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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21, INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS, THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 1996-2000, AND THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

CURRENT AND CRITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS OF THE SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The small island developing states of the region have identified climate change and the development of renewable energy technologies as the key focuses of their sustainable development efforts. Full integration of environmental concerns into the development process should be sought with a strong emphasis on multi-stakeholder involvement and expanded choice in decision-making for a better environment and a secure future. The importance of modern information technologies such as the Internet and geographic information systems as vehicles for information access, training, networking and coordination and development planning is underscored to enhance awareness, knowledge and effective decision-making. Industrialized countries are strongly urged to adopt and enforce policies which either directly or indirectly reduce environmentally and economically harmful impacts of development on small island developing states and to assist financially in alleviating the problems.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Six years ago in Barbados, small island developing states and the international community discussed the need to send a strong message to the world's peoples of the unlimited development opportunities to be achieved when pursued in partnership and with a sense of common purpose. It was agreed then that the sustainable development of island nations was both essential and achievable.

2. The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted in Barbados, was the first meaningful and concrete effort at a global alliance towards the pursuit of sustainable development.

3. Small island developing states have a strong sense of ownership of, and are deeply committed to, the principles and aims of the Barbados Programme of Action. The small island developing states of the Asian and Pacific region¹ and their associated regional and subregional organizations have made a sincere and dedicated effort to live up to their commitment to implement sustainable development and environmental reform.

4. The special financial, geographic and human circumstances of small island developing states were recognized at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994. The international community agreed to assist the small island developing states with new and additional financial resources and technology transfer. In September 1999, at the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States and the General Assembly expressed concern that, in the five years following the Barbados conference, adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources in support of the implementation of the Programme of Action had not been provided by the international community. They also expressed concern at the overall decline in financial assistance to small island developing states, noting in particular the decline in official development assistance (ODA). They recalled that the commitment of the international community to support small island developing states made in Barbados had been based on their acknowledgement that such joint action was essential for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. They therefore called on the international community to provide funding for the full implementation of the Programme of Action. They also urged developed countries to increase their ODA to meet the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product.

¹ References to small island developing states in the region include Maldives, the only small island developing member country of ESCAP in Asia.

5. Despite the various constraints, small island developing states have made efforts to implement the Programme of Action and the Regional Action Programme for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development, 1996-2000, and these are reported in detail in document ENR/PAC/MCED/2. Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the region is also contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council as an outcome of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.²

6. Governments of small island developing states in Asia and the Pacific and their associated subregional organizations have identified environment and development problems and have developed strategies for their resolution. The lack of financial resources and technological capacity to achieve sustainable development aims, however, remains a constraint. Delays in responding in a substantive way to the multitude of environment and development needs increase the severity of the problems and their impact on the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the island nations.

I. CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

7. The following priorities were agreed upon by small island developing states at the Roundtable of Pacific Ministers on Sustainable Development, held in Auckland, New Zealand, on 17 December 1998:

Sectoral issues

- Improving management of inshore and offshore marine resources
- Minimizing land- and sea-based pollution
- Promoting sustainable tourism
- Freshwater resources: provision of adequate supplies of non-polluted fresh water
- Conservation of terrestrial and marine biological resources
- Developing environmentally and economically sustainable [renewable] energy resources

Cross-sectoral issues

- Improving coordination of United Nations bodies and agencies
- Building new partnerships and promoting participation
- Implementing multilateral agreements
- Building capacity through education, training and awareness-raising
- Strengthening links between environment and integrated development
- Developing benchmarks and information for sustainable development
- Integrating health, population and development
- Vulnerability index
- Financial resources

² E/CN.17/1999/6.

8. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is currently reviewing the national priorities of its members as part of the process for developing the 2001–2004 SPREP action plan. New and important issues are emerging, such as integrating environmental considerations into economic decision-making and revising the process of funding and implementing environment and development programmes.

