



A REPORT ON THE ACADEMIC SUMMIT 2006
INTERNATIONAL ISLAND SYMPOSIUM
PRE-EVENT FOR THE 4TH PACIFIC ISLANDS LEADERS
MEETING (PALM 2006) OKINAWA, JAPAN

MARCH 10-11 2006
HARBOURVIEW HOTEL, NAHA, OKINAWA, JAPAN

1. Participants:

Pacific Islands Academic Pre-conference on “Sustainable Development for Islands: Education, Tourism, Environment and Economic Development” was held in Okinawa on March 10-11th of 2006, preceding the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM-2006) Between Japan and Members of the Pacific Islands Forum which will be held in Okinawa from 26-27 May 2006. Participants were the Presidents of the University of Guam, Palau Community College, College of the Marshall Islands, the University of New Caledonia, Northern Marianas College, the College of Micronesia-FSM, the University of the Ryukyus, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, Associate Vice President of the University of Hawaii Community Colleges and Professors from the Australian National University and the University of Otago (NZ). The invited participants expressed their deep appreciation to Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of the Ryukyus for hosting and organizing the Meeting.

2. Objectives:

The main objectives of the conference were to discuss common issues among the Pacific islands focusing on the themes of human resources development and sustainable development and make recommendations for the forthcoming Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting.

After opening remarks by Mr. Shigeie Toshinori, Ambassador in Charge of Okinawan Affairs, and also President Moshin Morita of the University of the Ryukyus, a keynote speech on “The Future of Pacific Region” was given by His Excellency Kuniwo Nakamura, former President of the Republic of Palau. This was followed by a panel discussion on “Sustainable Development for Islands: Education, Tourism, Environment and Economic Development.”

3. Suggested Strategy:

The participants confirmed their support for “the Okinawa Initiative on the Regional Development Strategy for a More Prosperous and Safer Pacific,” which was adopted at the last Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 2003) in Okinawa as well as outcomes from PALM 1997 and PALM 2000. In particular, the Okinawa Initiative, among other things, recognized the importance of education for the future development of the Pacific region. In the Joint Action Plan, Japan expressed support for the PIF efforts in the areas of school infrastructure, human resources development for teachers and teaching methods/materials, exchange programs among the children, hardware and expertise for distance learning (University of the South Pacific), ICT-

based projects including at the bilateral level, educational exchange programs between universities and colleges and technical and vocational education and training.

Participants also recognize the importance of the Pacific Plan Initiatives which was accepted by Pacific leaders at the PIF meeting in PNG October 2005, and support its initiatives on education.

The participants hereby affirmed the critical importance of developing appropriate achievable short-term and mid-long term strategies for human resources development and promotion of sustainable development of island societies through collaboration and networking among the participating countries/regions to achieve tangible results. Participants also agreed to implement an appropriate evaluation of the past PALM outcomes.

4. Mid-Long Term Strategies:

Human resources development must be accompanied by improvements in living and health standards and social and environmental sustainability. The participants noted the progress already made as a result of Japan's support in these areas, and expressed their hope for continuous collaborative efforts with Japan under the Okinawa Initiative. Higher education institutions should position themselves to identify best practices and to support local public policy development of their respective governments.

4.1 Higher Education:

The participants identified higher education as the first priority in strengthening human resources development.

4.2 Distance Education:

Distance learning among the Pacific islands higher education institutions should also be promoted through collaborative networking in the region.

The participants noted Japan's commitment to bridge the digital divide by introducing affordable communication opportunities to Pacific islands, including joint studies and subsequent construction of the internet networks which are sustainable in terms of cost and technological standards. A key component here is "diversified human resources development with the skills to be able to thrive both locally and globally".

4.3 Strengthen Centre for Asia and Pacific Islands Studies(CAPIS) of University of the Ryukyus and other institutions in Okinawa:

The participants recognized the important role of the University of the Ryukyus and other related institutions in Okinawa in spearheading and coordinating development and educational relationships with Pacific Islands. They share many common development issues with the Pacific island countries /regions including their small size, isolation, fragmentation, resource limitation and fragility, and vulnerability to natural disasters and outside economic and political impacts beyond their control. As such, Okinawa's situation and experiences can be very useful in terms of developing appropriate models for sustainable island development in this region.

4.4 Cultural Heritage and Education:

That emphasis be placed on raising awareness concerning education, with particular emphasis on the involvement of school children, as our future leaders, and on the involvement of elder community members who are the custodians of generation upon generation of precious knowledge about island cultures and environments.

