



Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook



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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
The University of the South Pacific (USP)
The IUCN Regional Pacific Office

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Details of the team members and their contributions to the preparation of the report are provided in Appendix 3.

FOREWORD



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has the mandate to keep under review the state of the global environment. As highlighted in the Rio+20 outcome document *The Future We Want*, this calls for the provision of scientific information and building national and regional capacity to support informed decision-making. The mandate is implemented by working with partners through scientific assessments, identifying emerging issues, monitoring and earth observation.

The Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook 2012 assessment report has been developed in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other regional institutions. It uses an integrated environmental assessment methodology developed for UNEP's Global Environment Outlook process to analyze and present data and information on the state, trends and outlook of the environment in Pacific island countries.

The report presents concrete evidence that food, freshwater and the livelihoods of the Pacific islanders are under threat due to climate change, and concludes that the Pacific is at the frontline in humanity's efforts to combat and adapt to climate change. As the President of Kiribati, H.E. Anote Tong notes, "The problem is much more immediate than we perceived."

The report reveals that while PICTs are particularly vulnerable to climate change, the sustainable management of their 33 million hectares of forests contributes to climate change mitigation as well as to improving the livelihoods of local communities. The report analyses the experience of 500 communities using indigenous knowledge for more than 12,000 km² of

locally-managed marine areas. It highlights the wide replicability of this approach for coastal and marine management in addressing challenges ranging from sea level rise, to pollution and mining, food security and sustainable livelihoods in all Pacific island states.

Based on this experience, I would like to recognize the recent SPREP Ministerial meeting for its endorsement of a framework for state of environment reporting by member countries, and its plan to develop a project to enhance the region's capacity for integrated environmental assessment work, not only to support national development strategies, but to also incorporate the reporting needs of selected Multilateral Environmental Agreements. This is a positive step towards the implementation of relevant Rio+20 outcomes, including an inclusive Green Economy, and for realising sustainable development in the Pacific.



Achim Steiner

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme**

November 2012

PREFACE



The Pacific Environment and Climate Change Outlook (PECCO) 2012 is the fourth in a series of regional State of the Environment Reports for the Pacific. Previous reports were published in 1982, 1991 and 2005. PECCO was prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in partnership with a number of regional organizations including the University of the South Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and IUCN, with financial and technical support from the United Nations Environment Programme and the European Union funded Asia-Caribbean-Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreement Project.

SPREP's mandate and strategic plan requires it to regularly produce regional State of the Environment reports. These reports are essential to assess the effectiveness of plans and actions implemented for conservation and the sustainable management of the region's environment, in particular its vast oceanic resources and fragile island ecosystems.

This is the first Pacific regional assessment report to use the Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) framework process developed by UNEP. The IEA provides an important framework for assessing the state of the environment and for exploring policy options for environmentally sustainable development. The PECCO reviews the progress of environmental management in the Pacific since the first Earth Summit in 1992, examines options for advancing sustainable development in the context of increasing climate change and global economic development, and assesses impacts on the well-being of the populations and societies of the Pacific.

The report notes the many challenges faced by the Pacific region including: the increase in large scale development projects, often associated with biodiversity loss and fragmentation of ecosystems; increasing populations; increased dependence of island communities on

imported food and commodities; increasing waste and pollution challenges; and invasives species. These pressures are exacerbated by climate change, noted by Pacific leaders as the major issue for our region, and more frequent extreme weather events.

The report also highlights a number of successful legal, policy and planning initiatives that have had a significant positive impact on the environment. These include the development of community conservation areas, in particular networks of locally managed marine areas; the establishment of national waste reduction and recycling measures; the conservation of energy and water resources; the development of renewable energy sources; the promotion of tree planting and reforestation programs; and the mainstreaming of environmental considerations into development plans.

The findings of the report emphasise more than ever the need to "raise the bar" through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels. The report underlines the critical role of strengthened environmental institutions and the importance of effective community involvement.

I am very pleased to express my sincere thanks to all who contributed to the PECCO report. In particular, I thank the University of the South Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the IUCN Regional Office for Oceania. I am also very grateful of the continuing support provided by the United Nations Environment Programme, in particular the regional team of its Division of Early Warning and Assessment in Bangkok who have worked closely with us on this report. Last and not least this work was carried out with the participation and support of our member countries who have endorsed its publication in this year's SPREP Meeting.



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