

Over **one-half**
of the world's population lives
within **100 kilometres**
of the sea.



MEDIA RELEASE

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Better integration needed for Pacific ecosystems, food security, wellbeing

Technical experts representing eight Pacific island countries this week endorsed an innovative approach to managing the environment which addresses natural resource management in the social, economic and political context.

The forum held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, considered the application of ecosystem-based management to address critical environmental issues which threaten delicate coastal and marine environments. Several issues for Pacific island countries were identified including sea level rise and coastal engineering; availability of resources and data; population and socioeconomic change; greenhouse gases and climate change; land-based pollution; livelihood of people – food and land security; invasive species; sustaining fish stocks; outdated and conflicting policies and regulations; and enforcement.

Ecosystem-based management is an integrated management approach which designs solutions to ecological issues within regard to social, economic and political drivers. It requires a whole-of-government approach, rather than a sectoral approach, and incorporates traditional management structures and practices.

The forum of technical experts endorsed the following guiding principles for ecosystem-based management:

- Embrace common policy
- Preserve options for the future
- Anticipate and prevent damage to the ecosystem and community
- Create incentives for stewardship and collaboration
- Make explicit tradeoffs based on best available socioeconomic and biophysical information
- Make decisions under uncertainty
- Integrate across sectors (e.g. fishing, mining, agriculture, public health, tourism, water quality)
- Apply lessons learned from management successes and failures, and from monitoring ecosystems
- Account for cumulative impacts within and across sectors
- Have sustained funding and support for implementation
- Include capacity to meet emerging issues and challenges

The group will seek wider endorsement of the ecosystem-based management concept over coming months which will promote its application across the Pacific.

The capacity for implementation will be strengthened by a two week training course for Pacific islands resource managers currently underway in Rarotonga. The course will equip participants with the tools and information to implement effective ecosystem-based management in their home countries.

The forum was led by the Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland, and the Center for Ocean Solutions at Stanford University, the Australian National Centre for Ocean Research and Security (ANCORS) and the United Nations Environment Program. Countries participating included Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Federated States of Micronesia (Yap), Vanuatu, Samoa and American Samoa.

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