

Republic of Palau

National Report
to the
United Nations Convention to
Combat Desertification

April 2002

Office of Environmental Response and Coordination
Office of the President of the Republic of Palau

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
ENSO	El Niño Southern Oscillation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MAP	Presidential Management Action Plan
MRD	Ministry of Resources and Development
NAP	National Action Plan
NCA	Ngaremeduu Conservation Area
NEPC	National Environmental Protection Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Protected Area
OERC	Office of Environmental Response and Coordination
PALARIS	Palau Automated Land and Resource Information System
PCS	Palau Conservation Society
STPAP	Sustainable Tourism Policies and Action Plan
STU	Sustainable Tourism Unit
TNC	The Nature Conservancy

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NATIONAL REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

REPUBLIC OF PALAU

APRIL 2002

**I. THE STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE
FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS
AND/OR POLICIES**

The Republic of Palau is an archipelago in the Western Pacific located between 7° North latitude and 134° East longitude. Palau consists of over 500 islands covering a land area of 535 km². The archipelago has a tropical maritime climate with a mean temperature of 27° C (81°F). The annual rainfall is about 3,700 millimeters. The Republic of Palau is situated close to the global center of marine biodiversity. There are at least 10,000 species of living organisms in Palau. The marine life consists of nearly 1,500 species of reef fishes, and 700 corals. Approximately 1,000 endemic organisms are found in Palau, the bulk of them from the terrestrial environment. Terrestrial endemics include about 200 endemic plants, of which 60 are orchids, 300 terrestrial gastropods, 500 insects, 16 birds, 12 amphibians and reptiles, two freshwater fishes, and two species of bat. All of these organisms are directly affected by droughts, soil erosion, land degradation, and unsustainable development.

The most serious environmental, social and economic peril to the Republic is the impact of Climate Change and Climate Variability. The 1998 El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) induced drought caused the complete loss of the taro crops (traditional food supply) in several States, valued at US\$ 0.75 million. On low-lying coral islands, the water lens was displaced upward by the rise in sea level, causing flooding of taro patches by saltwater intrusion. These taro areas have not yet recovered. During March of 1998, uncontrolled fires burned on a daily basis and destroyed 20% of Palau's forest, savannah and agricultural lands. Recent climate change studies have projected that ENSO extremes are likely to increase with increasing greenhouse gas concentrations.

Palau's main industry is adventure tourism. Tourism accounted for 47%, or US\$ 67 million, of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1996. The Gross Domestic Product for 1998 was US\$ 113 million, a 3.3% drop from the year before. The reduction was due to a decline in tourism because of coral bleaching associated with ENSO effects. Sea temperature warming associated with the 1998 ENSO event led to the loss of one third of hermatypic corals, valued at US\$ 100 million, throughout Palau's reefs. The agricultural loss was estimated at US\$ 0.75 million or 0.7% of the GDP.

The second greatest threat to the Republic is land degradation caused by population growth and development. The annual population growth rate is 2.1 %, primarily composed of foreign labor to build new infrastructure, including a 53-mile road on

the largest island of Babeldaob (409 km²). Building the Compact Road is the largest infrastructure project in Micronesian history. The road construction has caused the loss of vegetation totaling at least 3.087 km² from 1995-2001. Vegetation loss is due to the road alignment, stockpile areas, labor camps and quarry sites. Fires are also causing vegetation loss from slash burning by farmers and landowners building new homesteads. Sustainable land-use planning is crucial to ensure Palau's natural resources are available for future generations.

HUMAN ACTIVITIES

While climate change, sea level rise and drought cause long-term threats to Palau's security, human activities cause the greatest short-term threat. Overuse and misuse of marine and terrestrial resources lead to sea and land pollution that directly impacts human and ecosystem health. Dredging of inshore reef areas, addressed below, is of particular concern. Palau's recent move toward globalization and lack of adequate quarantine regulations to accommodate this trend has caused significant introductions of invasive species. According to a recently released IUCN report, Palau is host to ten of the one hundred worst invasive species. Recent dengue fever outbreaks in Palau were produced in part by unsanitary living conditions. Inadequate labor laws expose many foreign laborers to substandard living conditions on a daily basis.

