



FINAL OUTCOMES STATEMENT

14th Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation (PIRT) Suva, Fiji, 25-29 July, 2011

Theme: “Nature’s role in the blue-green economy”

BACKGROUND

1. The Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation (PIRT) is a coalition of nature conservation and development organizations, governments, inter-governmental organisations, research and educational institutions, donor agencies and community groups created to increase effective conservation action in the Pacific Islands Region. It was formed in 1997 at the request of Pacific Island countries and territories. The forum enables those organizations working on nature conservation in the Pacific to improve their collaboration and coordination towards effective conservation action. It is the key coordination mechanism for the implementation of the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Island Region 2008-2012. PIRT partners have been encouraged to sign a charter outlining their commitment to the 2008 to 2012 Action Strategy and Principles adopted at the 8th Pacific Nature Conservation and Protected Areas conference held in Alotau, PNG in 2007. A total of thirteen key partners have now signed¹.
2. The 14th Annual Meeting of the Roundtable for Nature Conservation held in Suva 26-29 July 2011 focused its discussions on the regional process leading to the global Rio+20 meeting to be held in 2012. One of the key themes for the 2012 Earth Summit is the green economy, in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development. The challenge of moving to a green, blue or blue-green economy was taken up by Pacific island governments at a Rio+20 preparatory meeting held in Apia in 20 - 22 July 2011 and in the implications for nature conservation action discussed at the PIRT.

THE 2011 PIRT RECOGNISES THAT:

3. Conventional economic models for development no longer support sustainable development and do not provide options in the face of climate change. There is a need to incorporate green economy principles to economic development models.
4. Greening of the economy makes good business sense and supports the Pacific Islands way of life by increasing market opportunities.
5. Fragile islands ecosystems are useful indicators of the sustainability of the planet

¹ IUCN, WWF, Conservation International (CI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network, University of the South Pacific (USP), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), RARE and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI), Birdlife International, SeaWeb and Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum (PBIF).

6. The informal and subsistence economic sectors should be recognized and as the formal sector in decision making around natural resources
7. because of their unique characteristics in terms of size, vulnerability, scarce resources and because of the unique relationship with nature, islands provide excellent models to demonstrate how green economies could work to improve development

THE 2011 PIRT COMMITS TO

8. Promoting natural capital and ecosystem services at the heart of sustainable development
9. Incorporating the cost and real value of using natural capital and ecosystem services
10. Working with communities and supporting their green growth
11. Encouraging members to commit to a pro-environment, pro-poor, pro-Pacific and pro-community approach to development.

MESSAGE

12. Members of the PIRT welcome a more ecologically sustainable approach to economic development and current process that has begun on how to achieve such a model needs to reflect on the following:

- the preparatory work that led to the convening of the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992, principally the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future*. Twenty-four years later the report's assessments are still valid:

"Failures to manage the environment and to sustain development threaten to overwhelm all countries. Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating environmental resource base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental destruction. These problems cannot be treated separately by fragmented institutions and policies. They are linked in a complex system of cause and effect."

- despite the adoption of numerous key multi-lateral agreements, and a growing awareness of our regional and global dependence on Earth's ecosystems and natural resources and successful implementation of specific strategies to protect the environment, environmental quality continues to decline and sustainable development consequently remains elusive. The grand objectives of the 1992 Rio Summit, and the subsequent Johannesburg Rio+10 Summit for a sustainable world have not been realised, because despite all the admonitions, our way of 'doing business' has not changed. Exploitation of non-renewable resources, widening gaps between the haves and have-nots, and the ongoing failure to deal with the root causes of climate change and the loss of biodiversity, the two main conventions ratified at Rio, have raised the level of threat globally, but particularly to Pacific island societies.
- What is required is indeed a shift to a 'green economy' or, as some Pacific fora have alerted, a 'blue-green' economy. Nevertheless, this shift needs to be transformational in its vision and, in its implementation, it needs to occur on a global as well as a regional and national scale. Simply moving specific sectors, such as energy and waste management, to a more sustainable basis, will address important issues but will not address the root cause of environmental decline that threatens our societies.

The current economic paradigm, which depends on the extraction and degradation of limited natural resources, cannot provide a sustainable future for the Pacific. There are stark examples from the Pacific that provide lessons for us all, both contemporary and historic: currently the Solomon Islands is facing an uncertain economic future as it reaches the end of its capacity to harvest wild timber from its forests; the classic case of Rapanui or Easter Island in the eastern Pacific is well known - destruction of the natural resource base resulted in environmental and social collapse; and food security, resilience to climate and environmental change and island biodiversity is seriously threatened in many island states by introduced invasive organisms and diseases .

- Across the Pacific, natural resources exploitation has failed to deliver the promised wide-ranging social and economic benefits. Resource-rich Melanesian countries still have some of the lowest development indices in the world for education, health and access to clean water and some of the most serious cases of escalating environmental degradation. The PIFT take note of the recent article in the *New York Times* by Marcus Stephens, President of Nauru, on the historical impact of mining and failure to provide adequate economic safety nets. In this article, he warned about "what can happen when a country runs out of options. The world is headed down a similar path with the relentless burning of coal and oil, which is altering the planet's climate, melting ice caps, making oceans more acidic and edging us ever closer to a day when no one will be able to take clean water, fertile soil or abundant food for granted."

13. Despite the critical environmental situation facing Pacific island countries, and its developmental implications, Members of the PIRT see some signs of hope. There is much that can be praised and strengthened. The islands of the Pacific can offer lessons and models to the greater island Earth. The Large Ocean States of the Pacific island nations are custodians within their Exclusive Economic Zones to one-third of the Earth's surface and the actions that have been, or are being, taken by visionary leaders at national political and community levels can point the way to a more sustainable future. For example:

- Marine and terrestrial conservation and sustainable development initiatives are being led at the highest political levels by the governments of Palau, FSM, Fiji, RMI, Kiribati and Cook Islands.
- hundreds of community-conserved and managed resource protection areas have been established by traditional communities across the Pacific.
- island nations at the 2010 meeting of the Pacific Island Leaders Forum unanimously agreed to protect and manage ocean resources through action taken to implement the Pacific Oceanscape Framework and to establish large Marine Protected Areas.

14. The Pacific is a leader in demonstrating successful community engagement and ownership in managing conservation and livelihood initiatives through the Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) Network and other similar initiatives. The Pacific Islands region:

- currently supplies 58% of the total world tuna catch; the eight PI countries which are the Parties to the Nauru Agreement are applying innovative conservation measures to provide for the sustainable management of economically critical commercial tuna stocks.
- has developed pioneering initiatives to control, manage and eradicate invasive plants, animals and diseases that threaten island life, food security and resilience.

15. Nevertheless, Pacific island nations cannot move toward a new economic development paradigm alone. The global economy as a whole must change and move to a more ecologically, economically and socially sustainable basis. Failure to do so will also place Pacific nations in an more precarious position if they choose to move to a 'green or blue-green economy' paradigm unaccompanied by the global community. This is the key message that Pacific Leaders and organisations must take to the Rio+20 in 2012.

The PIRT CALLS:

16. For sustainable development to be effectively embedded into sectoral business plans and actions monitored over the next decade to ensure a transition to a green economy is a reality.
17. On Pacific Island Governments to ensure that new development funding and investments from external donors and partners and domestic financial institutions, support green and equitable development.
18. On the Rio+20 Summit to deliver concrete actions to support the maintenance of natural capital of Pacific Islands states and recognize the unique positive contributions of our massive and relatively healthy oceanic and terrestrial ecosystems to the world.