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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

(Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSION RESOLUTION 56/4
ON THE PROMOTION OF A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FUTURE
FOR SMALL ISLAND STATES**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

At its fifty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 56/4 on the promotion of a sustainable energy future for small island States. The resolution demonstrates the importance that island States attach to sound development of their energy sectors, including the need for a coordinated approach to capacity-building and programme development and evaluation to support sustainable energy development.

As called for in the resolution, the present document provides an overview of progress in the implementation of the resolution. The Commission may wish to review the progress achieved and provide further guidance to the secretariat to enhance effective implementation.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1
I. CONSULTATION PROCESS	1
II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN	2
III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES	3
IV. FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION	3

Introduction

1. The present document provides information on progress in implementing resolution 56/4 on the promotion of a sustainable energy future for small island States. The resolution requires that progress be reported to the Commission and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries at their fifty-eighth and seventh sessions, respectively.
2. The Commission and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries may wish to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the resolution and provide further guidance to the secretariat to enhance effective implementation.

I. CONSULTATION PROCESS

3. To secure national commitment and draw on previous experience, the active involvement of Pacific island States and the establishment of an active network of other stakeholders have been the objectives from the beginning of the implementation efforts.
4. With the assistance of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, a draft project profile “Promotion of a sustainable energy future for small island States” was circulated to a number of Pacific island States as an initial effort to identify counterparts in project implementation and seek commitments and comments from the States. The profile was drafted in consultation with the initiator of the resolution and was aimed at developing an action plan through a study and an expert-level meeting, followed by advisory services for capacity-building in fund-raising and in institutional set-up. The profile and modalities for implementing the resolution were also discussed at an informal meeting in Bali, Indonesia, on 23 November 2000 with participants from the Pacific subregion in the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development. Pacific island States and representatives at the meeting in Bali expressed their full support for the efforts to implement the resolution, but also pointed out that enough paperwork in the form of feasibility studies had already been done and that more emphasis should be put on fund-raising, project implementation and follow-up. The need for coordination with existing work undertaken by subregional organizations in the energy field was also stressed. The view was also expressed that there should be further investigation of options for designing ESCAP activities to complement planned efforts, such as the Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Programme (PIREP) – a UNDP Global Environment Facility project with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme as the proposed executing agency, a Japan International Cooperation Agency-funded UNESCO project on a renewable energy toolkit and a South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) proposal on biomass resource assessment.
5. Consequently, the secretariat initiated consultations with a number of subregional organizations involved in energy activities in the Pacific.

6. Currently, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), SOPAC, the Pacific Power Association (PPA) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) provide assistance to their member countries on various issues pertaining to sustainable energy development. This includes petroleum pricing advice (PIFS), power sector efficiency (PPA), energy policy advice and database development (SOPAC) and rural energy development (SPC). Their activities are coordinated and discussed through the Energy Working Group of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP EWG), which meets on an ad hoc basis. CROP EWG is chaired by PIFS.

7. As a result of these consultations, the project profile was skipped and additional involvement and collaboration with subregional organizations were sought. Rather than preparing a project, the accommodation of specific needs of Pacific States was prioritized by inviting proposals for advisory services directly from the States. This process was greatly facilitated by SPC, which used its well-functioning energy network to promote the effort and obtain responses from the States.

8. Cooperation and collaboration with other members of CROP EWG have also taken place regularly through e-mail exchanges; finally, a meeting was held at Suva in October between CROP EWG members and ESCAP to discuss options for future cooperation, including the arrangement of a subregional workshop on sustainable energy policies and strategies. As an outcome of these efforts, PIFS will be the local host organizer of the workshop (to be held in February 2002) and inputs from other CROP EWG members are being sought prior to and during the workshop.

II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

9. Based on the requests from five Pacific island States and to consult on and develop the implementation modality of the resolution further, an advisory-cum-fact-finding mission on sustainable energy development in the Pacific was undertaken in September-October 2001. Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu were visited to make preliminary assessments of their needs and priorities regarding assistance for sustainable energy development and to advise them on specific matters in accordance with requests received from the Governments concerned. Specific technical advice covered energy policy (Cook Islands), rural electrification (Tonga), introduction of renewable energy technologies (Tuvalu), hybrid energy systems (Kiribati) and energy data collection (Fiji).

