



United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates Partnership in the Pacific Program



Executive Summary

This policy paper outlines the strategy of the United Arab Emirates to build and strengthen its relations with the island nations of the Pacific while assisting individual countries in their efforts to address a wide range of developmental issues.

On his first visit to the Pacific in February 2010, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Foreign Minister, will launch the UAE's 'Partnership in the Pacific Program' which has been designed to facilitate meaningful cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and Pacific island nations on programs and initiatives within a mutually developed co-operative framework. To that end the UAE has created a new starting program of \$50 million to be awarded to specific projects and partnerships in the Pacific in critical developmental areas such as education, social and healthcare services and infrastructure.

The island nations of the Pacific face a number of critical development challenges exacerbated by the impact of climate change. They are in fact on the front line of climate change, despite being the lowest contributors to this phenomenon; they are the most vulnerable to its consequences. The high exposure of their populations and infrastructure to projected climate change impacts such as rising sea levels, climate variability and extreme events calls for an

urgent need to strengthen adaptation and mitigation measures and increase the capacity of islands to manage their existing resources. Furthermore, lack of energy security, lack of widespread renewable energy technologies, remoteness and limited funding make the island states of the Pacific particularly vulnerable to energy supply issues. The UAE believes that more developed countries, especially those taking the lead in developing the next generation of environmental technologies, have an important role to play in partnering with others to address and overcome these tremendous challenges.

The "Partnership in the Pacific Program" is consistent with the UAE's long-standing record of international cooperation and its rapidly expanding capabilities in the field of low carbon technologies as well as its diverse foreign aid program. It is also in line with the UAE's wish to strengthen and expand its relationships with the island nations of the Pacific and build on the already strong ties that characterize our growing bilateral relationships there.

A History of International Cooperation

Since its foundation in 1971, the United Arab Emirates has established a solid track record for successful bilateral and multilateral cooperation around the world. The UAE has not only sought to play its part as a responsible global citizen, but to take the lead in tackling important issues that face the international community.

To take just one example, the UAE now hosts the headquarters of the recently established International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) - an agency that today stands at 142 United Nations members. The UAE's successful bid to host IRENA was a result of its commitment to using a unique geographic, political, and economic position to not only encourage the dynamic involvement of the developing world in the quest for renewable energy but also to bridge the ongoing North-South dialogue on a wide range of developmental issues.

The UAE shares the belief with its partners that the developing world must be fully engaged in the renewable energy revolution that lies ahead. IRENA's head-quartering in Abu Dhabi also represents an essential idea that the important work and functions of international organizations are more effective when equitably distributed globally and it is our mission to ensure that all countries gain equal access to the essential know-how and tools in the field of renewable energy.

On a range of other issues and as a responsible member of the global community, the UAE seeks to work constructively with countries around the world to share its insights and resources, and to establish mutually beneficial social, economic and diplomatic partnerships.

The UAE is a nation blessed with abundant natural resources and it understands the responsibilities such good fortune brings. The UAE operates a generous

foreign aid program, led by the Government-owned Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, which has established nearly 200 individual projects in more than 50 countries since 1971.

Leadership in Low Carbon Technologies at Home and Around the World

Like all developing nations the islands of the Pacific face a range of economic and development challenges. However, climate change and efforts to address its associated impacts represent perhaps the most pressing challenge to nations of the Pacific and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In the SIDS, more than 50 % of the population lives within 1.5 km of the shore and almost without exception, international airports, roads and capital cities are situated along the coast posing a critical potential threat to infrastructure and populations. Like the UAE, rising sea-levels pose a critical concern. In addition the Pacific Island states currently depend almost entirely on oil and other fossil fuels for their energy needs.

To address these problems, nations must partner in the efforts to both adapt to a low carbon world and in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Adaptation to climate change is a priority for ensuring the long-term effectiveness of investments in poverty eradication and sustainable development. Indeed, responding to the threat of climate change will require concerted adaptation action on an unprecedented scale.

The main determinants of a country's adaptive capacity include economic wealth, technology, information and skills, infrastructure, institutions and equity (WHO, 2003b).

Climate change demands that we grow our economies in a different way. It dramatically increases the level of uncertainty and requires new

decision-making methods to cope with it. Our climate will change over the long-term, but decision-makers still need to make investment decisions today.

The UAE is keen to support the island nations of the Pacific in addressing these challenges. To do so, the UAE will seek to leverage not only its foreign aid program but also its deep and growing expertise in low carbon technologies.

