



***Far too many governments have failed to grasp the scale of the threat from invasive species***

Achim Steiner, UN Environment Programme Executive Director

*Helping Islands Adapt: A Workshop on Regional Action to Combat Invasive Alien Species on Islands to Preserve Biodiversity and Adapt to Climate Change* highlighted successes, deepened connections within regions and facilitated the exchange of experiences across regions. While discussions outlined significant obstacles to invasive alien species management<sup>1</sup> on islands, it also showcased how targeted victories are leveraged into major gains for conservation and development. Collaboration across development and environment sectors and sustained support are critical to success in this field. Exciting new initiatives are developing to demonstrate large-scale management of invasive alien species across island regions. Next steps to accelerate and expand national, regional and international action and success were agreed. The workshop will help drive effective management of invasive alien species threats to island livelihoods and biodiversity from local to global levels.

### **Workshop Background**

The workshop was held from 11-16 April 2010, in Auckland, New Zealand. Hosted by the Government of New Zealand with support from a number of partner organizations and countries<sup>2</sup>, the meeting was welcomed in Decisions under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) relating to invasive alien species and island biodiversity<sup>3</sup>, and builds on efforts under the Cooperative Islands Initiative, a partnership launched at the World Summit for Sustainable Development and the CBD's 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties in 2002. Approximately 75 participants from 18 countries and territories and 26 national, regional and international organizations attended the workshop to focus on four major island regions – the Caribbean, the Coral Triangle<sup>4</sup>, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific – as well as international support by organizations and networks.

The purpose of the workshop was to identify and strengthen mechanisms that enable effective and sustainable invasive alien species management for islands. Outcomes included: 1) lessons from regional collaboration and coordination; 2) actions to strengthen invasive alien species management; 3) networks and resources to support implementation; and 4) key steps within international processes to catalyze and support regional efforts.

### **Impacts on Islands**

Invasive alien species are recognized as one of the major drivers of biodiversity loss worldwide.<sup>5</sup> However, invasive alien species also have significant, direct impacts upon many other sectors, including

economic development, health, agriculture, tourism and trade. Globally, the estimated cost of invasive alien species impacts totals US\$1.4 trillion annually - 5% of the world economy.<sup>6</sup>

There are over 180,000 islands covering the full range of habitats in the world. These span small island nations, archipelagic countries and countries with islands. Together, islands cover only 5% of the earth's land surface, yet they are home to ~20% of all known terrestrial species and almost half of all endangered species. While highly diverse, island ecosystems are particularly fragile and vulnerable given their small size and disproportionate susceptibility to the overharvesting of resources, natural disasters and other major drivers like climate change and invasive species. In fact 70-95% of the world's terrestrial species extinctions have occurred on islands, and most of these (55-67%) were directly caused or facilitated by invasive alien species. Assessments also show that only 16% of the world's marine ecoregions with available data are invasive-free, and that the major pathways for their introduction are ballast water, hull fouling and aquaculture introductions.<sup>7</sup>

Island biodiversity is also under serious threat from another major driver - climate change, which will interact with invasion and other processes in complex ways.<sup>8</sup> Observed impacts such as sea level rise and rainfall changes threaten to damage ecosystem health and accelerate species loss, undermining conservation efforts worldwide. Biodiversity can also be an important asset in addressing climate change through ecosystem-based mitigation and adaptation.<sup>9</sup> For example, there is strong evidence that healthy ecosystems are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, thereby helping to buffer resident communities from such impacts.<sup>10</sup> By fostering ecosystem health, invasive species management represents an effective form of Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EBA) to climate change.

### Lessons from Island Regions

Participants openly shared successes and challenges experienced in the coordination and implementation of invasive alien species management in their respective regions. In spite of the geographic, cultural, political and economic differences across islands and island regions, many common themes emerged:

- **Regional and global collaboration and initiatives** play an important role in building capacity and supporting national implementation to address the threat of invasive alien species to island biodiversity. Cooperation and information sharing **within and across regions** can serve as a valuable mechanism for South-South cooperation.
- Management of invasive alien species is a **multi-sectoral concern** affecting environmental and development priorities, as well as cultural values. The issue needs to be framed across all major sectors -- **biodiversity, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, forestry, trade and health**. The small size of islands and interdependence of such sectors demands increased need for mainstreaming on islands.
- Integration and prioritization of invasive alien species in regional frameworks, national legislation as well as **biodiversity strategies, climate adaptation and development plans** can create an enabling environment to support and empower existing management potential on islands.

