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**Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries:  
Sustainable development and Pacific island developing  
countries: Preparation for Rio+20 and beyond**

## Summary of Pacific preparations for Rio+20: The evolving “special case” of small island developing States

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

The present document is issued in response to two General Assembly resolutions: (a) 64/236 on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in which the Assembly decided, among other things, to convene the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference) in Brazil in June 2012; and (b) 65/2 on the outcome document of the High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The Mauritius Strategy remains the main global strategy for the sustainable development of small island developing States. For the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy, ESCAP took the lead in the Asia-Pacific region and, on the basis of national and regional assessments, convened the Pacific High-level Dialogue on the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation in Vanuatu in February 2010. The outcome of that Dialogue, the Port Vila Outcome Statement, was submitted to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session, whereupon the Commission adopted resolution 66/2, which, together with the Port Vila Outcome Statement, contributed to the formulation of General Assembly resolution 65/2.

The key message emanating from the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy is that the special case of small island developing States, first recognized at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992, should be strengthened at the Rio+20 Conference. While the perennial challenges of smallness and isolation remain to a large extent, new global threats associated with climate change and natural disasters, and food, fuel and energy crises have worsened the vulnerability of Pacific small island developing States while reducing their response capacity. These have threatened the survival of some Pacific small island developing States while putting enormous strain on the Pacific Ocean, which, at a third of the world's surface, represents one of the greatest global commons for humanity.

The main outcome of the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy was the General Assembly calling for “improved and additional measures” and “coordinated, balanced and integrated actions” to further implement the Mauritius Strategy. The forthcoming Rio+20 Conference is the opportunity to give impetus to these findings through the adoption of a green economy towards sustainable development and poverty eradication together with an enabling institutional framework. It is an opportunity as well to renew political commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Programme of Action) and the Mauritius Strategy as well as of other major summits on sustainable development.

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## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/236 on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the General Assembly decided, among other things, to convene the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (the Rio+20 Conference) in Brazil in June 2012, stating that the objective of the Conference would be to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. The focus of the Conference would include the themes of: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development. The Conference is expected to result in a focused political document.

2. The purpose of the present document is to report on the preparations of the Pacific subregion towards the Rio+20 Conference. For small island developing States, the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,<sup>1</sup> which remains the main global strategy for sustainable development in small island developing States, provides the assessment required of the progress made in implementing sustainable development. The five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy and its findings are summarized in paragraphs 7 to 11.

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

3. The key messages which the Pacific has advocated throughout the Rio+20 preparatory process include the following:

(a) The special case of small island developing States, first made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and widely supported throughout the preparatory process, needs to be highlighted;

(b) The Pacific Ocean, which at a third of the earth's surface is one of the greatest global commons, needs a much stronger collective commitment for its sustainable management and development;

(c) Effectively addressing the climate change threat is fundamental not only to the sustainable development and survival of Pacific small island developing States, it is critical as well to the future survivability of the whole planet;

(d) While all the Rio principles<sup>2</sup> need to be reaffirmed, two principles in particular need to be highlighted: (i) the principle of common but differentiated responsibility; and (ii) the principle of the precautionary approach;

(e) The need for commitments that are new, additional and concrete, including special measures or "safeguards" within the new institutional framework and architecture that ensures greater attention to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

4. The key messages and positions of the Pacific were first formally formulated at the Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting, which was held in Apia, Samoa, on 21 and 22 July 2011 (paras. 13-18). They were then carried forward and supported in a number of related meetings, including the joint meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Auckland, New Zealand, on 7 and 8 September 2011 (paras. 19-21) and the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Seoul on 19 and 20 October 2011 (para. 22).

5. ESCAP has undertaken a wide range of activities in support of Pacific small island developing States in this process which are outlined in paragraphs 23-35. These activities include those done with and through: (a) the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) (paras. 29-30); (b) the Permanent Representatives of Pacific small island developing States to the United Nations (paras. 32-35); (c) the United Nations country team and the Pacific United Nations Development Assistance Framework (para. 28); and (d) the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States (para. 31).

6. The report concludes with the recommendation that the Commission renew its support for the Pacific small island developing States based not only on their unique and particular vulnerabilities and limited capacities, but also on the fact that the Asia-Pacific region has a strong shared interest in areas such as the sustainable management of the Pacific Ocean and addressing the climate change threat (paras. 36-39).

