Palau shortlisted for the 2012 Future Policy Award

Title The Palau Conservation Society (PCS - BirdLife Partner) are delighted that two of the six short-listed policies for the 2012 Future Policy Award are from their Pacific Island nation. The 2012 Future Policy Award, an international award that celebrates effective and exemplary policies. Palau is shortlisted for its Areas Network Act, initiated in 2003 and its Shark Haven Act, 2009. California, Namibia, the Philippines, and South Africa are also still in the running. This year the topic of the award is the protection of oceans and coasts. Thirty-one different policies from 22 countries were nominated, ranging from integrated ocean and coastal policies, marine protected area programmes to laws regulating fisheries, trade in marine products, marine litter and land-sea interactions. The winning policy will be announced at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2012. Winners will be celebrated at the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Hyderabad, India. **Overview of Short-listed Palauan Policies: Palau?s Protected Areas Network Act, initiated in 2003** Palau?s Protected Areas Network Act establishes the framework for a network of marine and terrestrial protected areas ensuring a long-term sustainable use of natural resources. The Act involves local communities by enabling them to undertake a scientific and social assessment of their local environment and supports traditional systems of natural resource management, which have a long history in Palau. To date, 35 protected areas have been designated, including reefs, lagoons, mangroves and a sardine sanctuary. Some sites permit sustainable harvest of fish and other natural resources, whilst others have been declared no-take zones. Palau seeks to protect 30 per cent of its near-shore marine environment and 20 per cent of its terrestrial environment by 2020. **Palau?s Shark Haven Act, 2009** An estimated 73 million sharks are hunted every year and in addition to the loss of these magnificent creatures, diminishing populations have serious ecological effects. Palau has taken a global lead in shark protection by declaring its entire territorial waters a sanctuary for all shark species. Fishing for sharks has been banned and any sharks caught in the nets of other fisheries have to be released unharmed, and there are substantial fines for violators. Palau has also recognised the economic benefits of protecting sharks rather than hunting them: the shark diving industry contributes US$1.2 million in salaries to local communities and generates US$1.5 million in taxes for the government annually. Other countries, including Honduras, the Maldives and the Bahamas have followed the example of Palau and banned shark fishing in their national waters.