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United Nations Development Programme
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)



To: Mr. Avani Vaish, GEF
Ms. Kathy McKinnon, World Bank
Ms. Cyrie Sendashonga, UNEP
Mr. Marc Auer, CBD
Mr. Madhav Gadgil, STAP

Date: 7 July 1998

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Pages: (8 including this sheet)

From: Eduardo Fuentes
Principal Technical Adviser
Biodiversity

Subject: Submission of Biodiversity Enabling Activity for Cook Islands

Dear Colleagues,

Please find enclosed for your comments the enabling activity for Cook Islands entitled "National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Country Report to the CoP."

Regards.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Global Environment Facility

Project Brief

Country:	The Cook Islands
Project Title:	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and Report to the COP
GEF Focal Area:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Country Eligibility:	CBD Ratification 20 April 1993
GEF Financing:	US\$ 194,155
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP
National Executing Agency:	Environment Council of Tu'anga Taporoporo
GEF Political Focal Point:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Estimated Start Date:	August 1998
Project Duration:	Ten months

Background

1. The Cook Islands consist of 15 islands with a total land area of 237 sq. km scattered over some 1.8 million sq. km of the central South Pacific. They are formed geographically into a Northern Group of low atolls and a Southern Group of high volcanic islands. The Southern Group comprises 89% of the total land area. Rarotonga, the largest island, is 67.1 sq. km, has 54% of the country's total population, and is a strongly dissected volcanic island rising to 652 metres above sea level.
2. Despite being confined to 11% of the land area, agriculture remains the Cook Islands main activity with 85% of the households classified as "agriculturally active". Of these, 79% crop on a subsistence basis. Marine resources are a significant source of the country's protein requirement. Tourism is the current outstanding area of economic activity and its significance is expected to grow.
3. Vegetation in Cook Islands includes mountain rainforests on Rarotonga, "makatea" rainforest on the raised-islands of Mangaia, Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro, and fernlands on the higher islands. The lowland coastal forests have been mainly destroyed for dwellings, horticulture and Coconut plantations. Pukapuka is the only Northern Group atoll with a significant coastal forest. In general the significant terrestrial biodiversity is located in the uplands of Rarotonga and in the "makatea" forests of the raised-islands. The uninhabited islands of Suwarrow and Takutea support regionally significant seabird colonies. There is a significant reef-flat, lagoonal and pelagic biodiversity.
4. The Cook Islands' growing population, increasing tourism and expectations for a material lifestyle have increased human influences on the environment. Soil erosion has accelerated due to extensive tilling of thin soils on steep terrain. Siltation from soil erosion, along with pesticide and fertilizer run-off is impacting offshore marine areas, particularly coral reefs. The over-harvesting of marine resources, including destructive fishing practices, together with increased sewage and other waste discharges have adversely affected the marine habitat. Lagoons and reefs surrounding the major islands are being fished excessively and could pose potential yield problems in the future. In the terrestrial environment, the progressive loss of habitat and invasion of alien species is putting

endemic species at risk.

5. The establishment of the Cook Islands Conservation Service in 1986 was a measure of the Government's environmental concern. In 1995, the Government repealed the Conservation Act and replaced it with the Rarotonga Environment Act, a significant part of which is the provision for Environmental Impact Assessments for all development activities. Prior to the new Act a limited budget focused the work programme of the Conservation Service into five main areas: planning, coastal management, wildlife, environmental education, and vai rakau maori (traditional herbal medicines).

In addition, in 1990 the Prime Minister established the Cook Islands Natural Heritage Project to record and integrate the scientific and traditional knowledge on Cook Islands plants and animals, and to make this information available to the general public. This Project, formerly of the Prime Minister's Department, is presently under the jurisdiction of the Environment Council of the Tu'anga Taporoporo.

6. The Rarotonga Environment Act is currently limited in its application to only Rarotonga. However, with the increasing of environmental awareness throughout the outer islands in the Cook Islands, provisions for the addition of outer islands under the framework of the Act will be examined by the Crown Law Office. This would have to be with the agreement of the Island Councils of each island. To date, at least four outer islands have requested inclusion under the framework Environment Act. The Act maintains the Tu'anga Taporoporo as a corporate body, independent of day-to-day public service administration. Tu'anga Taporoporo consists of an Environment Council appointed by the Minister of the Environment, and the Environment Service. In addition, traditional conservation practices are still applied in some islands where they are used to preserve or restrict access to land, lagoons and reef areas for the conservation and sustainable use of resources.

7. In 1993, the Cook Islands developed a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) as part of a wider regional initiative coordinated by the Asian Development Bank, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), IUCN, and UNDP. The NEMS aims to integrate environmental considerations into economic development, improve awareness, manage resources and control pollution. The NEMS is linked with sector plans such as the Tourism Master Plan, together aiming for environmentally and socially sensitive economic development. Since the NEMS does not provide specific coverage on biodiversity the Cook Islands has decided to develop a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP).

