

SUMMARY REPORT of the Proceedings of the EVI Globalisation Meeting, 27 – 29 August, 2001, Geneva, Switzerland. SOPAC Technical Report 345.

SUMMARY

This summary describes the proceedings of the Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI) Globalisation Meeting held in Geneva 27-29 August 2001 at the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) International Environment House. The EVI Globalisation Meeting was attended by South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), UNEP, University of Malta and participants from the countries of Bangladesh, Greece, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand. Additional inputs were provided by International Strategy Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and submissions from Australia and New Zealand. Norway was present as an observer.

Without exception, the environment is the life-support system for all human systems and is an integral part of the development and success of countries. Until now, it has not been possible to monitor the vulnerability of this life-support system at an appropriate scale to ensure human welfare. During the 1990's a call was made by the International Community through Agenda 21, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Alliance of Small Island States to develop vulnerability indices that might address these concerns. The EVI has been developed in response to these calls.

The purpose of the meeting was to begin the process of globalising the EVI previously focused on Small Island Developing States. One aim was to introduce and gain support for the index among a group of countries called collaborators on the project because they represent the global extremes needed for developing the model. Another aim of the meeting was to obtain data from the collaborating countries for the purposes of testing the EVI.

In addition, topics relevant to the globalisation of the EVI were discussed, including the need for any new indicators to cover global conditions, problems with data collection, ways of creating a collaborative group to include SOPAC, UNEP, donors and participating countries, and mechanisms for permanent data collection. Emphasis was placed on mechanisms for introducing the EVI into the international community as much as on technical development. Participants gave statements regarding their experience with the EVI, providing additional insights for discussions.

During the discussions, the need for eight new indicators was proposed to ensure that global environmental vulnerability issues are covered by the EVI. These included indicators on shared borders, transboundary pollution and erosion, fragmentation of natural land cover, migratory species,

ice bodies, landslides, overhunting and lakes. Of these issues, draft indicators for five were suggested during the meeting.

A total of 13 recommendations was made by the meeting for further development of the EVI. These recommendations included mechanisms for improving global acceptance of the EVI model by highlighting its role in supporting human welfare. Recommendations were also given on future approaches to political and technical development of the index and sources of funding.

In order to complete the development of the EVI it will be necessary to focus on the following approaches:

- (1) There is an urgent need to ensure that the EVI is not perceived only as an islands issue. It is important that it is introduced into the international arena as a universal tool, relevant to all parts of the globe and useable at the scale of regions, countries and at the sub-country level.
- (2) The links between environmental security and human welfare need to be stressed as the central reasoning behind the index. The fact that the natural environment is the life-support system for all human systems, without exception, needs to be highlighted much more strongly. The EVI will occupy a new niche, allowing for environmental management at the same scales as those at which economic, social and cultural decisions are made – at the level of the country. Past management practices at either local or global scales, although necessary, could not operate in this way and did not allow for adapting policies.
- (3) There is a need to gain political acceptance for the EVI at the same time that it is undergoing its final stages of globalisation and testing. This includes introducing it at global and regional meetings, through governments and via publications. There is a long history of international documentation from meetings which called for the development of an EVI (Agenda 21, Barbados Programme of Action, AOSIS) and it is time to respond to these calls with the information that a functional EVI now exists. Rio +10 will be the most important meeting at which to present the index.
- (4) There was a call at this meeting for partners in developing the EVI among the countries invited. These collaborators were invited at this meeting to become part of the project in a very real sense. This will include the procurement of several sources of funding to assist in data collection, development and testing of the index. It also includes the establishment of links between all the collaborators on the project.
- (5) In addition to the excellent support given in the past, there is a need for UNEP to take a larger role in the development of the EVI. This includes political induction of the EVI into the world community, possible funding support and the use of existing mechanisms of data collection currently sponsored by UNEP.