THE COMPACT ROAD

Construction of the Compact Road, a 53-mile road that will encircle Babeldaob, began in 1995. This road is the most significant infrastructure project in recent history. The road will open development opportunities that are unprecedented in Babeldaob. Existing planning guidelines for Babeldaob stress an ecosystem approach that protects watersheds, mangroves, arable lands and cultural or historical sites. Key issues are soil erosion, wetland destruction, and impacts to habitats of rare, endemic, or endangered species. To date, there are limited land use plans for the individual states in Babeldaob. In 2001, Typhoon Utor caused major landslides along existing roads and especially along the Compact Road in Airai State. The storm resulted in estimated damages of US\$ 4.0 million. Effective rehabilitation of these watersheds is a challenge. Major dredging of inner reefs for coral sub-base material and filling of wetlands and mangroves are occurring throughout Babeldaob because of the road and other developments.

DROUGHT

Due to climate change trends, drought and the reduction of Palau's freshwater resources are major issues in Palau. Over the past 10 years, drought has caused significant degradation to terrestrial ecosystems, that in turn are closely related to marine ecosystems. The country has an annual rainfall of about 3,700 mm, yet it has limited storage, distribution and treatment capacity for water. During the 1998 ENSO

event, Palau had the lowest rainfall recorded in 100 years. The Republic has already experienced the beginning of drought conditions in the first quarter of 2002 as a new ENSO event is occurring. Water shortages are a frequent event in the main city of Koror and therefore rationing has been implemented whenever a prolonged drought period occurs. It is critical to improve storage and distribution of water for the current and upcoming drought(s) as well as to develop an action plan for fire prevention.

The 2001 National Drought Mitigation Action Plan (NAP) has been developed around a drought management infrastructure and incorporates both public and private sector activities to mitigate and/or adapt to the changing global climate. The NAP assesses the Republic's current water resources and potential infrastructure development options to manage and expand, where possible, water storage capabilities. It also includes the assessment of agricultural practices and identification of salinity resistant crops and potential agricultural sites to sustain nationwide food security during the ENSO event and associated drought. The NAP identifies the Public Health capabilities to manage the anticipated health effects expected during the 2002/03 El Nino event. Funding to fully implement this Action Plan is urgent.

The El Nino Mitigation Committee in coordination with the Ministry of Resources and Development (MRD) are in charge of on-going monitoring of freshwater resources, the Ngerikiil and Ngerimel watersheds, food supplies, and human health will continue throughout the duration of the expected drought. Other sources of water have been identified (Tabecheding and Lake Ngardok) and can be tapped if the Ngerimel runs dry and the Ngerikiil begins running low. The private sector will be continuously monitored to ensure that the cost of essential items such as bottled water and certain medical supplies and items essential for national preparedness are not unjustifiably increased during the drought. MRD has been coordinating with the appropriate agencies in developing an incentive program to allow citizens to purchase residential water catchment tanks. By developing residential based water supplies, citizens will be able to collect and use their own freshwater, thereby alleviating pressure on the national water supplies. The tanks will also allow for household water deliveries and storage during severe drought periods.

SEA LEVEL RISE

In 2001, the third assessment report by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) estimated a 50-90 mm rise in sea level within the next 50-100 years. The report states that climate change is attributed significantly to human activities. The single greatest threat to Palau's sustainability is climate change and subsequent sea level rise. In Palau, causeways, seawalls and other coastal infrastructure are slowly being degraded by sea level rise. The States of Angaur and Peleliu, as well as much of the western coast of Babeldaob lost 100% of its taro crops during the 1998 ENSO event. This loss was caused by saltwater intrusion and prolonged drought stemming

from sea level rise associated with climate change and climate variability. Taro is an essential part of Palau's food base and plays a unique role in its culture. Taro is used as a major component of food exchange in all traditional customs. Palau has at least 70 varieties of taro of which many are resistant to specific pests and diseases. It is important that these varieties are safeguarded from sea level rise, drought and land degradation. The lost taro crop represented US\$ 0.75 million, or 0.7% of the Gross Domestic Product for 1998. Sea level rise also threatens Palau's mangrove forests, beaches, and coastal communities where most of the infrastructure and economic development activities are located.