Project Objectives and Short Description

8. This enabling activity project will permit the Cook Islands to formulate a BSAP and a country report to the Conference of the Parties. The project will be coordinated by the Natural Heritage Project of the Tu'anga Taporoporo, which will develop the BSAP through a process of participatory planning and stakeholder consultation. The BSAP preparation will involve gathering existing information on the status and threats to biodiversity, cross-sectoral issues and obligations arising from the CBD and recent COP guidance. Based on a participatory analysis of this information strategies and implementable action plans for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity will be developed. The BSAP will be country-driven and reflect national priorities and goals.

9. The Natural Heritage Project will coordinate the establishment of a steering committee to direct

the implementation of project activities. The steering committee will comprise representatives from various ministries, the Environment Council, the Environment Service, NGOs and other stakeholders, such as House of Ariki, Te Koutu Nui, and the Taparoporoanga Ipukarea Society Incorporated. It will provide overall guidance to the preparation of the BSAP, ensure the participation of relevant stakeholders and sectoral integration and establish a work plan. The steering committee will meet quarterly to review the progress of the project.

10. The steering committee will nominate a National Coordinator to oversee the activities of a small project team comprised of a lead national consultant and a supporting consultant, both experienced in biodiversity analysis and planning. Short-term consultants will be hired to carry out specific studies and analyses to support the project team.

11. The lead national consultant will provide familiarization with methodologies for participatory biodiversity planning, strategic analysis and planning for biodiversity management as an early activity. He/she will also facilitate a review of the WRI/IUCN/UNEP biodiversity planning guidelines and UNEP Country Study guidelines by the steering committee prior to developing a detailed work plan.

12. A comprehensive stocktaking and assessment of existing information on the status of threats to biodiversity in the CKI will be undertaken. Relevant national environmental and cross-sectoral legislation, environmental initiatives, biodiversity issues and actions will be examined, analyzed and gaps will be identified and ranked. Indigenous knowledge related to biodiversity management will be specifically addressed. Threats and pressures contributing to the loss of biodiversity will be identified and their root causes analyzed. The results of the assessment and inventory will be synthesized into reports.

13. These reports will be presented at the first National Workshop. Participants will be drawn from Government, NGOs, private sector and outer island representatives with a stake and interest in biodiversity conservation. The participants will be oriented with the project, its objectives, and familiarized with causes and implications of biodiversity loss. Participants will then analyze the reports to set priorities for actions and develop preliminary strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

14. Subsequent to the workshop, the project team will carry out a detailed analysis of the issues and options identified during the workshop in relation to each island. This analysis will involve detailed consultation with a cross-section of stakeholders on each island, including the Island Council, the Aronga Mana (tribal chiefs) and other key individuals. Based on these consultations, detailed implementable action plans defining specific actions, roles, responsibilities and capacities of actors will be developed for each island.

15. The outcomes of the workshop and the stakeholder consultations will be drawn into a draft BSAP by the project team. A second and final national workshop will review the draft BSAP and obtain a broad consensus of the stakeholders. The BSAP, once finalized, will be submitted to the Cook Islands cabinet for formal approval.

16. The project team will also prepare the National report by analyzing and synthesizing information from various existing reports. Upon completion of the project a first national report will be prepared and submitted for Cabinet approval prior to formal submission to the CBD.

Coverage without Duplication

17. The BSAP will consolidate and build upon existing information in the Cook Islands. The BSAP will complement the NEMS' goal of improving environmental management and integrating environmental considerations into economic development. The broader guidelines provided by NEMS as well as other important documents relevant to biodiversity in the Cook Islands, e.g., Tourism Master Plan, ADB Urban Infrastructure Report, State of the Environment Report, among others, will be examined for guidance.

Best Practice

18. The project will follow the methodology recommended in the "Guide to the Convention on Biological Diversity" (IUCN, 1994), the "Guidelines for Preparing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans" (WRI/IUCN/UNEP) and the UNEP Country Study Guidelines. As recommended by these guidelines, the project will strengthen in-country capacity to facilitate development of a country-driven and participatory BSAP.

Time Plan and Sequencing

19. Activities are expected to start in August 1998 and last for ten months.

Time Plan and Sequencing

Activity / Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Establishment of Steering Committee	x									
Steering Committee meetings	x			x					x	
Familiarization with participatory BD approaches	x									
Stocktaking & Assessment	x	x	x	x						
First National Workshop				x						
Nationwide consultation and preparation of BSAP and national report.				x	x	x	x	x		
Presentation of National Report and BSAP at Rarotonga Workshop								x		
Finalization of National Report and BSAP									x	
Cabinet approval of National Report and BSAP									x	
Dissemination of National report and BSAP										x
Submission of National Report to the COP										x

