

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

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The Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development

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The Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development

Introduction

1. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, otherwise known as the "Earth Summit", was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. As well as producing Agenda 21, this Conference led directly to the UN Commission for Sustainable Development and to the Global Environment Facility, and was a considerable impetus behind the coming into force of the UN Convention on the International Law of the Sea and the subsequent negotiation of the UN "Fish Stocks" agreement.
2. Given this international activity, what has been the actual impact of these processes on the region? How far are we along the road to sustainable development that was mapped out in Agenda 21? The 10th annual Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in September 2002, will be an occasion for reviewing what has happened in the last 10 years and deciding what should happen in the future in this field.

Pacific Island fisheries issues in global sustainable development politics

3. Regional preparation and representation at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 cost approximately US\$ 2 million. However, despite this major effort there was little apparent involvement from, and little immediate impact on, the Pacific Island fisheries sector. Most Pacific Island fisheries departments and regional fisheries organisations, and certainly most people involved in the development of regional living marine resources, were unaware that the output of the Rio Earth Summit, Agenda 21, contained a chapter entitled "Protection of the Oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and coastal areas and the protection, *rational use and development of their living resources*" (see Adams et al. 1995).
4. A considerable number of lessons have been learned as a result of this dislocation and, second time around, there is an opportunity for all working in sustainable development to also be involved in the preparation for the Johannesburg Summit. The problem now is generating some enthusiasm amongst those not previously involved, and in actually agreeing regional positions in time for inclusion through the various preparatory conferences leading up to the summit (otherwise known as "Rio+10" or "CSD10") next September.
5. A CROP interagency working group has been set up to help coordinate the preparation of regional input to the summit and to coordinate support to member country representatives during the summit. The South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), which has traditionally been the regional-level coordinator of input into the international processes of the Commission for Sustainable Development, will be devoting considerable staff time and resources to these specific tasks.

Fisheries sector action

6. The SPC Marine Resources Division feels that the occasion of the Johannesburg Summit is an opportunity for Pacific Islands fisheries sector people to get involved in a process which may have far-reaching and long-term effects on the way we do business. We need to make it clear that the Pacific Islands region is not like the rest of the world. We need to establish our reputation for responsible stewardship and point to the record of fisheries governance in the region compared to the rest of the world. We also need to point out our vulnerability to external influence: in terms of pollution; in terms of foreign fishing effort; in terms of our commercial dependence on certain external markets (including our need to concentrate on high quality or non-perishability to mitigate trade difficulties); and in terms of the continuing problem of managing the increasing dominance of the cash economy over subsistence lifestyles.
7. A possible way to address this would be for this second Heads of Fisheries Meeting to produce a definitive statement about the Pacific Islands view of the fisheries sector in the Pacific Ocean, which could then be incorporated into the overall regional position and conveyed to the next CSD10 preparatory conference.
8. This is not a new idea. The SPC "mini" Heads of Fisheries Meeting in 1998 produced and agreed a carefully-worded formal statement to provide a Pacific Islands fisheries viewpoint to the 7th Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development, on Oceans, in 1999. However, this statement was paraphrased and reduced by a later workshop in order to fit within the overall regional multi-sectoral submission. During this process, several key concepts were lost, including the need to channel increasing aquaculture investment into sustainable paths.
9. In part, this occurred because SPC did not follow the process through to the CSD7 meeting. It has been the policy of the Marine Resources Division to concentrate its attention on regional issues, and not become distracted by into global issues, and we passed this document on up the line. We will be guided by the view of this Heads of Fisheries meeting, but it may be useful for us this time to follow the issue nearly all the way to Johannesburg.

Conclusion

10. The meeting is requested to consider preparing a statement to present a Pacific Islands regional fisheries sector position for the benefit of the 10th Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development. After discussion, a draft statement could be prepared by a working group convened during the evening, and presented later for final discussion and potential agreement in plenary.

Reference

11. Adams, T., A. Richards, P. Dalzell and L. Bell. 1995. *Research on fisheries in the Pacific Islands region*. Background paper 36 in: Joint FFA/SPC workshop on the management of South Pacific inshore fisheries, SPC, Noumea, New Caledonia, 26 June – 7 July 1995. Also archived in: www.spc.int/coastfish/reports/icfmap/resrev.doc

Attachment

Statement prepared by the Second Pacific Community Fisheries Management Workshop and Mini-Heads of Fisheries Meeting for submission to the CSD7 preparatory process.

