

High-level Meeting for the Five-year Review of the Mauritius Strategy Implementation:
Input from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Introduction

Among Members and Associate Members of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), fifteen countries and seven territories in Asia and the Pacific are small island developing States.¹ Of these Members, twelve are located in the Pacific and seven are least developed countries. Remoteness from major economic centres, small economic size and geographic dispersion raise costs and limit the realization of economies of scale in the small island developing States of Asia and the Pacific. Rapid population growth exerts pressure on scarce resources and frustrates efforts to raise living standards. The shortage of professional and technical skills, paucity of domestic savings and vulnerability to external shocks pose further constraints. In addition, these small island developing States form a very diverse group, with the development challenges facing small atoll, least developed countries being very different from those facing larger, more developed countries. Such factors present challenges for economic, social and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

The present document summarizes the Commission's activities organized during the biennia 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 to support the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Mauritius Strategy for Implementation), adopted at the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, 10-14 January 2005. In line with Commission resolution 62/12 on strengthening Pacific island developing countries and territories through regional cooperation, ESCAP also promotes South-South cooperation to assist countries in implementing the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, adopted at the meeting of the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum held in Kalibobo, Papua New Guinea, on 26 October 2005.

¹ Members are Fiji, Kiribati*, Maldives (the)*, Marshall Islands (the), Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa*, Singapore, Solomon Islands*, Timor-Leste*, Tonga, Tuvalu* and Vanuatu*. Associate Members are American Samoa, Cook Islands (the), French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue and Northern Mariana Islands (the). (* denotes least developed country).

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provided assistance to Pacific island developing countries and territories through: (a) regional activities under the themes of poverty reduction, managing globalization and emerging social issues organized by divisions based in Bangkok, and (b) subregional activities, including technical assistance aimed at strengthening capacities for formulating and implementing national sustainable development strategies, identifying urban management issues and improving labour market operations, rendered by the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre in Suva. In order to implement these activities, ESCAP cooperated closely with subregional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme and with United Nations bodies, funds and programmes with a presence in the Pacific.

The Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries, tenth session, Bangkok, 22-23 April 2008 deliberated on (a) economic and social policies to address labor market trends in Pacific island developing countries and territories, (b) formulation of national sustainable development strategies which integrate national commitments into the implementation of regional and international development strategies and plans. Its report was subsequently submitted to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session, for consideration under agenda item 2(d): Countries with special needs: least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. At the Advisory Council of the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, third session, Bangkok, 23 April, 2008, the Executive Secretary also noted the need (1) to strengthen the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, (2) to strengthen links between Asia and the Pacific with ESCAP as facilitator, and (3) to identify areas of collaboration among the outcomes of her discussions with Pacific Leaders in Noumea, New Caledonia, 13 March 2008. During its third session held in Suva in July 2009, the Working Group on Pacific Island Developing Countries proposed that the Special Body, which will be held during the sixty-sixth session of Commission, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 13-19 May 2010, consider (1) the regional review of the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and (2) regional cooperation to overcome the economic and social impacts of the global economic crisis in the Pacific.

The website of ESCAP (<http://www.unescap.org/epoc>), which is the main source of information and tool for communication with our members in the Pacific, has been consistently updated with publications and studies, meetings, and advisory missions in order to keep ESCAP member states informed of ESCAP activities in the Pacific, including its work to support the

implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. The ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre also issues the newsletter “ESCAP In the Pacific” in February, June and October each year. The newsletter provides an update on the Commission’s activities in the Pacific.

MSI Chapter II: Natural and Environment Disasters

As islands in the Pacific Rim, countries are vulnerable to the impacts of earthquakes, tsunamis and tropical storms. Information, communication and space technology is therefore critical for improving national preparedness against natural disasters. The Pacific ICT Ministerial Forum *Reducing disaster risk by connecting the unconnected* discussed a regional action plan to provide affordable, accessible and reliable telecommunication services in the Pacific by 2015 in Nuku’alofa, Tonga, 17-20 February 2009. The Forum was hosted by the Government of Tonga and held in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

MSI Chapter III: Management of Waste

Since disposal of waste is difficult in small islands where land is scarce, sanitation in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia requires development of low-cost sanitation infrastructure and adoption of technologies that use water efficiently and allow disposal of treated wastewater at sea. The workshop on Sanitation Solutions for the Urban Poor in Pacific Island States, Majuro, Marshall Islands, 12-15 January, 2009 was conducted in collaboration with Environmental Cooperation-Asia and supported by the Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPSSO) of the Marshall Islands.