9. At the 1999 review of the Barbados Programme of Action by the General Assembly, at its twenty-second special session, several issues were prioritized as needing urgent attention over the next five years:

- Adapting to climate change and rising sea levels
- Improving natural disaster preparedness
- Preventing worsening freshwater shortages
- Protecting coastal ecosystems and coral reefs from pollution and overfishing
- Developing solar and renewable energy
- Managing tourism growth to protect the environment and cultural integrity
- Biodiversity conservation

A. Climate change

10. Small island developing states of the region, including the Pacific island countries and Maldives affirmed that the issue of climate change remained an urgent and primary concern. Climate change was already having a devastating effect on small island developing states, threatening the well-being and the economic survival of island communities. Climate change would further undermine the efforts of small island developing states to achieve sustainable development. They therefore asserted that global warming and sea level rise should be given higher priority by the international community. They emphasized that the efforts of the developed countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases should be strengthened and accelerated. They also expressed the need for further international assistance for small island developing states to plan for longer-term adaptation to the effects of climate change and to implement clean energy technologies.

11. They noted that the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was a modest first step in the right direction, but that it would not meet the objectives of the Convention. They stressed the point that only small island developing states had ratified the Protocol and urgently called on annex 1 countries also to ratify the Protocol. They undertook to continue cooperation in the search for and promotion of adaptation solutions, through the sharing of information and consultation in relevant forums.

12. Some support had been received from the international community at national and regional levels to assist with research, technical studies, capacity-building, planning and the development of policy-relevant advice.

13. The outcome of the studies to date and a growing body of qualitative and anecdotal evidence from across the Indian and Pacific oceans indicated that climate change from atmospheric pollution was already causing substantial damage to small island developing states of the region. Extreme weather and climate events had had serious environmental and economic consequences. For example, in Fiji, drought had wiped out about two thirds of the newly planted sugar crop in 1998, and the overall economic impact was equivalent to 3 per cent of GDP. Australia had spent more than \$A 30 million delivering food aid to people in isolated areas of Papua New Guinea, many of whom had been close to starvation. In the Federated States of Micronesia, many atolls had run out of water. In the Marshall Islands, the United States of America had brought in large-scale desalination plants to provide water for the people. In Palau, drought had led to the loss of 30 per cent of the taro patches, affecting one third of the population. Tuvalu had suffered three cyclones during that same period, resulting in loss of land, inundation of taro pits, destruction of houses and contamination of freshwater supplies.

14. The Pacific Islands Conference on Climate Change, Climate Variability and Sea Level Rise, held at Rarotonga from 3 to 7 April 2000, identified a wide range of priorities for action that would require substantial funding from industrial donors.

B. An integrated response to climate change

15. An integrated, major response to climate change should not only assist small island developing states with adaptive responses, but also foster a reduction in fossil fuel and biomass use in all countries of the world.

16. Tuvalu, one of the most vulnerable countries in the Pacific, backed by the other regional small island developing states, stressed that the "polluter pays" concept should be applied to climate change. They emphasized the need for new and substantial funding to mitigate the impacts of climate change, while pursuing the promotion and support of renewable energy strategies to reduce pollution of the atmosphere.

17. Attention was also drawn to the World Bank's recently adopted Energy and Environment Strategy that stressed the need to provide basic modern energy services for the rural poor and peri-urban populations. That would involve the substitution of low quality biomass fuels with more efficient modern fuels and of centralized fossil fuel electricity generation with off-grid renewable systems.

18. The Strategic Partnership for Renewable Energy of the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) aimed to shift the programming of GEF resources for renewable energy from “one off” project components to large-scale, long-term renewable energy programmes.

19. At the Pacific Subregional Consultation Meeting in Preparation for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, from 12 to 14 April 2000, Tuvalu and Vanuatu noted that Shell Oil and Daimler-Chrysler were leading an international consortium to make Iceland the world’s first hydrogen-based economy. Iceland had geothermal energy and so was a good candidate for the first experiments.

20. Tuvalu and Vanuatu urged the international community to assist them and all the small island developing nations of Asia and the Pacific with substantial technical and financial assistance to shift their fossil fuel dependent societies to non-polluting hydrogen energy economies.

