



Australian Government



Streamlined reporting by Pacific Island countries to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements

The development of a consolidated reporting template

1. About the project

1.1. National reporting is an important and necessary requirement under most multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). However, for some countries, particularly those with small environment agencies, fulfilling national reporting requirements can be difficult and resource-intensive. This is the case for many Pacific Island countries (PICs).

1.2. In response to a request by PICs for assistance to address the growing reporting burden to MEAs, the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), developed a project to streamline national reporting by PICs to the biodiversity-related MEAs. This project is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

1.3. The main outcome of the project has been the development and trial of a consolidated reporting template for use by PICs to five of the biodiversity-related MEAs:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS);
- Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar); and
- World Heritage Convention (WHC).

2. About the consolidated reporting template

2.1. The consolidated reporting template is designed to facilitate reporting by reducing duplication and making the process simpler and less resource-intensive. The template represents a practical example of how national reporting can be streamlined by consolidating the reporting requirements of five MEAs into a single template. This means that instead of preparing multiple reports in a set-period, countries would develop only one national report per reporting period that would then serve as the national report for any of the five biodiversity-related MEAs. The primary benefits of this are a reduction in the amount of time spent by PICs undertaking national reporting to these MEAs, and a simplified structure that reduces duplication yet still allows for tracking of PICs' progress and achievements in implementing the MEAs.

2.2. The template was drafted through a consultative process involving Australian Government agencies, PICs, SPREP, and the United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The Secretariats of the biodiversity-related MEAs also provided input and feedback on the template.

2.3. The template is currently available for information only as a draft in both Microsoft Word format and as an interactive SmartForm (PDF).¹ The template has not been formally endorsed for use; therefore, it is available only for information as an *example* of a consolidated reporting model. It can not be used or submitted as a national report to any of the biodiversity-related MEAs.

3. Trial of the template

3.1. The template was trialled in eight Pacific Island countries in 2008-09: the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The objective of the trial was to 'road-test' the template to determine its suitability for use in the Pacific. The results of the trial were positive and the template was considered a useful tool to facilitate reporting by countries with limited staff and resources.

4. Future directions

4.1. The development of the template is a practical example of what can be done to assist countries in meeting their international obligations under MEAs. It provides a valuable case study of a regional approach to streamline reporting that could be applied to other regions with similar staffing and resource constraints to facilitate reporting.

4.2. Over the coming year, the project will be brought to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and will be promoted at upcoming international fora relating to the biodiversity-related MEAs.

4.3. Further information about the streamlined reporting project will be made available in the coming months on the website for the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/>

¹ SmartForms is an initiative providing a range of online services to help government agencies adopt the Adobe LiveCycle technology to meet their advanced online form requirements. More information about SmartForms can be found at <http://smartforms.business.gov.au/developer/>