to address current weaknesses in national research capabilities.

Within the reporting period a number of major research and survey work were carried out in the country. A nation wide marine assessment work was carried out in 2004 and provided much needed and new information on the marine species of the country. The work actually recognized the Solomon Islands marine biodiversity and included it as part of the ‘Coral Triangle’ group. This work was carried out under a cooperation project involving NGOs, government agencies and communities. The University of Queensland carried out some major work focusing on the Marovo lagoon in the New Georgia group. The WWF have a research base that focuses its work on Tetepari Island. A Danish expedition is currently underway focusing on terrestrial fauna. The Bismark Solomon Seas Ecoregion (BSSE) project is currently focusing it survey work on marine turtles.

4.2.7 Information Storage and Management

The storage and management of information continues to be a hurdle to the effective implementation of all policies, programmes, strategies etc in the country. Since the last report there has not been much improvement except that the AusAID funded project Solomon Islands (SISLAP) has established probably the most relevant information system as far as UNCCD issues are concerned. Government agencies and other organizations continue to collect and store information in their files, libraries or store rooms but most of these are not managed and continue to add difficulties to providing the basis for sound and effective decision making in all areas where such information are required.

As stated in the last national report valuable information related to the UNCCD were lost in the Agricultural Research facility destroyed in the tension. The DAL is initiating efforts to re-establish the research facility probably at a new site and reactivate the research sub stations through out the provinces. It is also initiating efforts to retrieve copies of the work done in the country and stored in data bases outside the country. Regional databases have relevant information relating to countries and have always provided necessary back up support and should be continued to be supported and used as a safe repository of national information. Efforts is urgently needed to train relevant officers on how to manage information and especially in managing departmental libraries and resource centres and how to effectively use information for decision making.

4.2.8 Linkages with Regional Programmes and Initiatives

The most relevant regional organizations providing linkages to UNCCD issues though their regional programmes are the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Pacific GeoScience Commission and the Pacific Commission. All of these regional organizations are members of the umbrella body, the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) where much effort has also been targeted at addressing issues of linkages at the regional level to ensuring the same at the national level. In fact the issue of linkages between regional and national programmes is tangibly direct as most regional programmes target needs of member countries of the CROP agencies.

One of the arrangements for effectively linking regional and national programmes is through the national focal point system where a specific national agency is designated the national focal point for a regional agency and ensures that regional programmes are linked to national needs and programmes, policies, strategies or programmes. The National Focal Points for these regional agencies have the important role of ensuring linkages, complimentarity, harmonization, effectiveness, etc of regional policies and programmes at the national level.

A number of relevant regional programmes have been implemented or are being designed and have direct linkages to the countries including Solomon Islands. Some of these are: International Waters Programme (IWP); Pacific Regional Agricultural Programme; Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific; FAO Regional Food Security Programmes; Invasive species programme; Pacpol; Sea Level Rise and Climate Change Monitoring; PACC; and Waste Management Programmes

5 MEASURES UNDERTAKEN OR PLANNED TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE AND REHABILITATE DEGRADED LAND

5.1 MAINSTREAMING OF CCD ISSUES INTO PLANNING PROCESSES

Mainstreaming of UNCCD issues into the planning processes continues to be a challenge as economic recovery and reconstruction continues to take precedence over environmental considerations in post conflict Solomon Islands. Despite the persistent advocacy by environmental groups, IGOs, Multilateral agencies, Regional organizations etc, there is no indication of any drastic change for immediate improvement, especially at the national planning level. This has been made worse by the lack of appraisal of development programmes and projects for environmental considerations at the national planning level.

The opportunities for mainstreaming however exists and are happening more at the sectoral planning level than at the national planning level. These include the mainstreaming of the relevant issues into the sectoral strategies, corporate plans and work programmes of the relevant departments. The last development plan (NERRDP) which is the key national planning document has a number of relevant strategies, policy actions and outcomes under the Departments of Agriculture and Livestock; Forestry Environment and Conservation; Fisheries and Marine Resources; Energy, Mines and Water Resources, Lands and Survey; Culture and Tourism; Home Affairs (National Disaster Council), and Infrastructure and Development.