The following submission covers only the areas considered of highest priority.

1. Marine Resources are the cornerstone for the sustainable social and economic development of the Pacific Island peoples. Its importance is well recognised and no less than five regional organisations have active programmes in this area. The importance relates to the welfare of Pacific Island communities for food and nutrition security and to the opportunity for economic development. However the emergence of communities from more traditional ways of life, and the recognised constraints facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has created difficulties in the pursuit of economic development goals while also sustaining the natural resources. Limited natural resource endowments and limited capacity and finances cause particular difficulties for SIDS to adequately address the needs and aspirations of their people.
2. Traditionally inshore fisheries have played an important role in promoting the well being of island communities. However, with increasing population and encroachment by other users, pressure on marine resources is depriving the most vulnerable members of the community, namely women and young children, access to their traditional sources of food and income. In many Pacific Island Countries (PIC) inshore fisheries are declining from over exploitation and environmental degradation and the establishment of effective management is a priority to maintain or restore maximum yield levels. In the past, separation of the responsibility for the management of fisheries resources from that of environmental management has further exacerbated the problem. At times disregard for traditional systems of use and ownership rights has also resulted in difficulties in resource management.
3. Regional fisheries managers have focussed on establishing regimes to sustain inshore fisheries. This is supported by a strategy to divert demand and fishing pressure to alternative activities, mostly to offshore fishing and into aquaculture. Development of fisheries management varies from country to country reflecting the differing stages of economic development and levels of need. In some countries the need is to encourage economic activities and to generate income for rural villages; in other countries the need is to restrict or limit fishing. Yet in other countries the need to involve all stakeholders in the management system has evolved into community-based decision-making and control. There is now broad acceptance that marine resources cannot be managed in isolation from other users, or by one government agency so that an integrated and co-ordinated approach should be taken. In many circumstances, because of the smallness of the islands, an island system-management approach is the desirable option.
4. Aquaculture, as an alternative activity, is still at a preliminary stage of economic development in most PIC, but is of enormous future significance. For aquaculture to realise its full potential to the economies of PIC in a sustainable way will require a considerable degree of international support. PIC have endorsed a strategy to harness and prioritise such support at the regional institutional level. Several PIC already devote significant national resources to this subsector and this trend will continue as benefits are realised.

5. Sustainable development issues are different for offshore resources, which have been addressed mainly on a regional basis due to the highly migratory nature of the key tuna stocks. In the case of offshore fisheries national efforts to establish viable enterprises have been ongoing for many years and access to EEZs by Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFN) has been granted as a means of gaining experience and necessary technology as well as for revenue generation
6. DWFN access creates risk against the sustainability of the offshore tuna fisheries if management measures are not in place. All PIC have some form of fisheries conservation and management measures in place for offshore fisheries, with many now moving towards the development of more complex fisheries management plans to consolidate national objectives for the fishery and determine appropriate measures to pursue these. Among the range of measures implemented by PIC to support management efforts are the regional vessel register, vessel monitoring system, and minimum terms and conditions of access which requires statistical reports necessary for monitoring the sustainability of tuna fisheries. In regard to economic development, in some PIC, priority is now being given to establishing small-scale short-range tuna longline fisheries to encourage indigenous entrepreneurship and private enterprise. In other PIC this is also a step in the development of large-scale industrial fisheries. Parallel with developments at the national level, multilateral high level consultations between Forum countries, Pacific Island territories and DWFNs on conservation and management of the tuna resources are progressing. The consultative process is now at a critical stage and support for this process is a high priority.
7. The implementation of the range of fisheries management measures needed for sustainable development places an enormous burden on SIDS and on their resources and financial capacities. Human resource development is an essential component in the sustainable development of marine resources. PIC are at various stages of developing their management schemes and most, if not all, require support to ensure sustainable development of their marine resources which is the key to the sustainability of the Pacific Island peoples.

SPC Heads of Fisheries. Noumea, October 1998