ARABLE LANDS

Eighteen types of soils are found in Palau. Latosols are the main type, comprising 93% of all soils in Palau. Latosols are infertile, acidic and have high aluminum content, and therefore are a poor soil for agriculture. Less than 18% of Palau's land is suitable for agriculture (has a slope less than 12%). In 1994, 22% of Palau's arable soil was being used for agroforestry or crop production. The value of total fruit and crop production for that year was US\$ 0.70 million. Savanna or grassland covers 25% of the land area and is subject to frequent fires during the drought periods. The cycle of burning and erosion results in the depletion of vegetation. This, in turn, causes high sedimentation down slope with deleterious effects in low-lying areas, mangrove forests and the reefs. Burning vegetation also tends to spread invasive plant species. According to a recently released IUCN report on invasive alien species, Palau is host to 10 of the worst invasive plants worldwide. Watershed management is also a major focus of the Bureau of Agriculture to ensure that sustainable agroforestry does not conflict with water quality in Palau.

WATERSHED PROTECTION

In 1997, three states, Aimeliik, Ngatpang, and Ngaremlengui, collaborated in an agreement to protect the largest watershed (98 km²) in Palau, Ngaremeduu Bay. The Ngaremeduu Conservation Area (NCA) encompasses some of the most important ecosystems existing in Palau and the region making it of global conservation importance. The NCA is one of Micronesia's most diverse areas with respect to both species and habitat types. Mangrove forest, swamp forest, wetlands and freshwater marshes, a lagoon, barrier reefs, patch reefs, and an outer reef pass are included in the NCA. The three States developed a management plan for the Ngaremeduu Conservation Area, including watershed management. In 1997, the State of Melekeok set up the Ngardok Nature Reserve covering an area of 4 km² and encompassing Ngardok Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Micronesia. Not only is this lake and the surrounding area home to endemic plants, birds, and other wildlife, it is also the most important breeding ground for the endangered saltwater crocodile. The Ngardok Nature Reserve is part of Palau's second largest watershed, the Ngerdorch Watershed. These areas, Ngaremeduu and Ngardok, are being considered as potential Ramsar Sites under the Ramsar Convention for the protection of

wetlands. The Ngerikiil Watershed is currently under study through the initiative of the Palau Conservation Society (PCS) for further watershed management. The Ngerikiil Watershed supplies freshwater to over 70% of the population.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Palau's native biodiversity and economy are under threat from invasive species. The introduction of foreign species to Palau has risen markedly during the last 50 years as modes of human transportation have become more efficient. These non-native species have been causing harm to agriculture, biological diversity, and integrity of

natural areas. There are already 428 species of alien plants found in Palau, 10 of which are considered some of the world's 100 worst weeds. These weeds compete with local taro and tapioca crops causing production loss. In addition, several of the weeds are fire resistant and out-compete less resilient native plants. The Palau Community College and the Bureau of Agriculture, together with a multi-agency government team are working to combat these alien invasive weeds.

Two fruit fly species, *Bactrocera philippinensis* and *B. occipitalis* accidentally arrived in Palau in 1995. These fruit flies are causing up to 100% damage to the mountain apple and carambola fruit and 80% damage to guava and 30% damage to bananas. Other fruits are being damaged as well. All export of these fruits has been banned. A Fruit Fly Eradication Program, under the Ministry of Resources and Development, has been established to rid Palau of these two fruit flies. Other invasive animal species of note include several species of rat, Asian musk shrew, feral pigs, Cane toads, giant African snails, Sulphur-crested cockatoos, and Eclectus parrots. Palau faces a dilemma with the Macaque monkey that was introduced in the early part of the 20th century to the low-lying coral island of Angaur. This monkey is causing severe damage to Angaur's fruits and crops. The monkey feeds on wild fruits, cultivated fruits and crops. It has become a serious pest and a major threat to Angaur's agriculture. Angaur State established an eradication program in June 2001 and over 500 monkeys were eliminated from the island. This has not completely solved the problem so the question remains how to control this pest species in Palau.

Palau has recently strengthened its quarantine laws and is building local capacity for detecting and preventing the entry of invasive species. Palau must improve three basic elements regarding alien species: exclusion; early detection and eradication of foreign "pest" species. The goal is to keep internal areas free of infestations. More coordination between State and National governments needs to take place for progress to occur.

II. THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CCD

Palau was the first Pacific Island Country to submit its National Report to the UNCCD in April 2000. Since that time, the focal point for the UNCCD shifted from the Bureau of Foreign Affairs to the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC). The OERC was created by Presidential Executive Order 189 in January 2001 to coordinate and implement the mandates of the UNCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD. The OERC is also mandated to develop a broad and coordinated planning approach to issues of environmental response; integrate governmental environmental programs in to Executive Branch environmental response planning; establish a coordinated grant writing capacity on environmental issues faced by the Republic; and assist environmental support agencies in the development of funding assistance for environmental programs in Palau. In December 2001, the Republic of Palau held its first seminar on the UNCCD. The objectives of this seminar were to assemble multi-stakeholders to review the 2000 National Report and assess the status of land use, land degradation, drought, and their environmental and socio-economic impacts. In addition, the seminar assessed the implementation of policies and measures to combat desertification and propose future actions.