The mainstreaming of relevant CCD issues is even happening further at the sectoral level with the departments own corporate plans and work programmes. For instance, one of the DALs' relevant key actions in its corporate plan is the revival of the Land Use Planning division and the planned production of land use plans. Under Forestry, amongst a number of key strategies of successive governments has been one to put in place a moratorium on the issuing of new logging licences but which has been legally difficult because no one in the government, including the Commissioner of Forests or the Minister of DFEC has any power to stop the issuing of new logging license. The Lands and Survey has a number of strategies focusing on land reform issues and is currently implementing exactly the required actions. Most of the relevant departments have strategies for strengthening their capacities and review of their existing legislative frameworks so as to allow changes for harmonization, complimentarity and to accommodate new issues. These are all part of mainstreaming. Whether these strategies are implemented is the real issue though.

Many NGOs do have their own programmes that mainstream the relevant issues into their work programmes. Most environmental NGOs as we know have a basic aim on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and many have very good concrete examples. Examples from WWF include the BSSE programme, the Tetepari initiative and the new Forestry Strategy. The TNC/SIG has the Arnavon Island programme and new initiatives on Choiseul and Isabel provinces. The CI and Makira Conservation Foundation have the Makira Highlands Conservation programme. The LMMA initiative by NGOs and Communities has been gaining momentum. ECANSI has been running a forestry programme to develop management plans for communities. SIDT has been a running a number of relevant programmes including an ecoforestry programme. One of the newest and strong

NGO, the Kastom Garden has been focusing on food security issues and is becoming one of the main players in the communities amongst the grassroots.

Existing legislation do provide the opportunity for mainstreaming and one needs to examine the existing legislation to use what opportunities there are for mainstreaming UNCCD issues. The EIA requirements of the Environment Act and Mines and Minerals Act provide the opportunities for mainstreaming of relevant CCD issues in relation to specific projects. The most practical and urgent thing to do in terms of addressing UNCCD issues and for any other environmental matters is to explore the opportunities in existing legislation instead of coming up with new ones that will take years to promulgate.

5.2 STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL CAPACITY

The effective implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements at the national level is a direct function of a strong and effective national capacity. National capacity in the Solomon Islands situation must encompass the total capacity within the country, and apart from the capacity of government and its parastatals, must include the capacity of the private sector, NGOs, CBOs, communities and individuals. As a Least Developed Country (LDC) affected by some years of an ethnic tension and still in a post conflict situation, national capacity of the Solomon Islands has been on the decline due mainly to the declining ability of government to provide the necessary resources. Since the last national report, though, things have improved due to the return of peace and law and order through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

The various assistance programmes of RAMSI and other bilateral and multilateral donors have achieved notable strides in improving the national circumstances enabling the rebuilding of capacity. This seems to play a role in the proliferation of organizations including NGOs and CBOs involved in relevant programmes. There is also an increased recognition of the services provided by NGOs and CBOs by donors. There is also increasing support to otherwise moribund government agencies. As already mentioned, the DAL is now committed to reviving the land use planning division. A number of government agencies have undergone some kind of institutional capacity review and reorganization. This includes the institutional review of the ECD by SPREP.

Many convention-related enabling activities have been completed or are ongoing and have definitely added to strengthening the capacity of relevant organizations involved. These include the International Waters Programme, UNFCCC Second National Communications, National Adaptation Programme of Action, and the National Biosafety Framework project. Many of these activities involved government and NGO stakeholders and has certainly contributed to developing their capacities.

One of the major enabling activities that is currently underway is the multifocal programme on National Capacity Self Assessment which has been generating much valuable information and will provide the basis for the country to identify its priority areas for capacity building in relation to the requirements of the conventions (CBD, FCC, CCD). The development of the MSP on Sustainable Land Management promises to be one of the key interventions in the area of land degradation and will help to provide significant improvement to national capacity. The required UNCCD NAP is yet to be produced but is said to be produced concurrently with SLM work. A country environmental analysis completed by ADB in 2005 focused on mainstreaming environmental considerations in economic and development

planning processes. The work identified mainstreaming issues and key areas where mainstreaming could focus on. It is the country's hope that the ADB follows up with tangible programmes on mainstreaming and not just on producing study reports.

