

# environment

Jan-Mar 2000  
NEWSLETTER

- Töpfer but not Good-bye ..... 1
- Trust Funds for Biodiversity Conservation ..... 2
- Dr Töpfer comments ..... 4, 5
- Marvellous Mangroves Logo and Slogan Competition ..... 6
- Australian funding for SPREP ..... 7
- International Waters project approved ..... 7
- SPREP Action Plan Reviewed ..... 8
- Regular Features**
- From the Director's desk ..... 3
- Special insert**
- Kiribati passes Environment Act**

## Töpfer but not Good-bye

*Aggie Gray's Hotel in Samoa is now officially recognised as one of the most famous hotels in the world. Its sisters in this family include the Ritz in London, Waldorf in New York and others. Equally as famous is the Samoan saying for Goodbye—"Tofa". Executive Director for the United Nations Environment Programme, Dr Klaus Töpfer (pronounced "tofa" in Samoan) came to Samoa and stayed at Aggie Gray's, and in the process tried to get a better idea on how one of its siblings is*



*making headlines, "...SPREP is one of the leading regional agencies around the world, especially with regard to small island states, it is very, very well known, and I believe the more inclined we are for the chance to get together with SPREP".*

*Dr Klaus Töpfer (middle) during his visit to SPREP recently.*

In 1972, UNEP played a major role in conceiving an environment programme for the Pacific. Twenty-eight years on, the embryo that was conceived later in 1982 has now grown into a technical entity where the advice and services it provides to its 22 Pacific island members is now globally recognised. Dr Töpfer's arrival together with Mr Nirmal Andrews

(UNEP's Asia Pacific Regional Director), provided a first hand opportunity for UNEP's Executive Director to experience first-hand the dynamics and directions of SPREP.

The chance to gauge the effectiveness of the organisation began with a half-hour

*continued on page 4*

*Planting a new beginning for UNEP and SPREP collaboration. Dr Töpfer plants while SPREP Director Tamari'i Tutangata and Samoa Environment Minister Hon. Tuala Tagaloa (second from left) look on.*  
Photo by Sue Rasmussen, Photocentre.



# Trust Funds for Biodiversity Conservation

*As a growing number of people are increasingly aware that the Pacific Islands region has more endangered and threatened species per head of population than anywhere else on the planet, conserving and managing the biodiversity on small islands holds a fundamental importance to Pacific islands people. This is because of the intimate nature that links their social, cultural, and economic well-being to the surrounding environment.*

*A mural combining the important biodiversity elements conserved in each of the 17 Conservation Areas under the SPBCP programme*

Designed by Michael von Reiche



The Pacific high islands support large blocks of intact rainforests, including many locally endemic species and communities of plants and animals. Dwelling within her national and international waters are the region's most extensive and diverse reefs, the largest tuna fishery, the deepest oceanic trenches and the healthiest remaining populations of many globally threatened species including whales, turtles, dugongs and saltwater crocodiles.

Over the last decade, 17 community-based land and marine conservation areas covering more than 1.6 million hectares have been established by the hard-working team from SPREP's South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP).

While the idea of a trust fund is not a new one having first been bounced around during the 1997 SPREP meeting in Pohnpei, the gut feeling amongst those on the SPBCP frontline is that with their programme due to wind down by the end of 2001, a Pacific Regional Biodiversity Trust Fund needs to be set up. This will ensure that the gains made thus far are maintained and enhanced in the 12 Pacific island countries in the programme. For that to happen an estimated US\$40 million dollars is needed for the trust. The proposal is based on 75 per cent funding

from the Global Environment Facility with co-financing from various sources making up the balance.

The aims of the trust are twofold. Firstly, it is intended to provide a secure mechanism for long-term financial and other support activities that either promote or achieve biodiversity conservation, or activities that manage biodiversity in a sustainable way within the Pacific. Secondly, the trust will operate in an independent manner promoting innovative conservation practices and lessons learned across the region, as well as assisting the incorporation of ongoing national conservation programmes.

To underline their reasons, SPBCP points to a number of important lessons learned:

- the effectiveness of the community based approach in delivering conservation outcomes;
- standard project funding is usually inadequate to support this approach;
- there are limits to the capacity of these projects to absorb large amounts of finance;
- the ongoing challenge is to mainstream these initiatives into national government development policies, plans, legislation and budget processes at all levels; and

- there is a need to continue to build on established partnerships in the Pacific region to deliver on community-based legislation.