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<sup>2</sup> See *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

## II. Assessing progress and gaps

7. For the Pacific small island developing States, the main assessment of progress and gaps was made in 2010 under the five-year review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Programme of Action)<sup>3</sup> and the Mauritius Strategy. At the end of the review in the Asia-Pacific region, the Commission adopted resolution 66/2 of 19 May 2010 on the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in which, among other things, it (a) agreed to seek from the international community further inputs for addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States; (b) noted that the Pacific small island developing States had already undertaken strong actions at the national and regional levels to further advance the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy; (c) requested the Executive Secretary to ensure that the activities of the Commission, consistent with its programme of work, took into account the special needs of the Pacific small island developing States; (d) also requested the Executive Secretary to continue to review, analyse and disseminate information, as appropriate, on economic and social development in Pacific small island developing States; (e) encouraged the United Nations system to function as a cohesive platform to assist small island developing States, including by making better use of the United Nations intergovernmental process at the regional level to report on implementation; and (f) requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.

8. As was noted by the Commission in its resolution 66/2, Pacific small island developing States had taken strong actions at the national and regional levels to help implement the Mauritius Strategy. For example, the Pacific Plan,<sup>4</sup> which had been endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2005 and recognized by the Commission in its resolution 62/12 of 12 April 2006, had been a key milestone representing an agreed regional framework for promoting sustainable development through regional cooperation and integration. The five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy also found over 30 regional policies, plans, initiatives and strategies being implemented across a range of sectors, including energy, water, conservation, fisheries, agriculture, forests and transport.

9. Unfortunately, the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy also concluded that the vulnerabilities of the Pacific small island developing States were increasing while their capacity to cope had not. The review noted the persistence of many old challenges of smallness and isolation. It also found that the recent food, financial and fuel crises had compounded the ongoing impacts of climate change and had served to underscore the need for renewed commitment and effort. The review of the Millennium Development Goals undertaken in 2010 had also found that performance varied but was generally poor in the Pacific small island developing States.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the *Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration*, October 2005 (updated version available from [www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific\\_Plan\\_Nov\\_2007\\_version.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific_Plan_Nov_2007_version.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> See General Assembly resolution 65/1 of 22 September 2010.

10. Among the small island developing States, progress had been made in gender, health, education and the environment. However, overall progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals was uneven and many had expressed concern that poverty reduction and debt sustainability were lagging. It was found that most of the small island developing States had not achieved sustained high levels of economic growth owing in part to the ongoing negative impacts of the financial and economic crisis.

11. As a result of the global findings from the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy, the General Assembly, in its resolution 65/2, reaffirmed its commitment to support the efforts of small island developing States in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities and called not only for “improved and additional measures” but also for coordinated, balanced and integrated actions to further implement the Mauritius Strategy. In noting the shortcomings in the institutional support for small island developing States and the Mauritius Strategy, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report containing concrete recommendations for enhancing support for the small island developing States.

### **III. Key messages and milestones**

12. In the light of the findings of the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy and their own experience, Pacific small island developing States have consistently emphasized during the Rio+20 process the specific and unique challenges they face in achieving sustainable development. They have also highlighted climate change and natural disasters as the most critical challenges facing them. Additional challenges include human capacity constraints, infrastructure bottlenecks, limited economic opportunities, the effect of global crises, protection of biodiversity and shared resources, energy security and urbanization. Furthermore, as Pacific small island developing States collectively have stewardship over the Pacific Ocean, the sustainable management and use of the oceans has featured prominently in the Pacific’s submissions for the Rio+20 Conference. These messages and others have emerged from the consultations and meetings conducted in the Pacific and in the larger Asia-Pacific region, most of it with ESCAP funding and coordination support.

#### **A. The Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting**

13. The Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting was held in Apia on 21 and 22 July 2011.<sup>6</sup> The meeting was hosted by the Government of Samoa and co-organized with ESCAP and members of CROP. Funding was provided by ESCAP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs with contributions from the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Children’s Fund. The Meeting was attended by 2 heads of government and 11 ministers along with senior officials and other representatives of governments as well as representatives of international and regional organizations, development partners, civil society and the media.