21. Two major studies showed considerable geothermal potential for Vanuatu and, combined with hydrogen energy, that would form the basis of a whole new energy economy for the country. The hydrogen initiative was considered to have the potential for providing mutual benefits to both the island countries and the industrialized countries. The components for a hydrogen energy economy had advanced considerably, providing opportunity for industrialized countries to integrate the components into one functioning society where renewable energy and hydrogen fuels powered the entire community: cars, trucks, buses, tractors, boats and electrical utilities.³

22. If industrialized countries developed their own renewable energy industries to design fully integrated hydrogen-powered communities for the inhabited islands of the Indian and Pacific oceans, hydrogen technology would achieve an economy of scale. The greater affordability and wider application of such technology, in turn, would hasten the end of pollution of the atmosphere with carbon dioxide and associated pollutants.

23. Moreover, under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries investing in clean energy projects in developing countries would gain credit for the reductions in carbon dioxide that resulted from those projects. Establishing hydrogen-powered island economies was thus an excellent means for the implementation of the Mechanism.

C. Hazardous wastes

24. At the thirtieth South Pacific Forum, held in Palau in October 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Forum reaffirmed their opposition to the transportation of hazardous and nuclear materials through the exclusive economic zones of

³ See the web site <www.h2eco.org/links.htm>.

small island developing states, and recalled that the right to ban such movement and transportation had been formally accepted in the Barbados Programme of Action. They recognized the need to pursue initiatives within the existing international legal regime in order to formally defend that right.

25. They exhorted the international community to ensure that the principle of state responsibility was more vigorously enforced to ensure that the environment of small island developing states was protected from the threat of such materials and not adversely affected by pollution from those sources. They also asserted that the international community and the United Nations system had a special responsibility to those people of small island developing states who had been adversely affected as a result of nuclear testing programmes. The international community should provide appropriate assistance in cleaning up, containing, or safely disposing of such wastes.

26. The Pacific island developing economies noted with growing concern that hazardous wastes had been imported into their countries in the past and that those currently represented a major hazard to public health and to the freshwater and marine environments. Many of those chemicals had been imported from various countries without due diligence and, until recently, the Pacific island governments had not been informed of the nature or the extent of the dangers that those chemical stockpiles represented. In particular, persistent organic pollutants were a significant problem. They included pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, general industrial chemicals, medical wastes, laboratory chemicals, oil, bitumen, timber treatment chemicals and fertilizers. The costs associated with disposing of the stockpiles of obsolete and unwanted chemicals, contaminated site remediation, and other waste management activities for 14 Pacific small island developing states would be about US\$8 million. While that was a very small amount of money compared with the cost of cleaning up toxic waste sites in some developed countries, it was currently beyond the financial capacity of the small island developing states.

27. Stockpiles of unwanted toxic and hazardous persistent organic pollutants were only one aspect of a growing problem with waste disposal among the small island developing economies of the Pacific subregion. Hazardous chemicals continued to be imported. Old cars, used tyres and large amounts of plastic packaging were serious issues on small islands where land was at a premium for homes, gardens, watersheds and wildlife zones. Addressing those issues would require innovative partnerships with the industrial world. Chemical companies selling pesticides and weedkiller that now represented a health threat by polluting groundwater and contaminating streams and coastal environments bore a responsibility for not adequately warning the island countries that such a serious danger existed. Where clean-ups were required or substitute water sources had to be found, the manufacturers must share in the costs of the remediation.

28. Under the principle of state responsibility, industrial countries should take action to curtail the manufacture and export of persistent organic pollutants, promote the reduction of plastic and non-recyclable packaging, and assist small island developing states of the region with recycling programmes.

D. Biodiversity issues

29. The small island developing states have made real strides forward in establishing community-based conservation and protected areas. These initiatives are one of the major success stories of environment in the Asian and Pacific region. The long-term sustainability of the conservation areas will require ongoing support from the international community. Towards that goal, the Pacific island countries have agreed to set up a Pacific conservation trust fund to provide ongoing and permanent financial support for these and future community-based conservation initiatives in the Pacific islands.

30. The establishment of the fund to maintain the current level of support and provide for future growth through investment will require US\$40 million.

II. CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

A. Integrating environment and development

31. Environmental issues are closely linked with development and the Pacific island countries recognize a need to shift the institutional emphasis away from “environment” and “economic development” to “sustainable development”. The integration of environmental issues into the economic decision-making process will require the formulation of sustainable development strategies within all sectors and levels of government, as well as in private industry and at the community level. This was a primary focus of Agenda 21 but it has been poorly implemented in the Pacific island countries.

32. The SPREP report entitled *Pacific Islands Environment Outlook*, published by the United Nations Environment Programme, points out that many of the planning and coordination functions of environment units should be taken over by the development agency and line ministries. Cost/benefit analyses, for example, should be carried out by the development agency (finance, planning, development or treasury). The line ministries would continue to exercise control over forestry, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, health and education.

33. A government environment unit can be reassigned to provide valuable monitoring and feedback for the process of sustainable development. New Zealand’s Commissioner for the Environment is a useful model for this. The Commissioner is an independent body that

undertakes studies and responds to public, private or government concerns about a great variety of environmental issues. The findings are reported directly to Parliament.

34. A Commissioner for the Environment would, in addition to acting as an environmental ombudsman as recommended by GEO-2000,⁴ monitor the effect of policies and action plans on the ecosystems of the islands. This would let people know when their efforts were making a positive difference to the health of the sea, the watersheds and the forests. The Commissioner would alert the community if actions were causing problems, and make recommendations to correct the plan. The Commissioner could keep track of progress on the commitments of line ministries as stated in their individual and collective sustainable development action plans.

B. Trade issues

35. Almost all small island developing countries in the region import far more than they export. Their small economies often depend on a few commodities and any shift in world prices or trade practices has a devastating effect on their financial status. There is concern that the pace and terms of globalization and trade liberalization have seriously affected the economies of small island developing states, undermining their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

36. The small island developing states are particularly concerned at the serious risk of marginalization in the emerging global economic order which their economies face in the areas of trade, investment, commodities and capital markets, despite efforts at domestic reform undertaken to facilitate integration into the international economy. The erosion of trade preferences is having a serious effect on the economies of small island developing states, and the international community can help to address the limitations and vulnerabilities of the economies of small island developing states by providing continued market access and through special and differential treatment in the international trading system.

37. In this regard, the Pacific island countries welcome the progress in the development of a vulnerability index, which should be used as one of the criteria for determining special and differential treatment for small island developing states in trade, and for concessional treatment in financing and monetary matters. There is also a need to ensure the full and effective participation of small island developing states in all relevant international forums, including multilateral trade, and financial and monetary institutions. The support of the international community is needed to assist small island developing states in this regard.

⁴ See the web site < www.grida.no/geo2000/english/0244.htm > .

C. Demographic issues

38. Demographic issues are also a serious concern of the Pacific island countries, especially the problems of urbanization and associated unemployment and health issues. If current trends continue, the population of the Pacific islands will reach the 10 million mark within the next 15 years, with the fastest growth occurring in towns and cities. Given the magnitude of population developments in the region and their social, economic and environmental implications, population and development will have to become an urgent area of policy reform for the governments of the island countries. These, and related priority concerns are being addressed in other action plans of the international organizations. These programmes require urgent new and additional funding from donor countries.

D. Access to information and Internet communication

39. Knowledge and awareness expand the choices and options that people have in contributing to sustainable development. The Internet is the best opportunity for island people to gain information to make wise decisions, and to influence global policies on key environmental issues such as climate change, radioactive waste and persistent organic pollutants.

40. Wide access to inexpensive Internet links for citizens of small island developing states in the region will perhaps provide some of the most positive impacts on sustainable development over the long term. Access to information and exchange of experiences on diverse topics such as health, education, e-commerce, trade, tourism and culture will erode the centuries-old barriers of geographic and economic isolation which have impeded the progress of the Pacific island countries, in particular, in achieving sustainable development. Universal or near universal access to Internet-based information sources is the vision previously adopted by ministers of communication, which was articulated at the South Pacific Forum in October 1999.