MSI Chapter VI: Land Resources

A regional action framework for the implementation of the Pacific Urban Agenda was adopted at the Pacific Urban Management Support Programme Workshop, held in Brisbane, Australia, from 2 to 4 October 2007. At the workshop, planners from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu reviewed a proposal for a joint programme developed by ESCAP in collaboration with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the New Zealand International Aid and Development Agency. The programme is aimed at strengthening institutional

frameworks and improving the urban environment, access to shelter and the quality of life in these countries. The regional action framework was designed in line with the recommendations of the Second Pacific Regional Workshop on Urban Management, organized by ESCAP in collaboration with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Nadi from 23 to 25 April, 2007. The workshop was held in response to Commission resolution 60/7 on the Pacific Urban Agenda, adopted by the Commission at its sixtieth session in Shanghai, China, in April 2004, and the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration, which endorsed the agenda as an integrated framework for addressing urban management issues in the subregion.

The Regional Adviser on Social Development and Planning assessed the social impact of the Guadalcanal Provincial Capital Township Project in the Solomon Islands, 17-23 May 2009. The expert reviewed urban township development as part of a project on developing eco-efficient urban infrastructure. The same advisor, together with the UN-Habitat Programme Manager for the Pacific assisted the Solomon Islands in urban policy formulation by holding discussion on informal urban settlements with the national and local government officials; assisting preparations of the draft strategic plan for development of a provincial centre in Guadalcanal; and assessing the impact of squatter settlements in Honiara in collaboration with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. They also provided assistance to the National Urban Policy Dialogue held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, 6-8 October 2009.

MSI Chapter VIII: Tourism Resources

The Workshop on Expanding the Role of Tourism in Poverty Reduction, held in Nuku'alofa on 24 October 2007, in collaboration with the South Pacific Tourism Organization, Pro-Invest and the Government of Tonga, considered how tourism could reduce hardship and poverty in countries of the Pacific and identified measures to achieve this objective. The workshop, which was held in line with Commission resolutions 62/3, on the implementation of the Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2006-2012) and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Tourism Development, and 62/12, on strengthening Pacific island developing countries and territories through regional cooperation, noted that further development of the tourism sector could lead to expansion of the economic base in both rural and urban areas and an increase in foreign exchange earnings and could create greater opportunities for employment in countries in the Pacific subregion.

MSI Chapter X: Transportation and Communication

To ensure greater connectivity in the Pacific, a study to examine the technical and commercial viability of information and communications technology (ICT) was undertaken in response to a request at the Pacific Leaders' special session held during the sixty-second session of the Commission. Technical, economic and commercial viabilities and financing options were considered at the Technical Consultation on Enhancing Pacific Connectivity, held in Bangkok on 13 and 14 November 2006, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. The outcome of the consultation was presented to the eleventh annual General Meeting and Tradeshow of the Pacific Islands Telecommunications Association, held in Pape'ete, from 23 to 27 April 2007. Participants in the stakeholders' round-table consultation on Pacific connectivity, held in Noumea on 13 March 2008, focused on ways to improve connectivity by building upon existing organizations and expertise in the subregion. It was hoped that further discussions could lead to a consensus among the Pacific island countries on ICT-related issues, and to strengthened partnerships with countries in Asia.

MSI Chapter XIII: Trade Globalization and Trade Liberalization

Since small markets limit growth led by domestic demand, trade liberalization is key to economic development. Ways to improve market access of food, food processing industries and the environmental sustainability of processed food production were discussed at the subregional workshop on the trade and environment dimensions of food processing industries in the Pacific, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji in Suva on 7 and 8 June 2006. In order to be able to comply with standards and regulations in their export markets, countries needed to establish testing laboratories, standardization bodies and certification processes. These considerations also needed to be taken into account in negotiations under the World Trade Organization as well as with multilateral and bilateral donors. Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu participated in the workshop.