14. In his opening address, the Prime Minister of Samoa, Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, highlighted the importance of the balance between the environmental, economic and social dimensions of development and of ensuring that the attainment of one was not to the detriment of the others.

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<sup>6</sup> See “Final record of discussions and decisions” of the Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting, Apia, 21-22 July 2011 (available from [www.unescap.org/epoc/pdf/Outcomes-Documents-Final-Rio+20-Pacific-Prep-Meeting.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/epoc/pdf/Outcomes-Documents-Final-Rio+20-Pacific-Prep-Meeting.pdf)).

While noting the need to ensure that the owners of natural capital are not short-changed, the Prime Minister agreed that green growth encourages what he called the “right kind of growth”, viewing it as an outcome-oriented concept aimed at improving human well-being without undermining the resource base on which current and future generations depended.<sup>7</sup>

15. To underscore his country’s commitment to greening growth, the Prime Minister noted that Samoa was aiming to be a carbon-neutral economy by 2020. He highlighted the need for Pacific countries to receive an equitable share of marine resources, a goal which had remained elusive. In looking ahead, he stated that the “green economy” theme was an opportunity to develop goals and priorities that would go beyond 2015.<sup>8</sup>

16. Regarding the Rio+20 theme of a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, the Meeting agreed that: (a) national country analyses should be completed and form the basis of country-specific strategies for greening economies; (b) enabling policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks should be developed in order for green growth strategies to be pursued; (c) fiscal and budgetary reforms are necessary to achieve a low-carbon green economy and sustainable development, to internalize environmental costs and to harmonize the imperatives of environmental sustainability, social inclusiveness and economic growth; (d) a regional green growth road map could be developed through the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group to assist Pacific small island developing States and support the implementation of the Pacific Plan.<sup>9</sup>

17. Regarding the institutional framework theme of the Rio+20 Conference, the Meeting agreed that: (a) the overall objective of sustainable development must be at the centre of all work in Pacific small island developing States by international, regional and subregional organizations; (b) the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) or its equivalent provides the best framework to integrate the opportunities that green economy approaches may offer; (c) for members of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Cairns Compact Peer Review process is beneficial as a means of strengthening policy development, planning, budgeting, and aid management; (d) partnerships have proven to be a useful tool for promoting sustainable development and a number of new ones will be tabled at the Rio+20 Conference; (e) the Pacific NSDS Regional Support Partnership and its subsidiary green growth partnership could be used by Pacific small island developing States to improve their NSDS preparation as well as their review and implementation of green growth; (f) climate change financing provides a significant opportunity for resourcing the climate-resilient and low-carbon elements of green economy initiatives, and donor partners should be aware that burdensome conditions can prevent the smallest and most vulnerable from accessing aid; and (g) some innovative national financing options and tax incentives are already being implemented in the Pacific, and experiences from these initiatives should be captured and shared to foster similar approaches in the Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, paras. 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, para. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, para. 33.

18. The Meeting also agreed on a number of key messages to guide the participation of the Pacific small island developing States in the Rio+20 preparatory process:<sup>11</sup>

(a) The Pacific was renewing its own political commitment for sustainable development by adopting a “green economy in a blue world” approach which can also help the Pacific adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change. Valuable lessons could also be learned from the sustainable lifestyles that have long been practiced in the Pacific, for example, on the stewardship of the Pacific Ocean for present and future generations, something which is ingrained within Pacific island cultures;

(b) Occupying about one third of the earth’s surface, the Pacific Ocean provides a significant global environmental, social and developmental contribution to sustainable development. This global resource is under threat from climate change and unsustainable practices, and, while the Pacific has done much at the national and regional levels to sustainably develop, manage and conserve oceanic and marine resources, the international community also needs to take immediate steps to strengthen the governance of oceans in order to sustainably manage this global resource. The Pacific would therefore wish to ensure that the “blue economy” aspects of sustainable development are featured prominently at the Rio+20 Conference;