In January 2002, the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) was created, with the OERC acting as Secretariat. This Council will provide coordinated planning and staffing for the Nation's response to issues of global climate change, biodiversity, desertification, land degradation and other internationally and nationally identified issues. The NEPC includes stakeholders from every government ministry, agency, and NGO that has environmental components and concerns in Palau. The Council will provide a comprehensive sustainable management plan highlighting the Republic's national environmental priorities and policies, as well as establishing clear, documented and endorsed national guidelines for environmental programs. The NEPC is mandated to serve as the focal coordinating group for all environmental initiatives at the national and international levels. The Council will also be reviewing, revising, and proposing new legislation that applies to Palau's environmental priorities and issues. The Republic's top environmental priorities: to stop and reverse land degradation; reverse coastal sedimentation; stop poor resource use practices; improve environmental monitoring; and stop large scale biodiversity loss through the management and protection of habitats and endangered species.

The NAP identified the Ministry of Resources and Development (MRD) as the office that will ensure that potential negative effects of the 2002/03 ENSO event on the Republic are kept to an absolute minimum. Short of declaring a national emergency should drought conditions intensify, every effort will be made to reduce the negative effects on the nation and keep daily operations as normal as possible. Priorities for MRD-Water System Division are:

1. Take necessary actions to coordinate with all necessary agencies to provide rationed amounts of water to sustain the population.
2. Coordinate with the Bureau of Public Health and Sanitation to maintain adequate sanitary conditions to protect the general health of the population.
3. Implement the above two priorities in such a manner as to enable the population to continue daily activities.

The Ministry of Resources and Development will also implement a water conservation program highlighting the economical use of water, leakage reduction, and the reduction of poor water conservation practices. The water conservation program will be a public awareness campaign on efficient water conservation practices.

III. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP

In 2001, the Republic established a Drought Mitigation Committee. The Committee includes all major national agencies including the National Emergency Committee, the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, the National Emergency Management Office, the Ministries of Health, Justice, Resource and Development and Education, the Environmental Quality and Protection Board, the Association of Governors and public radio. These agencies, in cooperation, developed a Drought Mitigation Action Plan that is currently being implemented on a national, state and community level. The Committee has held nation-wide workshops and a national symposium with the theme: Climate Change- Preparing for Drought. These activities set the stage for the successful implementation of the NAP.

The most important land degradation issues that have been identified by Palau are:

1. Soil erosion due to loss of forest and vegetation because of the impacts of infrastructure development, particularly the building of the Compact Road around the main island of Babeldaob. The critical capacity constraints limiting Palau's ability to address this issue are the emplacement of a legal and regulatory framework to consolidate functions, reduce overlap, clarify responsibilities and strengthen enforcement. There is also a lack in human resources, both in training and expertise of land use management and conservation, environmental protection, monitoring and enforcement.
2. Coastal erosion due to extraction of corals to use for the road building which will result in the degradation of mangroves, seagrass beds, and reefs. Capacity constraints limiting the ability to address this issue include the lack of financial resources and effective institutional processes (addressed with the creation of the NEPC).
3. Loss of soil fertility because of blockage of natural drainage and inappropriate agricultural practices. There is a lack of policy framework and clearly defined missions and mandates to address this issue.

4. Soil erosion due to commercial felling/extraction and fire. Unsustainable development is often pursued out of ignorance rather than unscrupulous practices. Effective long term environmental management will require an informed and supportive public. There is need to increase environmental awareness at all levels, including politicians, students of all levels, National and State Governments and the general public. The State of Airai, where the Ngerikiil watershed is located, has begun, with assistance from PCS and The Nature Conservancy, a land degradation public awareness campaign. This should assist local political and traditional leaders with State land use policies.