So far the New Zealand government has provided part funding for the initial stages of the trust fund development. A steering committee has been established to drive the concept along, and establish some common ground over the trust's design and operation.

The plan is that the trust will be an independent legal entity, with a Board of Directors consisting of government and non-government members, and to operate independently of government control. To that end, SPREP will line up with everyone else to apply for support.

Because a number of national governments have limited revenue to build and operate their own trust funds, a regional trust would provide the best and most effective mechanism to support conservation says SPBCP. 🌐

For further information contact:  
Iosefatu (Joe) Reti  
SPBCP Project Manager  
SPREP  
PO Box 240  
Apia, Samoa  
joer@sprep.org.ws

# From the Director's Desk

## A Pacific "Meeting" on Climate Change

Pacific islanders were renowned as being amongst the greatest of all mariners. Sailing vast distances in their hand-crafted ocean voyaging canoes, they traversed great distances only with the stars as guides and an inherent instinct to be one with their environment. These great sailors, roaming the Pacific Ocean, were the sole custodians of the Pacific and its environment as it provided not only for their subsistence but was also a central element of their very identity, culture, traditions—part of the essence of their very existence.

To protect their interests, culture and traditions, Pacific islanders use the traditional fono (village council) to solve issues of concern and agree on strategies that will protect the interests of the community at large.

The "fono" decision-making process is a common element throughout the Pacific and has assisted in the protection of the village itself and its natural environment. This partly explains why Pacific islanders have been successful custodians of the Pacific's environment. Through their annual "fono" Pacific leaders have expressed their concern over the threat of Climate Change and the vulnerability of the Pacific's island states to the potential impacts of climate change and sea-level rise.

As part of their efforts in addressing this issue, the Pacific has decided to bring the "world" to a special Pacific "fono", the *Pacific Islands Conference on Climate Change, Variability and Sea Level*

*Rise* to be held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, next month (3-7 April 2000).

Climate change theory says that gases we put into the atmosphere help trap heat close to the earth's surface. This in turn warms up the sea causing a rise in sea-level. The process is more commonly known as the greenhouse gas effect.

For the 7.1 million of us living on islands in the world's biggest stretch of water, the spectre of being swamped by the very Pacific ocean that has defined and nurtured us for generations is unacceptable.

It is well known that the contribution of the Pacific islands in greenhouse gas emissions, by comparison to other regions is infinitesimal. It is equally well-known that the much acclaimed 1997 Kyoto Protocol is still a long way from coming into force with the key global powers still to ratify it. In seeking to accelerate the process of establishing more direct linkages between science and policy in the climate arena, the Conference in Rarotonga (coordinated by SPREP in collaboration with the National Tidal Facility, Flinders University of Australia, the United Nations Development Programme and Global Environment Facility, South Pacific Forum Secretariat, AusAID, USAID, and WMO)) will concentrate on three main issues. Experts and representatives of key climate-related organisations from around the globe actively participating including the Secretary-General of WMO; updates on the latest research and developments will be covered; and SPREP member country representatives

Mr Tutangata,  
Director of  
SPREP



will present what they see as being priority areas to be addressed for the Pacific islands.


The main task of the conference will be to develop an all inclusive Action Strategy. The idea is to develop a framework that is owned by all stakeholders so that research and policy can be better aligned. Several organisations are involved in Climate Change work in our region. SPREP is just one of them and hence the need for better coordination.

The world's climate scientists have already said human greenhouse gas emissions are having a discernable effect on global climate. While the Pacific does not have the expertise to say that the changes we are now experiencing are a direct result of green house gas emissions, we know that we are vulnerable now, and there is every chance the risks will only increase in the future.

Recent research carried out by the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation for SPREP shows that human greenhouse emissions up to 1995 have already built an inevitable 5-12 cm sea-level rise into natural systems. New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research says regional air temperatures have increased by 0.3-0.8 degrees Celsius last century, well ahead of global rates of warming.

The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change strengthens commitments by developed countries to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases.

As far as the Pacific is concerned the sooner countries start making the reduction they have committed to and accept that much stronger reductions will be needed. The better the Pacific's chances of surviving the next millenium. The time for action is now! For all of us.

The Rarotonga "fono" should provide the Pacific with a strategy and support from members of our global village in order for us to continue our role as custodians of our beloved Pacific. 



“We [UNEP] are based in downtown Nairobi in Kenya. When you walk down the street in Nairobi, you are not confronted with the problem of the environment, you are confronted with poverty—with POVERTY. The question of the people is not how to avoid climate change in ten, fifteen or twenty years, the question of the people is how do I keep my family alive for another day?”