(c) Thirdly, while the Pacific small island developing States are not responsible for climate change or the financial, fuel and food crises facing the world, these have the impact of delaying or even jeopardizing development gains in the Pacific. In this regard, the Pacific also recognizes that it has little control over the carbon emissions and excessive resource use that result from unsustainable production and consumption patterns in industrialized countries. The Pacific is also deeply concerned that current levels of economic activity will cause a temperature rise of greater than 1.5 degrees, which will not only destroy coral reefs and ecosystems and undermine sources of livelihood for Pacific peoples, but also threaten the very existence of some of the Pacific countries. While the Pacific was committed to pursuing a green economy transformation, including through all relevant climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, the international community must accept that it bears the moral responsibility and, in turn, the financial burden for mitigation and adaptation. The international community should take immediate action to mainstream sustainable development into its operations and ensure that international systems and institutions, including the United Nations, mainstream the outcomes and priorities of the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy in their plans and programmes;

(d) Fourthly, the special consideration given to small island developing States has been a prominent feature of both the Rio+20 Conference and the World Summit for Sustainable Development. The Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy have provided a framework by which small island developing States have taken significant steps to address their sustainable development challenges. However, as evidenced by the recent Pacific regional report for the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy,<sup>12</sup> the special vulnerabilities of Pacific small island developing States remain and, in some cases, have increased as a result of (i) the impact of climate change,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 34.

<sup>12</sup> ESCAP, “Sustainable development in the Pacific: Progress and challenges” (available from [www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5/docs/regional/pacific/Pacific\\_Regional\\_Synthesis-MSI5-Final.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/regional/pacific/Pacific_Regional_Synthesis-MSI5-Final.pdf)).

(ii) natural disasters and (iii) the recent financial, food and fuel crises. Pacific small island developing States therefore reaffirmed the need to maintain special consideration of small island developing States at the Rio+20 Conference. In this regard, while there has been considerable development of global financing mechanisms, by and large, developed nations have not met their commitments to funding sustainable development or climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition, funds that have been channelled through global funding architecture have not been designed to accommodate the capacity constraints of small island developing States. As a result, small island developing States have not been able to access these effectively. Pacific small island developing States therefore seek the agreement of the international community to improve access to funds for the transformation of their economies and to ease the reporting burden faced by small island administrations.

## **B. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders**

19. A highlight of 2011 for the United Nations and the Pacific was the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Solomon Islands and Kiribati, which, among other things, promoted sustainable development and drew international attention to the struggle of small islands against climate change. The Secretary-General also attended the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, on 7 and 8 September 2011, at which issues associated with the Rio+20 Conference were discussed, resulting in the prioritization of issues surrounding sustainable development, including finance, capacity-building, oceans and climate change actions. Regarding international financing for sustainable development and climate change, the Forum Leaders “emphasized the need to secure appropriate governance arrangements, disbursement modalities and procedures which accommodate the particular constraints of Forum Island Countries in the development of the Green Climate Fund and in the operation of other financing opportunities”. They recognized “the unique capacity constraints facing Forum Island Countries” and called on “development partners, including global funds, to ensure that capacity funding for Forum Island Countries is flexible...to support capacity supplementation and institutional strengthening”.<sup>13</sup>

20. The Pacific Forum Leaders and the Secretary-General issued a joint statement<sup>14</sup> on how to address the challenges faced by Pacific island countries through, among other things, the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Pacific Plan. The statement stressed that climate change and ocean acidification remained the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. It emphasized the need for an ambitious reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, sufficient to enable the survival and viability of all Pacific small island developing States and for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to deliver a comprehensive outcome consistent with this objective. It stressed the need to address in all relevant international forums, including but not limited to UNFCCC, the General Assembly and the

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<sup>13</sup> Communiqué of the forty-second Pacific Islands Forum, Auckland, New Zealand, 7-8 September 2011 (Available from [www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2011%20Forum%20Communique%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2011%20Forum%20Communique%20FINAL.pdf)).

<sup>14</sup> The joint statement of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and the Secretary-General, which was acknowledged by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/316, is available from [www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2011/joint-statement-of-pacific-islands-forum-leaders-un-secretary-general.html](http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2011/joint-statement-of-pacific-islands-forum-leaders-un-secretary-general.html).



Security Council, the urgent social, economic and security threats caused or exacerbated by the adverse impacts of ocean acidification and climate change, including the implications of sea level rise for the territorial integrity of Pacific small island developing States and their continued existence as viable dynamic communities. In this regard, it welcomed the open debate in the Security Council on the impact of climate change in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security and the issuance of a statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2011/15) in that regard.