41. The Barbados Programme of Action and the Regional Action Programme for 1996-2000 adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific held in 1995, underscore the importance of information and information technology in the process of achieving sustainable development. Almost all international, regional and subregional organizations are already online and the amount of information that they are posting on their web sites is growing exponentially. Many government offices in small island developing states are already networking emails, and uploading and downloading files of every description. As satellite communications improve and costs come down, government officers will be holding international meetings online, video-conferencing and expanding databases with information on all aspects of sustainable development. Ultimately, the costs of such an initiative are minimal compared to the benefits to be derived in the long run.

42. The Internet offers significant potential for both encouraging and implementing environmental action plans. New software enhances the ease and effectiveness of online collaboration. This will, when fully integrated into action strategies, lower the costs of international cooperation and speed the implementation process. Organizations and government offices should be encouraged to place their sustainable development objectives on their web sites and to update these on a yearly basis to report on progress towards their stated objectives. Important statistical information for sustainable development should be maintained on an online database, with the participating countries updating the information on a regular basis. By updating information online, the process of recording and reporting will be rapid and fully integrated, thus avoiding delay and incompatible data formats. Online statistical data checks can catch and highlight errors during entry.

43. The global information network being developed and implemented through the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSnet) has been a great success. It networks sustainable development concepts and information among 42 small island developing states. In October 1999, for example, Pacific island leaders from the region's 16 independent countries endorsed SIDSnet activities in the region. They noted that SIDSnet was helping to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The General Assembly, at its twenty-second special session, recommended strengthening the Network as an important tool for sustainable development.

44. SIDSnet is a valuable tool for capacity-building, particularly through its programmes for Internet training and the scope offered for enhanced communication and for technical cooperation among small island developing countries. The island states urged that the SIDS Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should be strengthened and they further requested that SIDS focal points should be designated in all United Nations agencies.

E. Use of natural resources

45. Forestry issues continue to be a problem for Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The Forests and Trees Support Programme at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is addressing these issues, with important linkages to the SPREP conservation programmes and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Non-governmental organizations play a critical role in forest use issues, particularly through their grass-roots work with local communities to promote sustainable resource management.

46. The depletion of forest resources has occurred at an alarming rate over the past decade and unabated demand for forest products has, in many cases, prompted international logging companies to turn to the small island developing states, including those in the Pacific subregion.

There is an urgent need to curtail unsustainable harvesting of the limited and critical forest resources, for example, in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, by supporting eco-labelling and sustainable forestry initiatives through import restrictions.

47. The following agricultural, forestry and fishery priorities for the next five years were developed at the Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, held in Rome on 12 March 1999:

- Adjusting to changes in the global trading environment
- Moving towards a more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture
- Meeting fisheries needs
- Ensuring sustainable management of land, water and forestry resources and environmental protection
- Capacity-building and institutional strengthening

F. Community participation and the vision-making process

48. The small island developing states of the region have made great strides in harmonizing sustainable development goals by integrating all concerned parties into the decision-making process. Successes, especially in community participation projects, have bolstered confidence in the processes for involving communities and businesses in the decision-making process.

49. Integration of sustainable development planning between government workers and village people requires a methodology based on visual representation to augment the vision-making process of Agenda 21. The Vanuatu land-use project has had considerable success using land-use charts as visual representations of the community's development vision. This is created as an electronic model using a geographic information system (GIS). Current GIS charts in Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu already show many features of the island landscapes: for example, land and soil morphology, coastal topography, watersheds, forests, agricultural areas, pastures, public and private buildings, roads, utilities, waste flows, land ownership and political boundaries. Just as one would use an architectural plan to design an integrated resort complex, GIS can easily be adapted to design and manage an integrated island landscape.

50. The Vanuatu Land Use Planning Office successfully uses the national GIS to create resource management action plan maps in partnership with all government sectors and local communities. These are now being applied to a rural economic development initiative. The process can be improved by using the "appreciative inquiry approach" to community planning, and by including the Island Systems Management Programme of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC).