### UNEP and SPREP history

As UNEP head, Dr Klaus Töpfer pointed out, UNEP along with several other Pacific organisations was instrumental in SPREP becoming the Pacific region’s environmental organisation.

There is also a personal side to the story. It was Töpfer’s grandfather, Klaus senior, who was charged by UNEP to set up many of the regional facilities\*.

The idea to form a regional group was bandied about in the 1970s during a World Conservation Union Conference in Noumea, New Caledonia.

In 1975, talks between UNEP and the the South Pacific Commission, now known as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, led to a conference in New Zealand that allowed political support for a regional approach to environmental issues to snowball. A year later in Apia, the *Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific Region*, was signed calling for the protection of the region’s natural environment.

During this decade, UNEP and regional agencies including the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation, now known as the Pacific Islands Forum; the SPC; and the UN’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), eventually became parents to an entity that has now developed into an independent intergovernmental organisation otherwise known as SPREP.

\*UNEP’s *Regional Seas Programmes* was instigated during Klaus senior’s time in each of the Globe’s regions to help protect the marine environment from marine pollution and land-based sources of pollution. Each regional seas programme is linked to a convention which gives the legal parameters and clout. In the Pacific’s case, SPREP is linked to the SPREP Convention. 🌐



*continued from page 1*

private talk with SPREP Director, Mr Tutangata; and later with divisional heads, project managers and project officers. The two hour brief covered some of the main areas of SPREP’s work. These include biodiversity; waste management and pollution prevention; information systems and technology; environmental conventions; capacity building; education; environmental management; and climate change.

Following the briefing and discussions, Dr Töpfer was generous in his summing up of the work being done, and about SPREP the organisation itself. “There are a lot of common possibilities for cooperation in the future, linked to the biodiversity topic, as a follow-up to funding for biodiversity, programmes via the GEF [Global Environment Facility], and other very important programmes linked also with climate change, the question of adaptations, studies of which are already underway with SPREP and a lot of other very important topics”.

At the end of Dr Töpfer’s brief visit, he not only participated in a tree-planting ceremony, but he also committed UNEP

to a new partnership with SPREP through an MOU. “The signing of the MOU is a way of saying that we are back”, said Dr Töpfer.

Mr Tutangata added, “These seeds mark the beginning of a new era in environmental cooperation between our two organisations. In the beginning UNEP played a vital role in SPREP’s foundation. We now look forward to working closer together to create a better environment now and into the future.”

Priorities in the MOU include closer cooperation on all environmental issues, financing of: conservation activities, regional climate change, and nature-based tourism.

As Dr Töpfer departed Samoa, it was not good-bye. Rather he and Mr Tutangata have improved the foundation and provided a clearer direction for environmental protection in the Pacific. They did this by fulfilling another principle in Pacific lore containing that famous word—tofa: “Tofa mamao ma le faautautaga loloto” or wisdom in the exercise of authority. 🌐



Dr Töpfer comments

## Climate Change

With climate change being one of the main environment issues in the Pacific, UNEP head Klaus Töpfer commented on his views on what needs to be done. He also offered a few personal insights into what he sees as the way ahead.

“With climate change and sea-level rise, I think we have to make extremely clear that there are two different parts. One part is that we have to do whatever is necessary to come to a mitigation about the climate threat. That is the question of stabilising and decreasing the greenhouse gas emissions. The greenhouse gases are the ones that are going steadily up, they are not stabilising. So the one topic is education. The other topic is adaptation and impact analysis, that is our main concern right now, and I know that is aligned to the expectation of SPREP, that we must be aware of what are the possible impacts of climate change, and what we can do to fight against this.

“That is not to disregard mitigation. If you mention adaptation they all directly echo ‘A ha!’ they are unable to fight against the emission of greenhouse gases so they simply ask for adaptation. That is not the [issue], therefore I mention the two pillars of our activity: mitigation and impact studies; and adaptation and it would really not be responsible if we are only linked with the mitigation topic and we have not learned from the countries activities in SPREP that we are absolutely in line with their expectations.”



Dr Töpfer comments

## The environment and poverty

*The question of the people is not how to avoid climate change in ten, fifteen or twenty years, the question of the people is how do I keep my family alive for another day?*

“We [UNEP] are based in downtown Nairobi in Kenya. When you walk down the street in Nairobi, you are not confronted with the problem of the environment, you are confronted with poverty—with POVERTY. The question of the people is not how to avoid climate change in ten, fifteen or twenty years, the question of the people is how do I keep my family alive for another day?”