21. The joint statement also stressed the critical importance of the sustainable development, management and conservation of the subregion's oceans and coastal and fishery resources as a source of livelihoods and income for communities, industries and governments, and of enabling Pacific small island developing States to enjoy a greater share of the benefits derived from those resources. The statement called for the "blue economy" issues to figure prominently at the Rio+20 Conference and urged the international community to tackle threats to marine ecosystems and work towards integrated oceans management and a global network of marine protected areas.

### **C. The Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**

22. The messages from the Apia Meeting and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting were conveyed to the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Seoul on 19 and 20 October 2011. In response, the Preparatory Meeting adopted the Seoul Outcome,<sup>15</sup> in which, among other things, it recognized that the small island developing States continue to face "many special and particular vulnerabilities" The Meeting highlighted the particular challenges of delivering a green economy in small island developing States and, in the face of asymmetries in responsibility and capacity, stressed the need to apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Reflecting on the efforts to define the green economy, the Chair of the Preparatory Meeting, in his summary, noted the emphasis placed by members on the need for flexibility in selecting those measures that are applicable to their own development context.<sup>16</sup> The Chair's Summary also noted that:

"Applying the theme of 'greening economies' in the 'blue world' context of the Pacific small island States and countries with a significant fisheries sectors and large numbers of coastal communities requires special focus and attention at Rio+20. This is important not just for their benefit but for the sake of the globe as a whole, which depends significantly on the state of the Pacific Ocean and its resources".<sup>17</sup>

## **IV. Coordination, integration and other activities**

23. Apart from the preparatory process described above, the ESCAP Pacific Office has undertaken a range of activities to assist through other mechanisms. Some of these took place before the formal preparatory process was started.

<sup>15</sup> The Seoul Outcome was subsequently endorsed by the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development (see E/ESCAP/68/10, chap. I).

<sup>16</sup> See annex I to the report of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (available online from [www.unescap.org/esd/environment/Rio20/pages/documents/APRPM\\_Report\\_final\\_0911.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/esd/environment/Rio20/pages/documents/APRPM_Report_final_0911.pdf)).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

For example, mention has been made of the role that the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy played in providing the assessment of progress and gaps in the small island developing States. The contribution of the ESCAP Pacific Office in the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy included funding and coordination of national assessments, a subregional report, a high-level policy dialogue and briefings, all of which contributed to Commission resolution 66/2 and General Assembly resolution 65/2, as described above.

24. The ESCAP Pacific Office also convened a special meeting during the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (Astana, 27 September-2 October 2010). The meeting was convened immediately after the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy in New York and provided an opportunity to brief participating ministers and other officials on the findings of the review and on the Ministerial Conference. It was that special meeting of the Pacific in Astana which agreed to convene a follow-up ministerial meeting in the Pacific to discuss further the relevance of green growth in the Pacific and, more pertinently, to prepare the subregion for the Rio+20 Conference. The result was the convening of Rio+20 Pacific Preparatory Meeting (Apia, July 2011).

25. An important outcome of the Apia Meeting was the agreement to conduct national assessments on opportunities for green economy in the Pacific, which would be essential for the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes. The national assessments are being funded and managed by ESCAP on behalf of the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group in the Pacific small island developing States except for Solomon Islands (funded by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme) and Papua New Guinea (funded by ESCAP and the United Nations Development Programme). To assist in advancing this work, Pacific subregional expert groups meetings were convened in Fiji, New Zealand and Palau.

26. Briefings are also being provided on a regular basis to Pacific member States on the status of the negotiations. A paper on the evolving special case of small island developing States was developed with the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group and circulated. The paper was part of the briefing materials for the Pacific delegations to the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Seoul, October 2011) as well as the meetings of the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

27. A number of technical assistance activities have been delivered in connection with the work on the Mauritius Strategy and the Rio+20 Conference. They have been aimed at assisting in reviewing NSDS and in improving the mainstreaming of sustainable development in planning and budgetary procedures as well as in demonstrating the viability of green technology (Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Samoa and Fiji).