51. SOPAC uses GIS as a dynamic systems management tool. In 1998, SOPAC assisted the Fiji Electricity Authority and the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority with the installation of GIS for improved asset and financial management. SOPAC intends to help member countries to adopt a more holistic approach to create electronic charts to show design links between the island infrastructure systems and improve the efficiency of the building industry, telecommunications, manufacturing, supply, waste processing, agriculture, power and water delivery, travel and recreation.

G. Gender issues

52. Most small island developing states have made positive strides in gender equity. Organizations in the Pacific subregion such as SPC, SOPAC, SPREP and the South Pacific Forum have actively striven to ensure gender equity in all aspects of sustainable development. The United Nations Development Fund for Women in the Pacific has been active for over a decade in mainstreaming gender issues.

53. Women are significant users of land and coastal resources and tend to take major responsibility for family health. Their input will be increasingly important in land degradation issues, decision-making and training (as trainers and recipients) on waste management and land use.

H. Environmentally and socially responsible tourism

54. As small island developing states opt for cleaner technologies and make choices which minimize the adverse impact on the surrounding natural environment, these efforts will be noticed and widely appreciated not just by the local inhabitants, but also by the increasing number of tourists who will be drawn to the sound principles of sustainable development in policy and practice. Taking advantage of Internet-based information dissemination and marketing, the island countries of the region will be able to attract an even greater numbers of tourists, thereby generating sustained economic growth and gainful employment for the islands' citizens. Uncontrolled tourism, however, could put considerable pressure on the environment in terms of demand for natural resources and waste generation, and could disrupt the social and cultural fabric of island societies. It is therefore prudent to pursue policies which maximize tourism revenue with minimal adverse environmental and social impact.

I. Culture and traditional knowledge

55. In order to resolve environmental problems in the small island developing states, it will be necessary to deal with communal tenure systems, traditional land and coastal use practices and

cultural values. The Pacific island leaders, for example, recognize the importance of local knowledge and management system activities that integrate easily with indigenous knowledge, and natural resources management practices are received with growing enthusiasm in the Pacific subregion.

56. The capacity-building and environmental management project jointly organized by the United Nations Development Programme and SPREP works towards recording indigenous knowledge on Pacific island ecosystems. These kinds of data will take on added value as the Pacific islands come online, not only because of the ability of younger Pacific islanders to learn traditional wisdom and lore, but because there is a wide global interest in cultural issues.

57. The Internet may play an important role in assisting in the collection of traditional knowledge, music, art and dancing. The Pacific Arts Festival, the Melanesian Arts Festival and other cultural events can be advertised over the Internet and stories, images, music and video clips integrated into the catalogue of cultural online displays.

58. Funding for preserving culture needs special attention. Cultural associations and museums require significant funding. In Fiji, for example, an extension of the existing museum will cost an estimated 25 million Fiji dollars. Again, Internet advertising networks may help to gather support for cultural associations that set up especially attractive and popular web sites. In addition, the web sites will lead to an increase in visitors to the museums and cultural events. Art and traditional crafts can also be marketed globally online. Traditional art from Melanesia, in particular, is extremely popular in Australia, Europe and the United States.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

59. The mitigation of the effects of climate change and atmospheric pollution should be the urgent focus of bilateral and multilateral agreements, together with measures to improve and integrate renewable energy technologies with the goal of establishing renewable-energy/hydrogen-based economies in the small island developing countries. This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve the economies of the Pacific islands and help to achieve an economy of scale.

60. To highlight the importance of informed decision-making based on a menu of available options, one of the bases for sustainable development, the concept of expanded choice at the individual, community, national, subregional and regional level should be advocated in order to integrate and promote the participatory process for sustainable development.

61. All organizations should feature the Internet as the key to information gathering, reporting, access, training, conferencing, networking and coordination.

62. Organizations should use GIS to create graphic "vision statements" that integrate community, government and industry activities in much the same way that architectural plans and models display visions of development.

63. Small island developing states should implement policies to promote sustainable use of scarce natural resources, such as forests. Policies should also be aimed at reducing plastic packaging, participating in transnational recycling programmes, and restricting exports and transshipments of hazardous synthetic chemicals to the small island developing states of the region, most notably among the Pacific island countries.