IV. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP AND THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER ENTITIES

The consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the NAP has begun with the successful completion of the first awareness seminar in December 2001. The seminar's objectives were to review the status of land use, land degradation, drought, and their environmental and socio-economic impacts. The implementation of policies and measures to combat land degradation and drought mitigation measures were also assessed. Some of the key issues discussed during the seminar were:

- a. land degradation, degraded (pasture land) deterioration, soil erosion and infertility, and land use planning;
- b. freshwater conflict, drought effects, watershed management, water distribution and runoff management;
- c. deforestation, in particular the mangrove destruction and botanical degradation;
- d. nature conservation, ecology management, biodiversity loss and unsustainable use of natural resources;
- e. climate change, global warming and their negative impacts on the regional environment and local people;
- f. food security and disaster management, particularly the drought conditions caused by the 1998 ENSO event, and the upcoming 2002/03 ENSO event.

The participants at the first seminar also proposed further actions to achieve the implementation of such policy objectives and reviewed the 2000 National Report to CCD. Their comments and contributions are included in this 2002 National Report. Palau thanks the Secretariat for the CCD for supporting the seminar and look forward to continued support from the Secretariat to develop future Action Plans (see Annex for summary of the seminar).

V. MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NAP, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION TO MONITOR DESERTIFICATION ACTIVITIES.

The 2001 Sustainable Tourism Policies and Action Plan (STPAP) was developed to implement 24 key issues identified in the 1997 STPAP. The recommendations include product diversification, capacity building mechanisms, development of a high-end tourism product, diversification of tour attractions on Babeldaob Island, and effective management of natural and cultural resources. A Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) will be established within the Office of the President to implement the STPAP by the end of 2002. The STU will also work closely with the NEPC.

The Presidential Management Action Plan (MAP) has the aim to “improve the quality of life of the people of Palau.” The MAP includes the NEPC and the STU in a cohesive planning structure within the Executive Branch and ensures the effective implementation of different plans, including the NAP. Various issues that the MAP covers are providing a comprehensive national plan for the management and protection of marine resources; the establishment of guidelines for agro-forestry with the minimization of soil disturbance and environmental impacts; and the development of a comprehensive mangrove, forest, and watershed management and rehabilitation plan.

Palau has taken action within the framework of the NAP through the development and implementation of its Drought Mitigation Action Plan. The goal of this plan is to improve and expand storage capacity and distribution of water throughout Palau especially during drought periods. The Bureau of Agriculture has developed a Fruit Fly Eradication Program that is a top priority to ensure food security as well as to derive the economic benefits of exporting fruits for the Republic. In addition, the Bureau of Agriculture focuses on watershed management with the public, states, and NGO’s who are taking the initiative to better manage their watersheds. The Ngerekiil watershed in Airai State is of particular concern because this is where most of the water used by the public is drawn from.

The Conservation Area Support Officer, under the Ministry of Resources and Development is responsible for implementing the Ngaremeduu Conservation Area management plan. Draft comprehensive forest management and mangrove management plans have been developed as well as buffer zone legislation. Legislation for a National Protected Area (NPA) Network is currently being drafted with coordination between the Olbiil Era Kelulau (national congress) and various government agencies and NGOs. The NEPC will also play a role within the NAP framework by reviewing, endorsing, and implementing applicable legislation and policies at all levels.

VI. FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS FROM NATIONAL BUDGETS IN SUPPORT OF IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION RECEIVED AND NEEDED, IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING REQUIREMENTS.

The national budget has provided financial allocations to support multi-stakeholders from both government and non-government to take action on the CCD. The national budget supports, through both direct and indirect funding, the implementation of plans such as the Presidential Management Action Plan, the Drought Mitigation Action Plan, the Fruit Fly Eradication Program and the Ngaremeduu Bay Management Plan. In addition the national government supports the Palau Automated Land and Resource Information System (PALARIS) that provides accurate data to produce maps that track and monitor movements of fruit flies, invasive weeds, dengue fever outbreaks as well as provide information on land use activities.

In an attempt to gain additional support for sustainable development initiatives, Palau is Party to various international conventions and agreements that have implicit linkages to the environment and human health. However, the requirements of convention Party status coupled with internal environment and economic issues place added stress on already limited resources. The Republic continues to seek financial assistance and technical support for existing action plans relating to the CCD.

