

For immediate release

**Boost in Environmental Funding for Pacific Ocean Island States:
*New Strategy Takes a National-and-Regional Approach***

Washington, DC, 9 May 2007 – A new environment strategy, backed by a proposed \$100 million grant package from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was agreed to by Heads of State and top government leaders representing 15 small island developing states (SIDS) and territories of the Pacific Ocean region today. The funding, representing a six-fold increase over previous GEF financing for the region, will be used to fight climate change, protect island species and shared waters, and conserve the fragile environment of the islands.

“Pacific island nations and territories are becoming more vulnerable to the threats of climate change, including sea level rise,” said H.E. President Kessai Note of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands. “We intend to channel these resources to launch priority projects designed to meet these threats frontally, while promoting sustainable development to benefit our people.”

The landmark strategy was announced in Washington today in the presence of Heads of State, top government leaders, GEF and World Bank officials.

“We commend the GEF and its CEO, Monique Barbut for actions that recognize the importance of islands worldwide,” said H.E. Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., President, Republic of Palau. The Micronesia leaders are excited that the proposed \$100 million grant would include the Micronesia Challenge sub-regional program. “This is exactly the kind of public-private partnership that will strengthen effective resource conservation and promote sustainable development in our region,” added President Remengesau, Jr.

“Small island states, territories and atolls are among the most beautiful but remote places on the planet,” said Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson of the GEF. “Our assistance provides seed money for a new generation of projects that will have lasting beneficial impacts across the Pacific region.” To maintain the momentum of support for adaptation, Mrs. Barbut also highlighted the urgent need for a decision at the next UN Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Bali in December 2007 on the location of the Adaptation Fund, a fund established under the Kyoto Protocol which will likely become the largest source of financing for adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, including small island states.

In response, President Note indicated support for the CEO's statement, and emphasized the value of ensuring continuity in programs dealing with adaptation to climate change in the Pacific. He called on the Pacific governments to signal their support for a quick resolution of the location of the Adaptation Fund, recognizing the ongoing work of the GEF on adaptation.

Highlights of New Strategy

- **Boosting funding** - the \$100 million marks an exponential increase in environmental financing for the region, to be spread over three years in quick-disbursing grants. In contrast, over the past 15 years, GEF investments to Pacific Ocean countries and territories amounted to only \$86 million.
- **Supporting programs, not projects:** Rather than attacking problems project by project, the new, programmatic approach will allow countries to focus their strategies on a clear set of priority issues for the global environment, build and capture synergies, and apply a common set of tracking tools to monitor progress.
- **Supporting a regional approach** – to help countries and GEF to aggregate national programs at the regional level, and allow for the scaling-up of beneficial impacts across the Pacific Ocean region.

The new program includes multiple national projects that address the most urgent sustainable development needs of Pacific island countries, including adaptation to climate change. The program also seeks to minimize the administrative burden of the Pacific SIDS in implementing GEF-funded projects.

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About the GEF

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an international financial mechanism with 177 member countries that addresses global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. GEF grants support projects in developing countries related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer and persistent organic pollutants. Since its inception in 1991, GEF has achieved a strong track record of support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, providing \$6.2 billion in grants and leveraging \$20 billion in co-financing for over 1,800 projects in over 150 countries. Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP), GEF has also made more than 7,000 small grants, up to \$50,000 each, directly to nongovernmental organizations and community organizations.

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