

The five-year event on **Nature Conservation** and Protected Areas was held in Alotau, Papua New Guinea on 22-26 October 2007. This was the 8th Conference since 1975 and the second to be hosted in Melanesia, after Vanuatu (1989).



8th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation

The conference brought together a diverse range of participants from government, donor agencies, inter-governmental organisations, NGOs, communities and other interested groups. There was an increase in the number of young participants as compared to previous conferences, indicating better awareness in the region the need for conservation and sustainable use of resources. Furthermore, a striking figure of community participants was evident showing more community-based initiatives in conservation in the region and also reflecting the theme of the Conference, that is, "Conservation Serving Communities in a rapidly changing world".

THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS CONFERENCE was to

"Develop a shared understanding of the value of nature conservation to island communities and people and secure significant commitments to actions by Pacific island nations and partners"



AND this was achieved through the following:

- Reviewing the Action strategy progress, identifying constraints and priorities
- Celebrating achievements and leadership in all levels
- Exchanging/Sharing lessons and best practices
- Facilitating networking and partnerships
- And making a commitment to ACTION

- Revised Action Strategy for Nature Conservation
- Renewed commitments, vigour and agreement that in the Pacific we need to focus on how we are doing things. The "Principles for Implementation" in the new Action Strategy provides guiding ethics towards achieving positive conservation outcomes.
- An evolving Strategy. The implementation targets will be identified by Pacific Islands Countries and Territories and linked to National Sustainable Development Plans.
- The first time the majority of Conference participants were Pacific islanders.
- Mainstreaming, strong endorsement for links between conservation and sustainable livelihoods
- Rich discussions, no "death by powerpoint". A VERY important agenda decision that made the conference more challenging but also responsive to participants.
- Scaling Up, a sense that we are ready to work at larger scales. For example, community-based conservation is graduating from doing one project at a time to networks; funding is graduating from project grants to sustainable finance mechanisms; leadership is looking at large-scale approaches.
- Invasive species and Climate Change recognised as priority threats.
- First appearance by a Head of State.
- Host country, PNG agreed to chair for next 5 years.
- PNG provided one million kina to support the conference.
- Over 25 side events held (Reports on these can be found at <http://www.sprep.org/roundtable/default2.asp?category=8th%20Pacific%20Islands%20Conference>).