VII. A REVIEW OF BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND AN ASSESSMENT THEREOF.

The Republic had development benchmarks and indicators to measure progress and to assess the environmental concerns highlighted under the CCD. The PALARIS program is creating a database of our natural resources in terms of soil and vegetation types in collaboration with other agencies. This data can be used to monitor loss as well as protection of water, soil, vegetation and cultural resources over time. In addition, PALARIS is tracking the spread of invasive weeds and health related epidemics. The decrease in numbers or the spread of alien invasive species and epidemics can serve as indicators of success. Management plans have been developed for established watershed conservation areas. The successful implementation of these management plans and the establishment of plans for all watersheds will serve as a measure of progress. The watershed protection awareness campaign, carried out by PCS in Airai, the site of Ngerikiil watershed should have some effects upon land use policies in that State. The successful implementation of the Presidential Management Action Plan, the Drought Mitigation Action Plan, the Fruit Fly Eradication Program and the Ngaremeduu Conservation Area Management Plan can be used to measure progress and be assessed over time.

The Republic of Palau is interested in sub-regional and regional collaboration. The South Pacific Sub-regional Workshop on Integration of Priority Activities related to

Mitigation and Combating Land Degradation held in Somoa, May 2001, provided Palau with a chance to share experiences, challenges, and solutions with other Pacific Island Countries. It was particularly constructive to Palau's interests in the areas of ensuring better impact of anti-desertification projects, and promoting active participation of affected stakeholders in decision making.

Annex

Summary of the Sessions of the National Awareness Seminar on Combating Land Degradation and Mitigating the Drought Effects in Palau

5-7 December 2001, Koror, Palau

Opening session: Ms. Ann Kitalong, the Assistant Environmental Coordinator, the Office of Environmental Response and Coordination (OERC), chaired the opening session and following sessions on behalf of OERC.

Mr. Billy R. Kuartei, Chief of Staff of the Office of the President addressed the opening of the seminar and made a brief speech on behalf of the President of Palau. Mr. Kuartei welcomed all participants on behalf of the government of the Republic and he stressed the issues of land degradation and drought in Palau. He called on all participants, from national and state governmental officers, local community leaders and NGOs, to attach great importance to the implementation of the UNCCD. Also of significance is the preparation of the National Action Programmes to combat land degradation and mitigate drought effects which Palau faces at this moment. Mr. Kuartei also emphasized the necessity and urgency to begin efforts to deal with existing issues which necessitates close coordination amongst line ministries and government departments. Mr. Kuartei hoped all concerned governmental agencies would work closely with the Secretariat and international communities to open possible cooperative channels and search for potential financial and technical sources to work on solving the difficulties that Palau has. The Republic of Palau has accessed the UNCCD and other relevant environmental conventions and it recognizes its obligations to the international community. Development partners were kindly requested to provide necessary assistance to this country because of the lack of capacity to handle all of the serious effects of drought and land degradation. He promised that the national government would provide necessary leadership and political policies to implement the UNCCD and its master plans, including the NAP for combating land degradation and mitigating drought effects. Mr. Yang extended thanks to the Governments of the Republic of Palau and donor countries for sponsoring and co-financing the seminar in Koror. He expressed his sincere hope that the seminar would generate various ideas to facilitate the UNCCD implementation and to contribute to partnership building among stakeholders and close coordination among governmental agencies in Palau, as well as to strengthen further cooperation between the host government and international donors. He invited all participants to work together during the three-day seminar to bring about a solid output that would identify a course of concrete actions that are required to facilitate the UNCCD implementation in Palau. He addressed the importance of the National Report to Implement the UNCCD and hoped that representatives from Palau who will attend the forthcoming Committee for the Review on the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) would report on the progress made on combating land degradation and mitigating drought effects in the context of the UNCCD implementation. The

Government of Palau was requested to submit the revised National Report in April of 2002 for this purpose.

The following representatives of concerned governmental agencies participated in the seminar from opening event to the last session:

Ann Kitalong	OERC
Lorenza Pedro	Angaur State
Darlynne Rakawo	Ministry of Resources and Development
Peter Ma	Ministry of Resources and Development
John Cunningham	Rural
Hazime Telei	National Emergency Management Office
Techur Rengulbai	Water Branch
Alma Ridep-Morris	Bureau of Natural Resources and Development
Tmekei Ellis	Environmental Health
Losii Samsel	Environmental Health
Maria Rehuher	BHRD
Jack Idechong	Palau Conservation Society (PCS)
Caleb Otto	Public Health
Adalbert Eledui	Koror State
Tarita Holm	PCS
David Hinchley	The Nature Conservancy
Magario Wachi	Ngaraard State
Leonard Basilius	PCAA
Pearl Marumoto	Environmental Quality Protection Board
Jerome Temengil	Ngaraard State
Patricia Davis	-----
Fred Sengebau	DAMR
Yang Youlin	Asia RCU/UNCCD