#### **A. A United Nations aligned for sustainable development in the Pacific**

28. ESCAP played a key role in the efforts to mainstream the Mauritius Strategy and the Rio+20 themes into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the Pacific. As a result of these efforts, the mid-term review of the Pacific UNDAF recommended that the Mauritius Strategy, which was missing from the 2008-2012 UNDAF, be used as one of

the overarching strategies in the new UNDAF (2013-2017).<sup>18</sup> These efforts also facilitated agreement on the joint statement of the Secretary-General and the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, which highlighted the Rio+20 Conference, the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the Pacific Plan as the overarching strategies for future work of the United Nations in the Pacific. These have all helped place the sustainable development agenda and the special needs of small island developing States at the centre of the new Pacific UNDAF. The overarching mission of the new Pacific UNDAF is the “promotion of sustainable development and inclusive economic growth to address the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities affecting society at all levels and to ensure human security”. Its focus areas include environmental management, climate change and disaster risk management; inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction; basic services; and governance.<sup>19</sup> These focus areas not only cover the areas where small island developing States are particularly vulnerable, but they also address the central issue of Rio+20—sustainable development and poverty, inclusive growth and, as many member States are keen to highlight, governance (commitment) and basic services (concrete measures).

## **B. The CROP Sustainable Development Working Group**

29. A vital aspect of the work of ESCAP in this area is the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group, which is the subregional coordination mechanism for CROP agencies and other participating regional partners, including ESCAP. In line with the mandate of the regional commissions to work with and through regional and subregional organizations and as directed by Commission resolution 66/2, the ESCAP Pacific Office has worked closely with other members of the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group to support Pacific member States on issues pertaining to sustainable development, and in this regard on the Rio+20 preparatory process. Over the past year, this work has focused on preparatory work outlined above and on the following:

(a) Helping facilitate the Pacific Environment Forum, which focused on the Rio+20 Conference and was held in Apia on 12 September 2011, organized by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme;

(b) Continuing engagement with the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, where the ESCAP Pacific Office links with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other regions that are home to small island developing States;

(c) Developing policy briefs and submissions prior to the 1 November 2011 compilation-document deadline on the following priority issues: (i) the “special case of small island developing States” with a focus on Pacific small island developing States; (ii) the vital role of fisheries and marine resource management; and (iii) the capacity constraints of small island developing States;

<sup>18</sup> Pacific Subregion United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2008-2012) Midterm Review, May-July 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Outcome Statement, Pacific Multi-Country United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2013-2017): Meeting with Stakeholders, Nadi, Fiji, 27-28 October 2011.

(d) Liaising with the CROP Marine Sector Working Group to identify potential options for side events that may seek to publicize oceanic issues;

(e) Exploring funding avenues to facilitate the participation of members in the Rio+20 preparatory process;

(f) Support to the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum;

(g) Ongoing support and liaison with the Permanent Missions of Pacific small island developing States to the United Nations in New York, including through teleconferences.

30. As the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group has a standing mandate to coordinate policy as well technical assistance among its members (CROP and participating international organizations and non-State actors), its role will include coordinating the implementation of the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference. The ESCAP Pacific Office will therefore continue to coordinate its work with this working group, including through the Pacific NSDS Regional Support Partnership and its related green growth activities. There is also a proposal involving the Macroeconomic and Poverty and Development Division of ESCAP to conduct a meeting in the Pacific immediately after Rio+20, probably in July, to discuss plans for implementation.

#### **C. Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States**

31. Apart from collaborating with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on preparatory meetings and national assessments related to the Mauritius Strategy and the Rio+20 Conference, there is ongoing liaison between the ESCAP Pacific Office and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs regarding support to members on negotiations and projects and on other matters of interest to members of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States. This involves the exchange of briefs and information and attendance at meetings of the Group. This collaboration is expected to continue beyond the Rio+20 Conference as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will continue to coordinate interregional initiatives on small island developing States involving ESCAP, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, African, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean States, and the Indian Ocean Commission.

#### **D. The Permanent Representatives of Pacific small island developing States to the United Nations**

32. The Permanent Representatives of Pacific small island developing States to the United Nations in New York are leading the negotiations of the draft outcomes text on behalf of the Pacific. The Pacific has so far succeeded in helping keep such issues as the special case of the small island developing States, oceans, and climate change in the draft text, but negotiators from Pacific small island developing States need to seek stronger emphasis on these issues as well as concrete language on specific assistance in the areas of new and additional finances, technology transfer and capacity-building and supplementation. The argument for the special case of small island developing States is being made on the basis of the fact that responsibilities and capabilities are asymmetrically different between developed countries and small island developing States. As recognized internationally, while small island developing States contribute the least to climate change, resource

depletion and global economic crises, they also have the least, and in the case of the Pacific small island developing States, a declining capacity to respond.