5.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF FINANCIAL MECHANISM

Solomon Islands has not established any financial mechanisms to directly fund activities of the UNCCD. The still to be developed National Action Plan could address this issue further. The implementation of the SLM project might also be an effective vehicle to promote the concept of a financing mechanism establishment. The government and other stakeholders do provide resources, however meager it may be to relevant agencies involved in relevant UNCCD issues. Concerted efforts are required to follow up on the issue if it does receive any support. Some sectors have already started some efforts in setting similar arrangements but focusing on issues relevant to their own sectors.

5.4 STRENGTHEN EXISTING COORDINATING MECHANISM

Coordinating mechanisms are still weak across the national systems in Solomon Islands even though the issue has been a long time concern for all levels of government and the public. It is one of the inherent weaknesses in the system and has been one of the factors that affects the implementation of policies, strategies and programmes at all levels of government. The weakness can be seen both in terms of horizontal and vertical coordination.

Efforts have been ongoing to address the issue but it seems that those efforts have not gone far enough or have not been followed through at all. Some of the examples include the establishment of government coordinating bodies such as the Permanent Secretaries Seminar, Permanent Secretary Cluster groups, Under Secretary Forum etc. At the sectoral or project level, the project coordinating committees have been the most effective to date.

The national coordination arrangements for the UNCCD is for the time being, the most practical. This is where the National Focal Point remains in the DFEC and the DAL is designated the executing agency and provides technical back up to the NFP and the GEF-OFP. This is still a new arrangement and should be reviewed at the relevant time. There is still need to link up with other stakeholders and a mechanism needed to be put in place to allow this to happen. The SLM project could provide the best opportune time to address the issue. The Environment Advisory Committee to be established under the Environment Act could play such a role. Otherwise, the newly established body SISDAC could also be another body that could be used to strengthen the coordination mechanism. The SISDAC is however not a properly thought out idea pushed by foreigners and has yet to start any work since its establishment.

5.5 ESTABLISH SYNERGIES BETWEEN CCD AND RELEVANT CONVENTION INITIATIVES

In the Solomon Islands this is promoted through the Convention National Focal Points which for UNCCD and UNCBD is the DFEC and for UNFCCC is the Meteorological Service. Due to the size of the department responsible for administering the conventions, these two NFPs are constantly interacting on all convention initiatives. They also interact with the GEF-OFPs. The current GEF-OFP needs to strengthen its liaison and coordination with the convention focal points and the responsible departments and agencies.

The NFPs would be the ones responsible for all national convention initiatives and would lead or manage the implementation of activities. They would also be part of all or most project coordinating committees of the convention related activities which provide the main linkage between the NFP and the convention related projects or programmes.

The following projects are examples of relevant convention initiatives which are mainly GEF funded and coordinated through specific project coordinating committees: International Waters Programme, National Capacity Self Assessment and National Biosafety Framework. The NFPs as said, attend to most project coordinating committees as chairman or as a member and do provide that synergy role. The SISDAC has also been recommended to provide the central coordinating role between the conventions but has yet to start its responsibilities and its continuing existence seems in doubt.

APPENDIX - UNCCD country profile

This UNCCD country profile has been provided by:

Department of Forestry, Environment and Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources

Date: 27th November 2006

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Biophysical indicators relating to desertification and drought

1. Climate

1.1. Index of aridity ¹	N/A
1.2. Normal rainfall	3028mm/yr
1.3. Rainfall standard deviation	N/A

Sub-national areas	
1. Henderson Airport	1811mm
2. Kira Kira, Makira/Ulawa Province	3472mm
3. Lata Station, Temotu Province	3375mm
4. Munda, Western Province	3703mm
5. Guadalcanal Province	1905mm
6. Auki Station, Malaita Province	3123mm

2. Vegetation and land use

2.1. NDVI (normalized difference vegetation index)	N/A
2.2. Vegetation cover (% of total land area)	86%
2.3. Land use (percent of total land)	

