

COMMUNIQUÉ

Adopted by Ministers and Island Country Delegations and representatives of civil society groups meeting in the final High-Level Session of the Pacific Regional Consultation on Water in Small Island Countries, Sigatoka, Fiji Islands, 3rd August 2002, as part of the preparatory process for the 3rd World Water Forum

Recognising, the unique geographic and physical characteristics, as well as the fragile nature of water resources in small and vulnerable island countries which impact on the health and well-being of our peoples, environment and the development of our island economies;

We, Ministers and Island Country Delegations and representatives of civil society groups, with responsibilities for water affairs from 18 small island developing states from the Pacific, as well as East Timor, and Maldives, met in Sigatoka, Fiji Islands 29 July – 3 August to share knowledge particularly within and across the small island country regions, and agree to an action plan for sustainable water management in our islands.

We acknowledge the work of national governments, supported by regional and international intergovernmental organizations, and civil society groups to achieve sustainable resource management of water.

We recommit ourselves to sustainable water management components of Agenda 21 agreed to ten years ago in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the Global Action Plan for Small Island Developing States agreed to in Barbados 1994 and the outcomes of the 5-year reviews undertaken in 1997 and 1999.

We associate and reaffirm as appropriate ourselves with the outcomes of the meeting on freshwater held in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, which identified financing, capacity building and governance as key constraints. This Consultation recognises these as important in small island countries and adds political will as another important constraint which makes a set of four key constraints that need to be overcome for sustainable management of the region's water resources.

We urge the international community to pursue the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that target the vital role of sustainable water management contributing to reducing poverty, improving health and livelihoods for all people.

Recognising that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, later this month, 26 August - 5 September and the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan in March 2003, decide that:

For water resources management the following are key:

- 1: Strengthen the capacity of small island countries to conduct water resources assessment and monitoring as a key component of sustainable water resources management.
- 2: Implement strategies to utilise appropriate methods and technologies for water supply and sanitation systems and approaches for rural and peri-urban communities in small islands.
- 3: Implement strategies to improve the management of water resources, and surface and groundwater catchments (watersheds) for the benefit of all sectors including local communities, development interests and the environment.

For island vulnerability the following are key:

- 1: There is a need for capacity development to enhance the application of climate information to cope with the impacts of climate variability and change.
- 2: Change the paradigm for dealing with Island Vulnerability from disaster response to hazard assessment and risk management, particularly in Integrated Water Resource Management.

For awareness the following are key:

- 1: A high quality participatory framework should be adopted at the National level to allow for open participation of communities in sustainable water and wastewater management.
- 2: Access to, and availability of information on sustainable water and wastewater management should be provided to all levels of society.
- 3: Water and sanitation education should be mainstreamed into the formal education system.
- 4: Improve communication and coordination of all stakeholders in sustainable water and wastewater management including government, civil society and the private sector.

For technology the following are key:

1. Appropriate and well-governed institutions, infrastructure and information will support sustainable water and wastewater management.
- 2: Utility collaboration in regional partnership to reduce unaccounted for water will significantly improve the sustainability of utilities and reduce the need for developing new water resources.

3. Island specific regional training programmes should be developed, resulting in sustainable levels of skilled and knowledgeable people and communities within the water and wastewater sector.

For institutional arrangements the following are key:

- 1: Work together through a comprehensive consultative process, encompassing good governance to develop a shared National vision for managing water resources in a sustainable manner.
- 2: Develop national instruments including national visions, policies, plans and legislation appropriate to each small island countries taking into account the particular social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the citizens of each country.
- 3: Promote and establish appropriate institutional arrangements resourced sufficiently to enable effective management of water resources and the provision of appropriate water services.
- 4: Recognise and share the water resource management knowledge and skills of all stakeholders at a National and regional level in the process of developing and implementing the National Vision.
- 5: National and regional leadership in water resource management should be recognised and encouraged.

