



Strengthening the Fragile Pacific Islands Energy Sector
Addressing energy, economy and environment in a period of rapid change

Regional Energy Officials Meeting (and) and related Pacific Energy Ministers Meeting (PEMM2009),

Nuku'alofa Tonga, 20-24 April 2009

In terms of safeguarding the environment, IUCN recommends:

- Ensuring the appropriate frameworks are in place to safeguard the environment and people in the context of expanding energy systems
- That all relevant stakeholders are engaged in design and implementation of equitable and ecologically sustainable energy technologies
- Including robust environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) regulations and capacities (both for carrying out and reviewing findings), including gender sensitive instruments and methodologies, in the context of energy planning and development
- Investing in natural systems that underpin energy futures in the region

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IUCN Members have affirmed, through Resolution WCC 4.082, that access to reliable and sustainable sources of energy underpins human development and note that the current energy mix contributes significantly to biodiversity loss, pollution of the Earth's air and water and is the primary cause of climate change, which threatens the future of the Earth's environment. IUCN applauds the Pacific Energy Ministers participating in PEMM2009 for integrating environmental considerations in your discussions and recommends the following issues be considered in the proceedings.

Safeguard Ecosystems and Livelihoods in the Context of Energy Developments

IUCN recognizes the urgent need for more substantive energy systems in the Pacific, but registers concern about the potential impacts of expanding energy systems on the environment and consequently also people's well being and livelihoods. Such potential impacts can be effectively managed with appropriate policy frameworks, regulation and action. **IUCN urges the ministers of the region to ensure the appropriate frameworks are in place to safeguard the environment and people in the context of expanding energy systems** and has the following lessons from our work in the region and globally to guide the development of such frameworks.

Such frameworks can be supported through incorporating, where appropriate, the emerging global standards for sustainability such as those being developed by the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, hydro electric power, and renewable energies (www.iucn.org/energy).

Empower communities and countries to design and implement appropriate energy options

From a conservation perspective, decentralized systems of energy production and distribution are more appropriate for increasing equitable access to sustainable energy alternatives on the basis that they are generally less harmful to the environment than large infrastructure-based centralized systems, and require lower levels of capital investment and thus are more economically viable for cash-poor communities.

The right energy choices require working with stakeholders – in particular women and vulnerable groups – in the design and implementation of energy technologies to build commitment to investments in technologies, ensure the sustainability of the investment, and identify appropriate financing mechanisms that work for the project and the people.

Allow countries to take informed decisions about the technologies to be implemented, in consultation with communities where the technologies will be implemented, and with the aid of unbiased information to ensure the capacity exists in country to manage the technology and that technologies are accepted by the communities.

Establish robust impact assessment systems

Robust environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) regulations and capacities (both for carrying out and reviewing findings) are critical for safeguarding the environment and people in the context of energy development by helping strengthen plans for implementation and identify potential environmental and social impacts of the technologies and develop appropriate mitigation measures. In this context, gender-sensitive instruments and methodologies under EIA and SEA are essential. EIA and SEA can also reduce the risk of introducing inappropriate technologies and technologies or energy systems that may be vulnerable to ecosystem and climatic change. Additionally, robust EIA and SEA procedures can help ensure energy options do not undermine food security in the region.

Invest in natural systems (ecosystem services) which underpin energy options

Investing in ecosystem services such as upstream water catchments for both large scale and micro hydropower can help ensure the sustainability of energy options dependent on those services while at the same time safeguarding biodiversity and providing livelihood opportunities for communities in the area.

IUCN stands ready to assist Pacific countries in advancing equitable access to ecologically sustainable, socially equitable and economically efficient energy systems. For more information on IUCN's work on energy see www.iucn.org/energy.