“You can go wherever you want in the developing world and you face the same problem. So we learned very quickly that an isolated environment policy never can be successful. It must always be linked to the main topic, how to overcome poverty in the world. That is our concern.

“We must be aware of the whole scenario, that the most toxic substance in the world is poverty. The environment problems have two main reasons. One is the over consumption of a minority, which are the rich countries, and the other is the absolute poverty of the developing countries. So this is our, as you say, our philosophy. How to bridge the gap?”

Studio Azzuro



“Africa as a share of the global population is 14 per cent. In terms of greenhouse gas emission it has 3.2 per cent. But Africa is suffering most [because] of climate change. This is the same here in the small islands, exactly the same. Those that are not responsible for the situation, and not having the resources to fighting it, they are suffering

the most. And those responsible most for the reasons and having the resources are not suffering. So there is always this huge, huge chasm. That is also the explanation as to why we have a lot of problems in climate change. That is the centre of my conviction, of my dedication, as to why we have environment policy in the world.”



Cover of the brand new video produced by SPREP to promote awareness about the importance of mangroves and their current plight. The video will be officially launched on World Environment Day, 4 June 2000.

# Marvellous Mangroves Logo and Slogan Competition

*Pacific island countries are calling for measures to curb the rapidly disappearing mangrove forests across the region.*

In response, SPREP will be highlighting the plight of mangrove forests with a number of promotional awareness programmes.

SPREP's Wetlands Management Officer, Lucille Apis - Overhoff says, "Indifference towards the on-going destruction of mangroves is in part due to the public perception that mangroves are just ugly unproductive wastelands.

"The truth is they are crucial to the well being of our islands and people. For instance, the root system of mangroves act as a living sieve that traps soil and pollutants that might otherwise smother and kill our life giving coral reefs."

Commonly, mangroves in the region are the breeding grounds for many species of fish and prawns. However, the demand for housing and commercial development, particularly in expanding urban areas has led to the present declining situation.

SPREP's first mangrove promotion is a logo and slogan competition. The winning entries in each category will be published in SPREP's newsletter, and will also be the official logo and slogan for wetlands activities.

## ***Interesting side information about mangroves:***

Often the word most people associate with mangrove forests is "yuck!" This is because mangrove areas are usually seen as slimy, mosquito-infested, stinky, unproductive wastelands. But hang on a second ...

- Did you know that the root systems of mangroves act as a living sieve, trapping soil and pollutants that could otherwise smother and kill our life-giving coral reefs, or cover our beautiful beaches?
- Did you know mangroves act as living coastal barriers against rough seas, and that the bark and leaves of mangroves are prized for their medicinal purposes?
- Did you know that mangrove areas are breeding grounds and nursery areas for many fish and prawn species?

Mangroves play a major role in preventing tidal flooding, erosion, and salt intrusion into neighbouring areas.

They also stabilise shorelines. 

For further information contact:  
Wetlands Management Officer  
SPREP  
PO Box 240  
Apia, Samoa.  
Ph: (685) 2192  
Fax: (685) 20231  
Email: [lucille@sprep.org.ws](mailto:lucille@sprep.org.ws)

## Competition Details

The SPREP family of countries and islands wants everyone in your family to be a part of our drive to preserve the mangrove forests of the Pacific. To help us do that we've organised two fun competitions for the best mangrove logo, and the best mangrove slogan. As well as four cash prizes, the winning entries will become SPREP's official slogan and logo for all our mangrove conservation activities. It could be you!

### ***Theme***

Naturally the theme for the competition is Mangrove Conservation. To get some ideas and increase your chances of winning, read over the interesting article on *Marvellous Mangroves*, or head to the library. Still need more information? Then check out our SPREP website at [www.sprep.org.ws](http://www.sprep.org.ws)

### ***Logo competition details***

Okay, what we want is either a colour or black and white logo design on A4 (or bigger) paper. We've put up three great prizes in three age groups. The limit is one entry per person, so let the creative juices flow.

12 years and under: USD\$100 dollars

18 years and under: USD\$200 dollars

19 years and over: USD\$300 dollars

### ***Slogan competition details***

We need a cool A4 size slogan in either black and white or colour that captures what conserving mangroves is all about. Again, let your imagination run wild. The limit is one entry per person and we have one great prize of USD\$250 dollars.