- **Improved messaging and engagement of communications professionals are needed** to raise awareness and generate support for the importance of invasive alien species management and social values around the resources threatened by them.
- Analyses of the **economic and social costs of invasive alien species on islands** can help inform decision makers to identify management priorities.
- **The need for champions** is fundamental to advance management efforts on islands and catalyze further support at the regional and international levels.
- **Numerous challenges to regional collaboration and national action** on invasive alien species and islands were identified including: human and financial resources; coordination across sectors; border security and enforcement; community engagement; and enabling policy and legal frameworks, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Overseas Territories, dependencies and other insular jurisdictions.
- **New initiatives with potential to demonstrate large-scale management** of invasive alien species across island regions include the multi-agency Pacific Invasives Partnership, the new Caribbean GEF project on *Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean*, the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security, the comprehensive Micronesia Biosecurity Plan, and the Western Indian Ocean Challenge.
- **Invasive alien species on islands are a top priority** for the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), who are working together to provide global support, guidance and assistance with implementation to countries and regions.

## Actions

Overall, the regional and global working groups identified six major actions critical to helping islands combat invasive alien species and adapt to climate change, which require immediate attention:

- Increase coordination and integrated action on invasive alien species across key sectors through national, regional and global networks and partnerships
- Engage public and private sector leaders to champion invasive alien species management on islands
- Build public support through effective communication of the impacts of invasive alien species on island economies, people and environments
- Improve biosecurity systems to address the full range of invasive threats to islands
- Accelerate the use of successful invasive alien species approaches through the exchange of experience, skills, information, taxonomy, data and tools between islands
- Increase sustained funding and capacity to implement invasive alien species activities

Working groups identified more specific actions to dramatically improve invasive alien species management in their region. Additionally, each participant identified actions he or she would undertake to advance this work.

## Implementation

Workshop participants identified mechanisms and supporting structures to help implement the actions outlined above. These included:

- Briefing delegates attending relevant international fora -- including the CBD, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), UN General Assembly (UNGA), UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other relevant agreements -- on workshop outcomes and highlighting the importance of invasive alien species management in relation to both islands and climate change.
- Taking advantage of upcoming regional and international meetings to follow up on actions identified at the workshop (e.g. CBD's inter-agency meeting with other international conventions and organizations, Pacific Invasives Partnership meeting).
- Identifying and engaging key champions in international and regional organisations and national governments to represent the issue of invasive alien species management.
- Establishing or strengthening mechanisms to share lessons learned within and across regions and government departments, including learning exchanges, inventories, reports and online portals.
- Engaging civil society organisations including national, regional and international NGOs to help carry messages and raise the profile of invasive alien species management.

### **Recommendations**

The workshop identified priorities for consideration by international fora including the CBD, CSD, UNGA and the UNFCCC. Suggested actions called for:

- Recognition of the inter-linkages between climate change and invasive alien species and their combined impacts on island biodiversity, as well as the role of invasive alien species management in mitigating the effects of climate change by enhancing ecosystem resilience and adaptation.
- Political, financial and technical support for regional collaboration and initiatives addressing invasive alien species to facilitate implementation of national obligations on protecting island biodiversity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods.
- Identification of a mechanism or process to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned on invasive alien species management within and across islands regions, particularly as a means to enhance South–South cooperation.
- Improved linkages to Overseas Territories, dependencies and other insular jurisdictions with a view to strengthening management efforts and effective funding instruments.
- Analysis of progress and lessons learned on regional island cooperation to manage the threat of invasive alien species for consideration under the CBD's review of the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work scheduled for COP11 and further work on the Mauritius Plan of Action for Small Island Developing States.
- Focus review of the CBD Strategic Plan and post-2010 targets on the drivers of biodiversity loss and direct significant funding to address invasive alien species and other major direct drivers of biodiversity loss on islands.

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<sup>1</sup> Management includes prevention, control and eradication.

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<sup>3</sup> CBD Decisions IX/4 and IX/21

<sup>4</sup> The Coral Triangle includes Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

<sup>5</sup> Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis. Island Press, Washington, DC.

<sup>6</sup> Pimentel et al, 2001. Economic and environmental threats of alien plant, animal, and microbe invasions. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 84: 1-20

<sup>7</sup> Donlan, C.J., and C. Wilcox (2008). Diversity, invasive species and extinctions in insular ecosystems. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 45: 1113-1123.

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<sup>8</sup> Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2009). Connecting Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Report of the Second Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change. Montreal, Technical Series No. 41, 126 pages.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 2009. Convenient Solutions to an Inconvenient Truth: Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change

<sup>10</sup> Dudley, N., et al. [editors] (2010); *Natural Solutions: Protected areas helping people cope with climate change*, IUCN/WCPA, TNC, UNDP, WCS, The World Bank and WWF, Gland, Switzerland, Washington DC and New York, USA.