First session: All participants, both national government and state government officers and NGO representatives, were invited to make presentations on the prevailing issues, efforts and policy approaches. The following issues were freely discussed during this session:

- a) land degradation, ked (pasture land) deterioration, soil erosion and infertility, and land use planning;
- b) freshwater conflicts, drought effects, watershed management, water distribution and runoff management;
- c) deforestation, in particular the destruction of mangroves and botanical degradation;
- d) population growth and human resource development, foreign workers management and local unemployment;
- e) lack of capacity at both national and state governmental agencies and local community levels;

- f) insufficiency of GIS, GPS and mapping techniques and technology transfer;
- g) nature conservation, ecology management, biodiversity loss and unsustainable use of natural resources;
- h) climate change, global warming and their negative impacts on regional environment and local communities;
- i) food security and disaster management, particularly the drought effects caused by El Nino, that is happening again in 2002/03;
- j) lack of funds for training, education and extension service at various levels.

All participants expressed their strong wishes that both the UNCCD family (GM and Secretariat) and international development partners give high consideration to the specific situation and limited capacities in Palau. The participants asked for them to provide possible assistance to the Palauan people in order for them to carry out productive projects and/or demonstrations/pilot programs designed to combat land degradation and mitigate drought in this affected country. Although the annual rainfall is over 150 inches the ability at the local levels to conserve and store water is strictly limited to technical and financial elements, that in most cases local communities are lacking. UN agencies, donor countries and other development partners are welcomed to Palau to observe, investigate and assist the Palauan people in handling the above mentioned issues.

Second session: Mr. Yang made a presentation on the introduction of the UNCCD and highlighted some specific cases from other Asian countries on their experiences of formulating and implementing NAPs, and the program development. Free and broad discussions were held at this session. Participants of various agencies made oral and written proposals that would be discussed at the planned 3rd session on Dec. 6th, 2002. GM and the Secretariat of the UNCCD were requested to play active roles in linking the host country (Palau) with donor countries and putting together regional, and subregional activities on implementing the UNCCD. Palauan agencies welcome the UNCCD family to sponsor initiatives at regional or subregional levels. Palau's participants expected that GEF could open a window for implementing the UNCCD at national, subregional and regional levels.

During this session, participants discussed the framework of the National Report to Implement the UNCCD in Palau, which will be prepared by the OERC. Valuable comments and recommendations were contributed to the framework and it is hoped that the final edition of the National Report of Palau can be completed by January 2002 and transferred to the Secretariat in Bonn and GM in Rome.

Dec. 7th, 2001

Third session: This session focused mainly on the preparation of the National Report to Implement the UNCCD. It also included considerations and discussions of the framework of the National Action Programme to Combat Land Degradation and

Mitigate Drought Effect (NAP), in a form of Q&A between participants and representatives of the Secretariat of the UNCCD. Participants a) made contributions to the national report and project proposals on behalf of the governmental agencies; b) reviewed the prevailing issues and challenges faced by Palau; c) Q&A were made on the preparation of project proposals, CCD implementation processes, financing mechanisms; d) brief format introduction of NAP preparation and some cases briefing in Asian countries were presented to concerned agencies and representatives; e) partnership building and inter-department coordination were one of the most discussed issues. Free discussion and exchange were held which aimed to let the host governmental agencies and officials know that necessary preparation has to be done before the sponsorship of a roundtable meeting.

The participants were satisfied with the assistance the Secretariat provided to Palauan agencies and NGOs. Due to the lack of capacity in Palau, the Secretariat and GM of the UNCCD are kindly requested to provide more technical assistance and financial support to Palau for preparing its NAP and preparation of a roundtable meeting. The Secretariat in Bonn is also requested to consider the possibilities of holding subregional meetings or initiatives in Palau, similar to the Drought Mitigation and Early Warning System in South Pacific Island Countries, which was approved by COP5 and stipulated in COP5 document (ICCD/(5)/2/Add.2, item 18). Both national and state governmental agencies and NGOs in Palau care to be involved in all initiatives and activities of CCD implementation. Secretariat and GM are suggested to include Palau as one of active members to attend the workshops, seminars or expert meetings on the CCD implementation.