For financing the following are key:

- 1: Create a better and sustainable environment for investment by both the public and private sector, by developing and implementing National, sector and strategic plans that identify the economic, environmental and social costs of different services and to develop pricing policies, which ensures the proper allocation of resources for the water sector.
- 2: Establish financially viable enterprises for water and sanitation that result in improved performance by developing appropriate financial and cost recovery policies, tariffs, billing and collection systems, financial and operating systems.
- 3: Reduce costs through improved operational efficiency, using benchmarking, development of water loss reduction programmes and improved work practices.
- 4: Ensure access for the poor to water and sanitation services by developing pro poor policies that include tariffs with lifeline blocks and transparent and targeted subsidies.
- 5: Achieve sustainable rural water and sanitation services at a community level through developing strategies that incorporate mechanisms for appropriate financing and capacity building.

We endorse the Regional Action Plan prepared during the Consultation, to address these key issues for the water sector in the pursuit of sustainable development in our islands. (Copy of the Regional Action Plan attached to this Communiqué).

We urge each country representative to actively promote the priorities outlined in this Communiqué with their country delegations attending (i) the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting in Suva, later this month, and (ii) attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

We agree that the Type 2 Partnership/Initiative on water being submitted by the Pacific delegations at the WSSD must provide an opportunity to secure support to implement the Regional Action Plan and urge donors and partners to do likewise.

Acknowledging the valuable contribution of the International Secretariat of the Dialogue on Water and Climate and the Caribbean delegates to the importance given to island vulnerability, we commend this Plan to the Caribbean Consultative Meeting to be held in October 2002 as part of the preparations for the 3rd World Water Forum, and support partnerships between the small island regions.

We request the organisers of this Consultation, SOPAC and the ADB, to transmit this Communiqué and the Regional Action Plan to the 3rd World Water Forum, in order that the priority actions needed to support sustainable water resources management in our small island countries are endorsed.


Finally we acknowledge that the above meetings and fora are important steps on the road to addressing the vital water issues confronting our small island countries, and reaffirm our commitment to strive towards the realisation of sustainable water resources management for the benefit of the peoples of the small island countries.


MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Recognising, the unique geographic and physical characteristics, as well as fragile nature of water resources in our small and vulnerable island countries which impact on the health and well-being of our peoples, environment and the development of our island economies;


We declare that on behalf of our governments, we endorse the Communiqué and Regional Action Plan developed during the Pacific Regional Consultation attached to this Declaration.

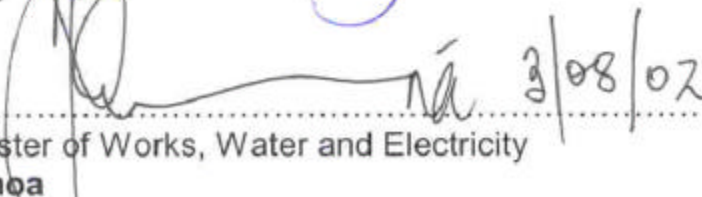
Signed:


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Executive Director, American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA)
American Samoa


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FOR Minister of Works
Cook Islands

ON  (Sec of State)
.....
Ministry of Transportation, Communication and Public Works
East Timor

(for)  03/08/02 (DIRECTOR OF WORKS)
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Minister of Public Works
Niue


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Minister of Works, Water and Electricity
Samoa

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Minister, Department of Transportation, Communication & Infrastructure
Federated States of Micronesia

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Minister of Works, Telecommunications, Energy, Road Transport and Shipping
Fiji Islands

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Minister of Works and Energy
Kiribati

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Minister of Public Works,
Marshall Islands

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Minister of Health
Republic of the Maldives

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Minister of Works and Community Services
Nauru

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Minister of Rural Affairs
New Caledonia

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Minister of Resources and Development
Palau

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Minister of National Planning and Rural Development
Papua New Guinea

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Minister of Mines, Energy and Water Resources
Solomon Islands

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Minister of Lands and Natural Resources,
Tonga

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Minister of Works, Communications and Transport
Tuvalu

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Minister of Lands and Natural Resources
Vanuatu