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PRESS RELEASE

Commonwealth Study Team Backs Community Based Management For Marine Resources

Apia, 28 November, 2008: A Commonwealth study tour team, completing a three nation Pacific inquiry in Samoa today concluded that community management initiatives for fish and shellfish are producing results and are the right way to go. They foster community ownership and responsibility, and deserve long-term help from governments and donors.

The team, from six nations, has been on an intensive study tour of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Samoa from 16-28th November. They have met fishery and environment officials and made field visits in each country – in Samoa to Tafagamanu village, which has a fish reserve, and to Safata, to meet committee members for the Safata and Aleipata Marine Protected Areas. In each country they have appreciated the generous assistance of government, NGO and village community organisations.

The study tour is part of a two year Commonwealth Fisheries Programme which will position the Commonwealth as a major player in stopping the depletion of marine fish resources, in promoting sustainable management strategies, and in supporting the long-term livelihood of coastal fishing communities. Other findings are:

- That the question of sustainability has to be addressed, as too many projects depend on short-term funding or a handful of individuals for their operation
- That good collaboration between government departments, levels of government and chiefs or those responsible for marine management in the villages is crucial – the team was impressed by the good examples seen in Samoa
- That community management initiatives and no-take zones are already working successfully – with a return of inshore fish and shellfish, and coral recovery – although full recovery and abundance may take decades

The Commonwealth Fisheries Programme is jointly managed by the Commonwealth Foundation, an intergovernmental body which supports civil society, the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, a think-tank which is part of London University, and the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, the Commonwealth's environmental NGO. It is funded by the Department for International Development, UK, and AusAid, the aid arm of the Australian Government.

The programme is preparing a report for Commonwealth leaders who meet in Trinidad in November 2009 and includes study tours, case study work, and meetings of civil society and presentations to Fisheries Ministers in the Pacific and Caribbean. Progress reports will be given to London High Commissioners on 20 January, 2009, and to Commonwealth officials at their FAO fisheries meeting in Rome in March.

Members of the Commonwealth Study Tour in the South Pacific

Papua New Guinea

John Aini, Director, Ailan Awareness, New Ireland
Almah Tararia, Environmental lawyer

Samoa

Chief Seuala Patone, Aleipata Marine Protected Area Trust Fund Chairman
Chief Tuala Peniamina, Mayor of Tafagamanu

Vanuatu

James Graham, Chairman, Krab Bay Tabu Committee
John Ronneth, Nguna Pele Marine Protected Area

University of the South Pacific and the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council

Dr Joeli Veitayaki, Director, Marine Studies Department

Study Tour Coordinator

Marta Lang, New Zealand lawyer on contract to the Commonwealth Foundation

Study Tour Leader

Richard Bourne, Associate Fellow, Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Fisheries – Our Common Wealth is an international programme aimed at ensuring sustainability and improving the livelihoods of coastal communities in developing countries. Managed by a consortium of Commonwealth organisations, the two-year programme combines their expertise and networks to raise awareness and develop a knowledge base to help provide effective long-term solutions for fisheries management.

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Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organisation, resourced by and reporting to Commonwealth governments, and guided by Commonwealth values and priorities. Its mandate is to strengthen civil society in the achievement of Commonwealth priorities - democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable, people-centred development, and to promote arts and culture. www.commonwealthfoundation.com

Commonwealth Human Ecology Council

CHEC works to promote education, research, practical projects and policy that support a human ecological approach to development. This approach addresses the complex relations between social systems and ecosystems at all levels as well as related mechanisms of governance. As a non-governmental organisation, CHEC works closely

with its regional Chapters and Commonwealth Universities on local projects. Through these, it strengthens its knowledge base and understanding of areas such as forestry; human settlements; health and nutrition; capacity analysis and development for small island states; water and energy, and education for sustainable development. This information is also shared at an international level through advice and advocacy in the United Nations and Commonwealth arenas. www.checinternational.org

Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

The CPSU is the think-tank for the Commonwealth of 53 countries. They work to inform and influence policy decisions affecting commonwealth countries on issues such as democracy, human rights, economic development and civil society. The CPSU conduct research studies to inform and influence policy makers in over a quarter of the world's countries. They seek to put the policy choices before the Commonwealth into sharper focus, exploring options and suggesting new directions.

www.cpsu.org.uk

Follow the programme on-line: www.commonwealthfisheries.org



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