**And don't forget, all ENTRIES CLOSE 1 MAY, and thereafter become the property of SPREP. We'll make sure all the winners get credited. Good luck and go for it!**

Post your entries with your address on the back to:

**Marvellous Mangroves Competition**  
c/o Wetlands Management Officer  
SPREP  
PO Box 240  
Apia, Samoa.

# Australian funding for SPREP

*Australia in January committed AUD3.3 million towards the operations and programmes of SPREP over the next three years.*



*Mrs Kathy Sullivan, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Mr Gerald Miles after signing the MOU.*

Before signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Australia and SPREP, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, stressed the important role played by SPREP in assisting the Pacific's efforts to protect its environment. She said one of the most important means of protecting the Pacific's environment is through education, and in particular, recognising the very active role played by women in this area.

"The on-going support and financial assistance of the Australian Government is of tremendous assistance to our work. It underpins much of our work to build ca-

capacity in the region" said Mr Gerald Miles, SPREP's Officer in Charge at the time.

Part of the money for 2000 will go towards SPREP's Core Budget to help cover operating expenses. The balance will go towards activities in environmental education, waste management, coastal management, wetlands and mangrove protection, links between tourism and the environment and support to governments at international environment negotiations.

Australia has also played an important catalytic role in the financing and establishment of the new headquarters for the organisation at Vailima. The new SPREP Centre is due to be completed by July 2000. 🌐

## International Waters project approved

*One of the biggest environment projects ever undertaken in the Pacific—the Strategic Action Programme for International Waters of the Pacific Islands Region (SAP) was signed in Apia on 16 February 2000. The project is set-up to help manage Pacific islands coastal and watershed resources. With a GEF/UNDP input of US\$12 million, the five-year project is executed by SPREP in partnership with other regional organisations: SPC, SOPAC and FFA.*



*1. the documents and 2. the players (UNDP Resident Representative, Apia, Mr Serge Ducasse and Tamari'i Tutangata)*

"The SAP is a pioneer effort in several respects: it is the first SAP for islands, and the first for international waters not only in the Pacific, but also the other three oceans (the other international waters SAPs are for the Black Sea, the Danube River Basin, and the Red Sea), said SPREP's Director, Mr Tutangata. "It is innovative in its development process and in its explicit structure around holistic, linked watershed, inshore and offshore governance and management".

Actions will focus on freshwater supplies including groundwater, improvement and development of Marine Protected Areas, integrated coastal management including tourism development, activities to dem-

onstrate waste reduction strategies, and the Western Pacific Warm Pool ecosystem, whose boundaries correspond almost precisely to the Western Pacific Tuna fishery. Of economic importance, the project will address the possible benefits to the local economy of the US\$1.7 billion a year commercial tuna catch. Currently only one-per cent enters the local economy.

Pacific countries involved are the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanutu. 🌐

### Goal of the SAP

Integrated sustainable development and management of International Waters

### Priority Concerns

- Degradation of water quality
- Degradation of associated critical habitats
- Unsustainable use of resources

### Imminent Threats

- Pollution from land-based activities
- Modification of critical habitats
- Unsustainable exploitation of resources

### Ultimate Root Causes

Management deficiencies

- governance
- understanding

### Solutions

- Integrated Coastal and Watershed Management (ICWM)
- Oceanic Fisheries Management (OFM)

### Targeted actions

- management/institutional strengthening
- capacity-building
- awareness/education
- research/information for decision-making
- investment



## The Review Process

### Outputs

- 1 Review the implementation of the Action Plan (1997-2000); and
- 2 Draft Action Plan (2001-2004)

### Scope of country consultations (February to July)

In-country consultations with as many member countries as is technically and financially feasible between February and April 2000. These consultations will require a maximum of 3 days. Countries will be visited by a team comprising SPREP's management. Management and staff for detailed consultations aimed at securing views on the future direction of SPREP, its members and the Secretariat.

The country visits and consultations will involve:

- An Introductory meeting with senior representatives of the National and Project Focal Points;
- Courtesy Calls to Prime Ministers, Ministers of Environment, Economic and Trade Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and key sectoral Ministers where appropriate;
- ½ to 1 day National Seminar to obtain feedback from SPREP stakeholders (e.g. Governments, NGOs, private sector, community representatives and other interested members of the public, as well as international and regional organisations);
- Individual meetings with appropriate representatives of key implementing agencies as well as

# SPREP Action Plan Reviewed

*To help SPREP function in line with the needs of its member countries, we have an action plan which covers four years. Since SPREP's inception in 1982 there have been three Action Plans. The process of reviewing the current Action Plan (1997–2000) and development of the 2001–2004 draft began in March.*

Although the decision to review the current plan was made by the Ninth SPREP Meeting in Tonga, in 1996, it is also worth noting that the 10<sup>th</sup> SPREP Meeting in Apia in 1998 "agreed that the implementation of the SPREP Action Plan was the joint responsibility of the SPREP Secretariat in partnership with all SPREP member countries and territories."