The National Seminar on Prospective Benefits of Joining the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) for Papua New Guinea, 7-9 May, 2007, Port Moresby was jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and ESCAP and was attended by representatives of Government ministries and departments with trade related portfolios including commerce,

agriculture and natural resources development and representatives from several NGOs and private businesses. In addition to providing an overview of the APTA, seminar presentations explained the accession procedures and the benefits from joining APTA, which was initially called the First Agreement on Trade Negotiations among Developing Member Countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok Agreement). Papua New Guinea had earlier acceded to the 1975 Bangkok Agreement and needed to renew its accession to the successor Agreement. The cost and benefit analysis of Papua New Guinea accession to APTA was discussed at a subsequent seminar jointly organized by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and ESCAP, in Port Moresby on 28 and 29 July 2009 and attended by government officials and private sector representatives.

Other trade-related initiatives during the two biennia included advisory services on adjusting to a Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement provided to Fiji (June 2006), Vanuatu (June-July 2006), Papua New Guinea (July 2006), Samoa (July 2006), Kiribati (July 2006), Fiji (July-August 2006) and Vanuatu (November 2006) as well as assistance to the Fiji Islands Trade and Investment Board in preparation of a medium term Corporate Plan 2007-2011.

MSI Chapter XIV: Sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development

Key labour issues in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu, including the policies in place and the operations resulting from these policies, were identified at the Expert Group Meeting on Labour Markets in Pacific Small Island Developing Countries, organized by ESCAP in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Suva on 4 and 5 June 2007. Implementation of the recommended policies at national, subregional and regional levels could lead to increased employment opportunities, strengthened labour force skills and greater compliance with internationally agreed labour standards in those countries. The Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) made substantive contributions to the meeting. The outcome of the meeting served as input to the ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting on Decent Work in Pacific Island Countries, held in Nadi, Fiji on 28 and 29 November 2007, and was included as input to the tenth session of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries, Bangkok, 23-24 April 2008.

The ESCAP-ILO workshop entitled “Paving the Way for National Action Plans” in Nadi, Fiji, 17–21 November 2008 aimed at building capacity for developing national action

plans on youth employment and integrating them into national planning processes. Government officials from the ministries of labour and youth, as well as representatives of labour unions, chambers of commerce and national youth associations in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu attended this workshop. Experiences in public policy development on youth employment in both Asia and the Pacific were exchanged. Since participating countries were at different stages of developing their youth policy and action plans, they requested assistance from both ESCAP and ILO on developing, refining and finalizing their national policies and national action plans through a mapping exercise of existing youth employment activities and organization of national workshops. These workshops took place in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu during 2009 and resulted in development of their draft national action plans.

ESCAP also provided advisory services on economic and social policy development, upon request, to countries in the Pacific. Over the course of the two biennia, in addition to the services of the regional advisers on social development and planning and development policy, who are based in Suva, countries also requested the services of regional advisers on environment and sustainable development, economic statistics and trade and investment policy, who are based in Bangkok. The regional advisers on social development and planning and on development policy undertook advisory missions on a wide range of activities, including the development of disability policies in Fiji and Micronesia (Federated States of), a national development strategy in Vanuatu, a development plan for the island of 'Eau in Tonga and a project planning guide for Solomon Islands. In line with a request from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, a study on the costs of adjusting to the requirements of the Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement was prepared as background material for negotiations between Pacific island developing countries and the European Union. Advisory services to prepare a draft action plan against the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Micronesia (Federated States of) complemented the report entitled "Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children in Fiji: A Situational Analysis", which was launched in Suva on 1 March 2006.

MSI Chapter XVI: National and regional enabling environment

In preparation for the implementation of the project entitled "Supporting the development of national statistical systems in the ESCAP region", funded by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris21), the secretariat participated in a workshop on the future of statistics in the Pacific region, held by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Noumea from 19 to 21 March 2007. The secretariat also participated in the

Regional Meeting of Heads of Planning and Heads of Statistics: Future directions for evidence-based decision-making in the Pacific, held in Noumea from 17 to 21 September 2007, in order to identify strategies for extending the project to the Pacific.