Project Financing

20. The cost of this project is estimated at US\$ 194,155.

Activity	Product	Process	Total US\$
<i>Stocktaking and Inventory of Information -</i>	22,500		22,500
National consultants	16,000		16,000
Documentation, travel, misc.	6,500		6,500
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	19,000	78,000	97,000
International consultant	8,000	4,000	12,000
National consultants	9,000	11,000	20,000
Steering committee meeting	2,000	3,000	5,000
First national workshop		25,500	25,500
Outer Island consultations		22,500	22,500
Documentation, travel, misc.		12,000	12,000
<i>Preparation of Strategy and Action Plan</i>	23,000	29,000	52,000
National consultants	10,000	9,000	19,000
Second national workshop		15,000	15,000
Documentation, travel, misc.		5,000	5,000
Dissemination	5,000		5,000
Translation/publication	8,000		8,000
<i>Preparation of First National Report</i>	17,000		17,000
Preparation	6,000		6,000
Translation/publication	8,000		8,000
Promotion	3,000		3,000
<i>Coordination and management</i>	2,445	3,210	5,655
Total	83,945	110,210	194,155

Deviations from Criteria and Norms

21. This proposed project is consistent with GEF enabling activity criteria and norms.

Institutional Framework and Project Implementation

22. The Natural Heritage Project will coordinate this project establishing a steering committee to provide overall guidance. The Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from different ministries, NGOs and other stakeholders, and the Taporoporoanga Ipukarea Society Incorporated.

23. A National Coordinator will be appointed to oversee the implementation of the project and serve as a liaison between the Steering Committee and a project team composed of the Lead Consultant and an Assistant Consultant. The project team will be responsible for planning, management, and completion of all project activities. Short-term consultants will be hired to carry out specific tasks as necessary.

24. A first national workshop will bring together all levels of government, community, private sector, and NGOs. Further consultations and verification for a draft BSAP will be carried out in the Outer Islands by the project team, and concluded in the final consultative workshop on Rarotonga.

J. Activity Matrix

Enabling Activity Commitment	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participation	Comments
	Planning, Execution	Institutional Strengthening	Training		
<i>Stocktaking and Assessment</i>					
- biodiversity and biological resources	x				1
- cross sectoral issues	x				2
- policy and regulatory framework	x				3
- institutional and human capacity	x				
- analysis of root causes of biodiversity loss	x				
- technologies for conservation and sustainable use	x				
- activities with adverse impacts	x				
- existing measures and programmes	x				
- preliminary statement of objectives	x				
- identification of gaps	x				
- assessment of existing needs	x				
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options to meet the Objectives of the CBD</i>					
- strategies for conservation	x	x	x	x	4
- strategies for sustainable use	x	x	x	x	4
- strategies for benefit sharing	x	x	x	x	4
<i>Planning and Preparation of a Strategy and Plan</i>					
- national strategy	x	x	x	x	
- national action plan	x	x	x	x	
<i>Preparation of First National Report</i>					
- first national report	x			x	

Legend: x = activity undertaken by the project

Footnotes:

1. Disparate scientific research conducted in the Cook Islands since World War II and recent qualitative inventories contain data relevant to the assessment of biological diversity. However, no overall assessment of existing information on CKI's biological diversity has been done.
2. The NEMS is linked with sector plans such as the Tourism Master Plan, together aiming for environmentally and socially sensitive economic development. However, there is no overarching strategy or action plan for biodiversity conservation and management.
3. The Conservation Act (1995) was repealed and replaced with the Rarotonga Environment Act (1994-5). There is no other similar act that applies to the other islands. The project will assess the policy and regulatory framework based on the current reality of resource exploitation and the status of biodiversity.
4. The BSAP will be the first attempt of the Cook Islands to outline strategies for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing. Although an NEMS exists, it essentially proposes 4 broad objectives related to biodiversity conservation: 1. support sustainable practices for the utilization of the coastal zone; 2. support sustainable use of the marine resources; 3. support sustainable use of land resources; and 4. establish and manage protected areas. The BSAP will factor in biodiversity concerns and management into sectoral strategies and plans and additionally develop implementable action plans.

03/07/98

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URGENT



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

FAX NO: 1 212 906 6362
TO: UNDP/GEF Support Programme for Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
ATTENTION: Ajay Gupta
FROM: Trevor Pitt, Director, Policy and Analysis
DATE: 3 July 1998
FILE: 204.316
NO: 967
SUBJECT: GEF COOK ISLANDS PROJECT - NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN, AND REPORT TO THE COP
TOTAL PAGES: One

Dear Sir

Please accept this letter as our Government's formal endorsement of the above project, submitted earlier for consideration by the GEF Secretariat.

I understand this endorsement should have reached you earlier and as such, apologise for this late notification. Your cooperation and assistance has been most appreciated and we look forward to your advice, in due course.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Pitt
For Secretary

CC: Tim Boyle, Asia/Pacific Coordinator
Fax - 1-212-9065825

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JUL 06	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION
TO	
<i>Mr Boyle</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTION COMPLETED	
<input type="checkbox"/> ACKNOWLEDGE	
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