33. Regarding the institutional framework theme of Rio+20, the Pacific small island developing States want specific safeguards or “improved and additional measures” in the new institutional framework, as called for in the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy.<sup>20</sup> These are needed in order to adequately meet the special needs of small island developing States and to address the “shortcomings in the institutional support” which, according to the General Assembly, had characterized the international community’s support of the Mauritius Strategy and small island developing States in the past. It is for this reason that the small island developing States are proposing to maintain the convening of a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States, with the next such conference being proposed for 2014.

34. In the course of its support work, the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group has requested the missions of the Pacific small island developing States to seek to retain the Small Island Developing States Day that is currently part of the annual session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Working Group has also recommended that the precautionary approach (Principle 15) be given particular reaffirmation given the great sensitivity of the oceans environment and the threats that careless exploitation brings. It would appear, in view of the enormous evidence of over-exploitation and environmental degradation, that this principle warrants a place alongside those principles, such as common but differentiated responsibility, which have been given special mention in the draft outcome.

35. Greater efforts are also needed to strengthen the reference to oceans by highlighting: (a) the importance of the links between fisheries and food security; (b) the dangers of ocean acidification; (c) healthy coral reefs and the need to address coastal vulnerability; (d) the dangers of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing practices and destructive fishing practices; and (e) the importance of emphasizing the precautionary approach.

## V. Conclusions

36. In reaffirming the need to overcome the unique and particular vulnerabilities of small island developing States, the General Assembly has called for improved and additional measures as well as coordinated, balanced and integrated actions towards the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Pacific has agreed to the need for adequate safeguards and special emphases that can make green economy relevant to the Pacific small island developing States and enabling of sustainable development and poverty eradication. At the same time, the Pacific has taken the view that “a green economy in a blue world” or the “blue economy” aspects of a green economy can provide the framework for the coordinated, balanced and integrated actions called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/2.

37. For the Rio+20 Conference to be relevant to the Pacific, the following key messages need to be recognized in the outcome document. The first is that the special case of small island developing States, first made in 1992 and widely supported throughout the preparatory process, needs to be highlighted. The second message is that the Pacific Ocean, which at a third of the earth’s surface is one of the greatest global commons, needs a much stronger

<sup>20</sup> See General Assembly resolution 65/2, Outcome document, para. 33.

collective commitment from the international community if it is to be managed and developed sustainably. The third message is that effectively addressing the climate change threat is not only fundamental to the sustainable development and survival of Pacific small island developing States, but also critical to the future survivability of the whole planet. The fourth message, which is in support of the first three, is that, while all the Rio principles need to be reaffirmed, the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and a precautionary approach need to be highlighted. The first principle is critical to the future survivability of small island developing States given the asymmetrical nature of responsibilities and capabilities. The second principle is critical to the future survivability of the oceans and of the planetary system.

38. The fifth and final message is that new, additional and concrete commitments are needed. Such commitments would include special measures for implementing green growth initiatives, such as new additional and accessible finances, appropriate technology transfers, and capacity-building and capacity supplementation. They should also include special measures or “safeguards” within the new institutional framework and architecture that ensure greater attention to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. An example of how this objective has been pursued in the Pacific is given in paragraph 29. Examples which have been raised by the Pacific in New York include the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States, which the small island developing States group is proposing to be convened in 2014. Small Island Developing States Day, which is part of the annual session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, has also been suggested for retention in the new institutional framework.

39. The Special Body may wish to recommend to the Commission a resolution renewing its support for the Pacific small island developing States in the areas highlighted in the present report. These areas, while reflecting the special case of small island developing States, do reflect the common interests of the Asia-Pacific region and of the global community as well. The Pacific Ocean is one of the greatest global commons, and addressing climate change is just as critical to the survival of the hundreds of millions in coastal communities and low-lying areas throughout the world as it is to the tens of millions in small island developing States.

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