As a world leader in the production of energy, the United Arab Emirates has access to significant resources and expertise that can be equally applied to the development and adoption of low carbon energy technologies around the world in the future.

Over three years ago, the UAE took a pioneering step in being the first hydrocarbon economy to create a clear mandate with regards to renewable energy. Renewable Energy technologies are set to become an increasingly significant component of global energy supply and the UAE will maintain its relevance as a producer and exporter of energy, for both ecological and economic reasons.

The UAE has also established itself as an international hub for renewable energy research and discussion on the potential impacts of climate change through platforms such as the annual World Future Energy Summit, the Zayed Future Energy Prize and IRENA. The UAE is seeking to improve the nation's standing from a high per capita consumer of water and energy in the world today, to an efficient consumer of water and energy in the future.

This approach is most notably evident in the Government-backed Masdar initiative, owned by Mubadala Development Company, which is currently building the world's first zero waste, carbon-neutral city in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

Other major steps have already been announced. In 2009, The Government of Abu Dhabi announced

a commitment that 7 percent of the Emirate's power generation capacity will come from renewable sources by the year 2020.

However, global challenges such as climate change require cooperation and international solutions.

Therefore, while recognizing its own challenges at home, the UAE is also seeking to assist other nations around the world in their efforts to address the social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change. Moreover, as a country which may be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change itself; the UAE has a vested interest in investing in, learning and sharing strategies for coping with climate variability.

What is the Partnership in the Pacific Program?

The "Partnership in the Pacific Program" is an outreach umbrella program initiated by the UAE to strengthen and increase co-operation with the island states of the Pacific in a number of key development areas. The "Partnership in the Pacific Program" aims to facilitate cooperation and to assist individual countries from the region in their own efforts to address social, economic and environmental as well as other developmental issues. In the area of climate change specifically, the program also seeks to establish a new model for country-to-country and country-to-region cooperation to address the domestic and cross-border impacts of one of the most truly global challenges the world has ever faced. With a growing interest in the field of low carbon technologies the UAE believes it is in an ideal position to contribute to international efforts and regional partnerships to address the social, environmental and economic impacts of climate change, at home and around the world as well as to build ties with island states in a number of other developmental areas.

The UAE recognizes that any partnership program must work on a dual-track to help today with adaptation measures but also to help build for tomorrow a future based on low carbon alternatives. The Partnership program will therefore include developmental assistance in a variety of other areas in order to raise and promote capability within the Pacific island states to take the lead in finding the solutions to our shared problems. The program seeks to provide financial and technical assistance for Pacific island nations seeking a sustainable development program.

The key elements of the “Partnership in the Pacific Program” include:

1. Financial Assistance

The establishment of a partnership program with an initial capital of US \$50 million, managed by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, and solely dedicated to the provision of funding for projects and initiatives emanating from and/or focusing on the Pacific island nations in a wide-range of inter-related developmental fields. The resources of the fund will be administered on application to the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development on the basis of specific criteria to be outlined as we move forward with our partners.

2. Facilitating Dialogue

The facilitation of an annual meeting on the sidelines of the World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi and the UN General Assembly in New York between key stakeholders from the United Arab Emirates and the Pacific island nations to explore the potential for partnership and cooperation in facing key developmental challenges, to assess the existing cooperation framework and to mutually agree on ways to develop and expand its parameters.

3. Developing Research/Academic Partnerships

The UAE seeks to facilitate developing academic relationships and partnerships between UAE universities and research institutes with their counterparts in the Pacific Islands. This initiative could include joint research projects in areas of mutual interest as well as academic exchange programs and partnerships.

4. Developing Tools in Partnership with the Region and Capacity Building Programs

The Program will include the joint development of a set of development and evaluation tools for governments and private organizations in the Pacific island region to apply in their own projects as they see fit. Furthermore, as the UAE grows and develops as a knowledge hub for low carbon technologies, under the umbrella of the Program, the UAE will cooperate with Pacific islands states in sharing knowledge, data and expertise to assist in the challenges that lie ahead and as an integral part of the transition to a sustainable energy economy.

How can Pacific Island Nations Participate?

The UAE is keen to discuss the potential for Pacific island nations to participate in the “Partnership in the Pacific Program” and welcomes suggestions for proposed projects and cooperative initiatives to be submitted to the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