ESCAP co-organized jointly with ADB and UNDP a Pacific Millennium Development Goals Workshop: Taking Stock, Emerging Issues and Way Forward in Nadi, Fiji, 16-20 March 2009. The international community committed themselves towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Despite the progress made, many countries in the Pacific will not be able to meet all of their Millennium Development Goals within the next six years. While targets such as reducing tuberculosis and achieving gender parity in secondary schools will be reached, others, such as improving access to water and sanitation, may not. At this meeting, representatives from the government, civil society and their development partners reviewed progress in the Pacific, identified emerging issues and outlined the way forward. They acknowledged that gaps existed between policy and strategy, that resources needed to be allocated appropriately and that institutional capacity to implement programme was vital. Since programme design should be based on statistical data, databases needed to be strengthened. National ownership through alignment of the Millennium Development Goals to national priorities and observance of human rights were also critical. Since the food and fuel crisis, climate change and global economic crisis could reverse the progress made in the Pacific towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, participants also discussed possible policy options for governments.

As Palau negotiates a successor to its Compact Agreement with the United States, strengthening of institutional capacity to plan and budget, as well as monitor policy implementation is essential. An advisory mission to identify such needs was conducted in collaboration with the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre in February 2009. The Regional Advisor on Development Policy reviewed the policy and planning processes of the Prime Minister's Office and its Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination and proposed capacity building activities to strengthen their links to the budget and aid management in Port Vila, May 2009. The Regional Advisor for Development Policy led a team of experts in September 2009 to assist Nauru in preparing a review of its national sustainable development strategy that was launched in 2005. Although much progress has been made in its implementation, its national sustainable development strategy needs to take into account recent developments affecting Nauru. In response to Tuvalu's request for assistance to review its national plan, similar support, involving a partnership of regional and international agencies, is likely.

MSI Chapter XVII: Health

ESCAP promoted the rights of persons with disabilities, mainstreaming of disability in the national planning and budgeting processes, strengthening of partnerships between governments and civil organizations and ensuring a rights-based approach to development. The Expert Group Meeting on Disability in the Pacific: Strengthening Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework was held in Nadi from 28 to 30 March 2007, in collaboration with the Pacific Disability Forum. As a result of this initiative, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have developed or are currently adopting national disability policies. The meeting also provided a subregional input to the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 September 2007. ESCAP, in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, organized the first Forum Disability Ministers Meeting held in Rarotonga from 21 to 23 October, 2009. During this meeting, the Disability Ministers from Australia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu as well as the Cook Islands and Niue endorsed the Pacific Regional Strategy for Disability and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which took effect in 2008. The endorsement reaffirmed the rights-based approach to disability. Participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations has been instrumental in advancing policy development and discourse on this issue in the Pacific.

To raise awareness of the complex relationships between population, development and poverty awareness among national planners and policymakers, a training workshop on population, development and poverty in the Pacific was held in Suva, from 24 to 28 September 2007. At the workshop, officials from national planning and statistical offices in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu prepared population and sectoral projections on the economy, health and education in order to ensure that demographic issues are integrated into development planning.

The regional stakeholders' consultation and planning workshop on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse in the Pacific and the Fiji national stakeholders' consultation on the commercial sexual exploitation of children were held in Suva, from 19 to 21 November 2007, in collaboration with End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) International and Save the Children,

Fiji. At the workshop stakeholders from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu shared key findings from situational analysis studies on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse and developed responses, taking into consideration existing commitments and strategies on children's rights and protection. The national stakeholders consultation, which followed the regional consultations, aimed at planning a strategy to respond to findings of the situational analysis on commercial sexual exploitation of children in Fiji. The publication *Child Sexual Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Pacific: A Regional Report*, prepared by ESCAP in collaboration with ECPAT and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), analysed the factors driving this issue in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and suggested responses.

Capacity building assistance was provided to the Government of Federated States of Micronesia in the areas of disability; follow up on the national plan of action on commercial sexual exploitation of children; technical assistance to the newly formed working committee on human trafficking and different forms of exploitation, and youth development program. Similar assistance in developing a national policy on disability has been provided to Fiji's Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Housing between March and November 2006. Technical assistance missions to develop national policy on disability have also been provided to the governments of Kiribati, Cook Islands, Samoa, and Solomon Islands.