Concrete measures should be taken to conserve local culture and heritage that are becoming increasingly important in nourishing identity and self-respect of the Pacific island communities. This should include training in conservation of archaeological sites and other cultural monuments and places.

Emphasis should be placed on integrating and utilizing archaeological, cultural sites, ritual song, arts and dance as key components of promoting sustainable tourism and to maintain the unique identity of indigenous peoples.

4.5 Education for Needs of Community:

Research and education be more applied and field-oriented as a means of making these activities more relevant to the needs of small islands and their local communities. At the same time, research and education must be more closely linked with the policy and decision making process.

4.6 Emphasize Tourism Education:

Environmentally and culturally sustainable tourism offers one of the best long-term options for sustainable small island development and collaboration between small islands in the Pacific region. Particularly a positive measure to facilitate student exchange programs with the newly established Department of Tourism Sciences (DTS) of the University of the Ryukyus will be beneficial to the promotion of human resources development in the tourism industry for future development of the Pacific islands.

5. Short-term Strategies

5.1 Student and Academic Exchange:

The participants recognized that the University of the Ryukyus will play a pivotal role in facilitating academic and student exchange programs with the Pacific island countries/regions particularly in the areas of sustainable tourism, environmental education and distance education (eLearning).

5.2 The Establishment of a Scholarship Scheme:

Participants expressed strong desire and total support for the PALM2006 to consider the establishment of a scholarship scheme to enable students of the Pacific islands countries/regions to study at the University of the Ryukyus and other institutions in Okinawa.

5.3. The establishment of a Pacific-wide Regional Consortium of Pacific Islands academic institutions.

The University of the Ryukyus will co-ordinate the networking of Pacific Island Higher Education Institutions through the use of the established organizations such as Pacific Distance Learning Alliance, the Pacific Post-secondary Educational Council,

USP, the University of Guam, the National University of Samoa, University of New Caledonia, University of Papua New Guinea and appropriate universities in New Zealand and Australia such as University of Otago and Australian National University. This will be achieved by creating continuous channels of communication, regular workshops and academic symposiums within Okinawa.

5.4. Action for Distance Education:

To improve ICT infrastructure through policy reform, we strongly desire that PI governments encourage telecommunication authorities to offer special consideration for educational access to ICT resources.

We hope that USPNet, one of the most successful education and communication networks in the region, will extend its coverage to link the islands nations and regions which are not members of USPNet. Also achieving full integration and region-wide connectivity will provide a truly seamless ICT network coverage to the Pacific Islands Communities. PI governments be encouraged to support this development.

PI governments should facilitate the approval of USPNet and other public network such as PEACESAT licensure in PICs for services in education, research, tourism and health.

Stakeholders to work closely with governments and telecommunication providers to come to some agreement as to the best technological and affordable solutions for education, research, tourism and health in the region.

Participants fully support the recommendations from the other pre-meeting which was held on 27-28 February in Naha, Okinawa, on the Distance Education for the Sustainable Development of Pacific Islands region.

5.5 Strengthen CAPIS of University of the Ryukyus:

Participants agreed that CAPIS, one of outcome of PALM-2000, has a critical role to implement the above plans. CAPIS is in the position to promote joint research programs with PI higher education institutions such as universities and colleges in the Micronesian and South Pacific Region, as well as student exchange and open lectures for greater community engagement which focus on the Pacific Islands issues. This will be undertaken in collaboration with other institutions in Okinawa such as Research Institute for Subtropics. CAPIS of University of the Ryukyus is also ready to conduct further projects such as symposium in collaboration with MOFA and other organizations.

5.6 Networking success case of Small Business, such as Recycling Plant

Participants had the opportunity to visit and view a waste-glass recycling plant in Okinawa, Supersol. They were impressed with this entrepreneurial operation as it highlighted the importance of linking successful waste management, research, small business and sustainable development. Participants agreed that there is a need to promote a small business network between Okinawa and Pacific Islands.

It also recognized that this Okinawa success model can be applied and considered as a strategic initiative to one of the key objectives in the Pacific Plan dealing with waste management.

5.7 Action in archaeological and other cultural heritage resources:

Participants agreed that there is an urgent need to undertake a feasibility study on the need for an educational program on archaeology, conservation and protection of cultural heritage and resources across Pacific nations. The University of Ryukyus is in a position to develop workshops, courses, and curriculum jointly with Pacific higher education institutions in this area. In preparation for this, a pilot study be undertaken immediately to identify and record important archaeological sites in the region.