10. During the mission, modalities for capacity-building and information exchange between the island States on sustainable energy development were discussed with the concerned States as well as with subregional organizations involved in energy development. In addition, local support and assistance for the subregional workshop on sustainable policies and strategies in Pacific island developing States were sought and the objectives and main subjects of discussion at the event were discussed. The modalities and organization of the workshop were discussed with subregional organizations as well and agreement was reached on collaboration between CROP EWG and ESCAP concerning the event.

11. The outcomes of the mission include increased knowledge in Pacific States concerning sustainable energy development and the recommendations they received for the enhancement of their support for such development through country reports. A good network has been established to support future endeavours. A report on the main findings and recommendations of the mission will be submitted to the subregional workshop and used as inputs for the deliberations there.

12. ESCAP has secured some additional funds for the provision of short-term experts to accommodate some pending requests. ESCAP is also trying to raise funds to accommodate requests received from the countries visited for follow-up actions to the mission's recommendations.

III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

13. The Workshop on Sustainable Energy Policies and Strategies for Pacific Island Developing States will be held at Suva from 4 to 5 February 2002 to identify areas of cooperation and information exchange among small island States and to develop a concrete programme. Representatives of all Pacific island developing members and associate members of ESCAP are invited to the Workshop, as well as donor agencies' Pacific offices, subregional organizations and international institutions with activities or interest in the energy field.

14. The Workshop will focus on plans and strategies for sustainable energy development taking into account previous, ongoing and planned activities in the Pacific. Among the inputs to stimulate discussions will be the findings and recommendations of the ESCAP advisory-cum-fact-finding mission. The purpose of the Workshop is to find implementation modalities to further the promotion of sustainable energy development, including options for increased complementarities among ongoing activities, a strategic approach to cross-country exchange of experience and enhanced cooperation in project development, implementation and evaluation among States, institutions and organizations. It is also expected to establish or strengthen linkages of national activities with intercountry activities and the implementing organizations/agencies.

15. Other planned activities include an advisory mission to Vanuatu in early 2002 on geothermal energy development and the provision of expert assistance on wind energy development in Cook Islands.

IV. FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

16. Energy development, in particular rural electrification, is of high priority to Pacific island States, but responsibilities and authorities regarding energy policy issues are in general unclear and often lack legal frameworks. Most energy departments or offices lack capacity in policy formulation or implementation. Consequently, there has not been effective long-term strategic planning and management of the energy sector and data collection to support such activities is insufficient. Most countries have initiated renewable energy projects, the bulk of them being solar photovoltaic on

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remote outer islands. The sustainability of most of these projects is questionable, mainly owing to managerial problems. Fees are not being collected and often do not reflect real costs. Most of the community councils or cooperatives managing the projects face problems when the time comes for major replacements or maintenance work.

17. In the light of the above, several island States have indicated a need for training in areas such as policy formulation and monitoring, pricing matters and managerial and technical skills, as well as independent ad hoc advice on policy matters and project proposals. Capacity-building is seen as a necessity to enable the countries to play a proactive instead of reactive role towards donor-driven projects. There is also a need for networking among Pacific island States to obtain information on and lessons from local projects and people and to learn from the experiences of other States.

18. Because of the small size and high migration rate of the populations of most Pacific island States, they cannot expect to build and maintain capacity in all areas of sustainable energy development at the national level. Expertise and capacity at the regional level are therefore vital. The existing CROP EWG network may play a key role in the formulation and implementation of future activities in the subregion.

19. Options for future activities will be discussed in detail at the Workshop at Suva in February 2002. Such options may include facilitation of coordination among energy activities in the subregion, in particular between PREFACE, which is the only regional energy project currently being undertaken, and projects in the pipeline, such as the PIREP proposal. The Pacific Operations Centre may continue to play a facilitator's role in the implementation of intercountry programmes and coordination.

20. ESCAP plans to continue its assistance through short-term advisory services to strengthen national capacities in addressing specific issues and preparing project proposals for securing financial resources for project development and implementation.

21. ESCAP also plans to extend support for subregional and/or national training workshops on topics of interest to the subregion, including strategic planning and management.

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