

06 February 2011

The Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Fisheries and Forests
PO Box 2218,
Government Buildings,
Suva, Fiji

Excellency,

It is with gratitude and pleasure that we address you this letter on behalf of the ICCA Consortium (www.iccaforum.org) – the international organization that addresses appropriate recognition and support to territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities. We also write to you in our capacities as members of the Steering Committee of the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN: www.iucn.org and www.iucn.org/ceesp).

We recently visited Fiji seeking to learn from its leadership experience in the region and globally in the establishment of and support to ICCAs (Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories) i.e., as they are more commonly known in Fiji, your LMMAs. We met with communities, government officials, NGOs and academics in the east, north, west and south coasts of Viti Levu and we are now indeed extremely grateful for the wealth of information and insights they shared with us— rich lessons on ensuring the sustainability of LMMAs and the conservation of Fiji's rich natural and cultural resources.

During our visit we were informed that the Fijian fisheries legislation is presently under review and we considered that it may be appropriate to pass on to you a glimpse of the global perspective we have been able to develop after many decades of observation of the ICCA phenomenon in countries throughout the world. For recent international policy briefs and documentation and the relevant decisions approved by the 10th Conference of Parties (COP 10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), please consult the documents referenced at the end of this note.

In a nutshell: community conserved areas and management regimes (ICCAs in short) are highly-effective resource management and sustainable livelihoods tools and **one of the most important factors to their effectiveness and sustainability is their formal and appropriate recognition in national law.** We thus consider that you are now facing a wonderful opportunity to consolidate and strengthen a situation for which Fiji is rightly looked upon as a regional and international leader.

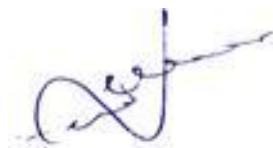
Indeed, if you will choose to enshrine in legislation your current LMMA regime you will act consistently with the leadership role that Fiji played at the recent CBD COP 10 (Nagoya, Japan, October 2010) when you promoted the full respect of the rights of indigenous peoples (Article 8j of CBD). You will also provide a significant contribution to achieving the stated goal of the Fiji government at the Small Island Developing States Conference (Mauritius, 2005), *i.e.*, protecting 30% of Fiji's inshore waters through effectively managed protected areas.

As a member of IUCN and signatory to key conventions, Fiji is upholding its international obligations to reflect in national law and promote the implementation of the policies it has ratified. **An appropriately legislated LMMA regime would go a great way to establish a robust international leadership in this sense.** And let us note that the next World Parks Congress— expected to shape conservation policies and thinking for the decade ahead— will be held in Oceania (Australia) in 2014 and community conserved areas will be a key theme there. Fiji will thus soon have a world stage where its leadership role can be appropriately showcased and recognized.


In light of all of the above, we allow ourselves to strongly encourage you— when drafting the new fisheries legislation— to include **specific provisions for the recognition and legal empowerment of the community institutions governing and managing your ICCAs/LMMAs**—the very feature that makes them one of the world's leading networks of community conserved areas in the marine environment.

In renewing our congratulations for what Fiji has achieved so far and our gratefulness for having been able to learn from your experience, we send you our warmest greetings and encourage you to contact us for any information, reference or advice in drafting legislation on community conserved areas that you may be interested to discuss.

Sincerely yours,



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