

## REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS– UNESCAP REGION

### FIJI ISLANDS STATEMENT

Fiji as in other countries in the Pacific (PICs) is experiencing hardship as a result of escalating fuel prices. To try and reduce the adverse impacts on development programmes and more so to the ordinary households, requires innovative policy responses, such as energy conservation initiatives and the greater use of energy pricing and taxation as instruments for imported fuels conservation and end-use efficiency. The maintenance of a reliable and cost-effective supply of petroleum products is essential for Fiji and other PICs.

With rising fuel cost, and the possibility of the price of crude oil hovering close to US\$100 per barrel mark in the not too distant future, the fuel supply chain and its mechanism will need to be reassessed. All efforts should be directed towards minimising the adverse impacts on the economy of such huge hikes in prices and measures should include looking at available alternative energy sources.

The impact of petroleum spillages and emissions on the environment can be significant, particularly for the fragile atoll marine environments. For this reason, the proper handling, storage and use of petroleum products is an important issue for Fiji and also other PICs.

It is therefore essential for government to put in place a policy framework that provides sufficient autonomy and financial incentive to maintain supply of petroleum products in a commercially orientated and cost-effective manner, that sets appropriate price signals to encourage their conservation and efficient use, and that enforces sufficient regulation and control measures to protect our fragile environment.

On access to energy services our priorities include:

- Ensuring that there is sufficient, affordable and efficient supply and use of imported fuels;
- The delivery of reliable, affordable and efficient energy services to all sectors of the economy including the rural communities;
- The promotion of appropriate renewable energy technologies to harness the available energy sources in the country;

On the provision of modern energy services to rural communities, Fiji and I believe, other PICs also, have put in place a rural electrification policy that is heavily subsidised by government. Government is also mindful of the plight of women and other gender groups in the provision of these energy services and have incorporated appropriate policy instruments to address pertinent issues pertaining to these gender groups. However, we feel there is a need to place more emphasis on some of the basic issues that are specific to our women and these include:

- (a) The need to mainstream gender into national energy policies and planning, including the provision of assistance on the implementation of existing policies at all levels from government to community levels.

- (b) That relevant NGOs in the Pacific region be encouraged and supported to include energy in their terms of reference, with clear focus on gender and energy for sustainable development.
- (c) The use of participatory methods to enhance and commence data collection on gender and energy must be encouraged.
- (d) Strengthen community-based networks developed by the communities where the purpose is to support community electrification through advocacy, networking, training and implementation support.
- (e) The need to increase awareness and dissemination of information on energy and gender issues, especially at the rural community level.
- (f) The need to provide financial support mechanism including micro-credits for work in the energy and gender field and the development of appropriate and client-oriented technologies.
- (g) The need for improved gender and energy training and capacity building at different levels, through a number of approaches specifically:
  - Gender and energy curricula to be included at all education levels, from primary to tertiary level;
  - Encourage more female students in technical disciplines
- (h) If gender mainstreaming is to be successfully integrated into energy activities then the following priority needs to be addressed:
  - gender awareness training in government, energy officers and other stakeholders;
  - gender training at community levels;
  - “train the trainer” training within communities to facilitate sustainable development; and
  - see training opportunities for women in energy technologies.
- (i) Community participation which is inclusive of men, women, youths and children is critical for electrification at the rural level.
- (j) The language use in energy and gender policy statements must be clear, appropriate, gender sensitive and inclusive.
- (k) The need to use appropriate language in promoting energy awareness and capacity building in communities.

However, to be successful there needs to be continuing attention given to ensuring there are ongoing awareness and education programmes that are delivered in a balanced way such that energy and gender become successfully mainstreamed and are adopted as part and parcel of good governance in the future.

2 May 2006 .