The Work Programme and Budget Subcommittee meeting in Apia in November 1999 called for a forward looking approach, with in-depth member country consultation and input, as a crucial aspect of the review, to ensure strong country ownership of the 2000–2004 Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the Pacific Region.

Between February and April SPREP is holding consultations with as many of its 26 member countries as possible, for

their advice and input. Each country's consultation is held over three days. American Samoa, Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu have so far completed their discussions, involving government departments, stakeholders, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

SPREP members not able to be visited are being provided with all the relevant material and opportunities for e-mail and telephone conversations ensuring their views and priorities are taken into account.

The sum of all these talks in draft form will be finalised in a draft which will be submitted to a regional action plan workshop in May. The revised draft will be submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> SPREP meeting scheduled for 9–13 October, 2000, in Guam. 🌐

### Table of activities and timeframe

Activity	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July
Secretariat review	■					
Background material	■					
Country dialogue		■	■	■		
Written submissions			■			
Initial draft circulated				■		
Regional workshop <sup>1</sup>					■	
Revised draft					■	
Review & comment						■
Translation		■	■	■	■	■
Final draft						■

Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies, donor representatives and the UN system (if in country) to carry out the evaluation of the Secretariat's performance and determine expectations

- ½ day Wrap up meeting with senior representatives of the National and Project Focal Points;

Member countries and territories not able to be visited will be provided with all the relevant material and opportunities for email and telephone consultations will be identified.

A Regional Workshop, depending upon the availability of funds, is planned for

31 May to 2 June. It will be important for a senior representative from each member country to attend the Regional Workshop. The workshop will focus on an initial draft of the Action Plan that will be prepared on the basis of agreed records from each national consultation and the inputs from other stakeholders.

A revised/final draft Action Plan incorporating comments and feedback from the regional workshop will be circulated to all member countries in early June. Further comments will be collated by mid-July.

The final draft 2001–2004 Action Plan will be submitted for consideration at the Eleventh SPREP Meeting scheduled for 9 to 13 October, 2000, in Guam. 🌐



## Kiribati passes Environment Act

*The Kiribati Government announced on 21 March new far-reaching environmental laws to try and counter increasing pollution and population impacts on the low-lying island state.*

Officials from the Kiribati Environment and Conservation Division say the newly introduced Environment Act is a response to worsening population impacts and pollution problems on the main island of Tarawa, and the urgent need to better manage the natural resources upon which the economy is so reliant.

The Act aims to control and manage the dumping of waste and pollutants on land and sea, lagoons and foreshores. Offenders face fines of up to AU\$15,000 or up to two years in jail.

Environmental officials say that not since the Wildlife Ordinance in 1975 has such a groundbreaking piece of environment legislation been enacted.

The Kiribati Attorney General, Micheal Takabwe says, "Successive governments and this government in particular consider environment a priority and this Act is intended to realise this priority".

One of the main objectives of the Act is to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into the socio-economic planning process.

Historically, in 1992, SPREP with funding from the United Nations Development Programme, assisted Kiribati with development of a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS). The

NEMS was approved by the Kiribati government in 1993. This NEMS became the platform on which this Environmental Act was developed and now has, in March 2000, entered into force.

In 1995 the Asian Development Bank project on Institutional Strengthening for Environmental Legislation was given terms of reference for a new environment law. The Environment Bill was given its first reading in November 1999 and was passed the same month.

According to Mr Andrea Volentras, SPREP's Legal Officer, "The passage of the Environment Act is an extremely positive development for environmental protection in the Pacific. Many Pacific countries have environmental bills in the pipeline, some have been there for years. Hopefully, Kiribati's lead in passing a framework bill which integrates key elements of sustainability will now be followed by others in the region".

For further information contact:

**Baranika Etuati**

Environment and Conservation  
Division

Ministry of Environment and  
Sustainable Development

Tarawa, Kiribati

Ph: (686) 28593

Fax: (686) 28334

Email: mesd2@tskl.net.ki



*Solid Waste randomly dumped on the coast in Kiribati. (source: The Law of the Sea and the South Pacific: K. Etuati, 1991. UNEP)*