Land use	1990 – 1999	2000 – 2005
Arable crop land	2%	2%
Irrigated	N/A	N/A
Rainfed	N/A	N/A
Pasture	1.4%	1.4%
Forest and woodland	21%	21%
Other land	5%	5%

2.4. Surface albedo²: N/A

¹ The index of aridity is the ratio P/PET; P=precipitation, PET=potential evapotranspiration. Climatic zone maps to be annexed if available in a scale of 1/million

² Surface albedo map to be annexed if available

3. Water resources

3.1. Fresh water availability (million m ³)	44,700,000m ³
3.2. Fresh water resources per capita (m ³)	93,405,000m ³
3.3. Agricultural water use (million m ³)	0.1m ³
3.4. Industrial water use (million m ³)	1,602,312 m ³

4. Energy

Consumption

4.1. Energy use per capita (kg oil equivalent)	150-200 kg oil eq./capita
4.2. Agricultural energy use per hectare (millions of BTU)	436 million of BTU/ha

Production

4.3. Energy from renewables excluding combustible renewables and waste (% of total supply)	5%
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Renewables - Consumption by sector

4.4. Industry (% of total renewable consumption)	10%
4.5. Residential (% of total renewable consumption)	89%
4.6. Agriculture (% of total renewable consumption)	1%

5. Types of land degradation

Type of degradation	1990 – 1999		2000 – 2005	
	million ha	Percent of total area	million ha	Percent of total area
Deforestation	596,000	21%	596,000	21%
Water erosion	n/a		n/a	n/a
Riverbank erosion	n/a		n/a	n/a
Soil fertility loss	n/a		n/a	n/a
Water logging	n/a		n/a	n/a
Salinization	n/a		n/a	n/a
Loss of cover	n/a		n/a	n/a
Sediment Choking of rivers and waterways	n/a		n/a	n/a
Sediment depositions on productive land etc	n/a		n/a	n/a

6. Rehabilitation

Lands under rehabilitation	1990 - 1999	2000 - 2005
Rehabilitation of degraded crop land (km ²)	n/a	n/a
Rehabilitation of degraded rangeland (km ²)	n/a	n/a
Rehabilitation of degraded forest (km ²)	n/a	n/a

Socio-economic indicators related to desertification and drought

7. People and economy

7.1. Population (total)	533,672
.. Population: urban (percent of total)	16%
.. Population: rural (percent of total)	84%
7.2. Population growth (annual %)	2.8%
7.3. Life expectancy (years)	61.1yrs
7.4. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	66
7.5. GDP (current US\$)	US\$340
7.6. GNI per capita (current US\$)	US\$57
7.7. National poverty rate (% of population)	23.2% (HDI)
7.8. Crop production (metric tons)	31,204mt
7.9. Livestock production (metric tons)	4242.37mt

8. Human development

8.1. Primary education completion rate (% age group)	47%
8.2. Number of women in rural development (total number)	N/A
8.3. Unemployment (% of total)	12%
8.4. Youth unemployment rate (age 15-24)	6%
8.5. Illiteracy total (% age 15 and above)	38%
8.6. Illiteracy male (% age 15 and above)	31%
8.7. Illiteracy female (% age 15 and above)	44%

9. Science and technology

9.1. Number of scientific institutions engaged in - World Fish Centre, Western Province Desertification-related work (total number)

10. Please specify the data sources

1. Statistic Office, Population report (1999)
2. Statistic Office, HIES 2005/6
3. CBSI, Annual Report 2005
4. Solomon Islands Human Development Report 2002, Honiara
5. Forestry Inventory Report 2003
6. Energy Division, Department of Mines and Energy, Ministry of Natural Resources, Honiara
7. Department of Meteorological Services
6. Earth Trends Country profile (<http://www.earthtrends.wri.org>)
7. Water and Food Security Country profiles of the FAO (<http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/water/default.asp?search=search&iso3SLB>)
8. AQUASTAT Information System on water and Agriculture Country Profiles (<http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/agricult/agi/agl/aquastat/countries/index.stm>)
9. http://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Solomon_Islands.htm