

Mr Ravahere Taputuarai, showing how *Miconia* is threatening Tahiti's species-rich native forests.

\\ *Our forest is reduced to just one weed, but now we're trying to fight it with a specially introduced pathogen.* //



Ereti Tekabaia, South Tarawa, Kiribati.

\\ *Te babai (giant swamp taro) is our staple food crop but it has been killed by the invasive taro beetle.* //



Augustine Haga from Haubwa village, Makira, Solomon Islands.

\\ *Since the little fire ant came to our land our children cannot help us in the garden or they will be stung.* //

Pacific people

FIGHTING INVASIVE SPECIES



Masae Polloi from Palau.

\\ *If monkeys spread to Babeldaob, Koror, and Peleliu, there will be widespread hunger in Palau* //

Andrew Yamanea MBE, Managing Director of PNG's biosecurity agency NAQIA.

\\ *Between 1979 and 1996 the Sepik River people and environment suffered disasters from two alien invasive plants and we don't want to see that happen again.* //



Mataiti Mataiti, Cook Islands Takitumu Conservation Area staff.

\\ *After two decades of baiting for rats, we have saved our bird, the kakerori, from extinction.* //





Invasive species are an issue of serious environmental, economic, social and cultural consequences to our Pacific people. We already have many examples across the region of communities, business and families facing problems caused by invasive species – problems of crop loss, damage to infrastructure, forest devastation, collapse of the populations of our native birds and other animals, and risks to our reefs and

FOREWORD

to fishing. We also risk our exports suffering trade barriers and restrictions if we are not doing enough to protect our borders. The battle against invasives is underway, led by the Pacific regional secretariats, Pacific governments, research institutions, NGOs and communities, along with our partners. Success will depend on our renewed commitment, our support for current initiatives and our understanding of the need for new initiatives. I welcome the opportunity to present the issue of invasive species to the Pacific Islands Forum and I urge Forum leaders to support action on invasive species. It is with our leadership that we will turn the tide.

Hon. Henry Puna
Prime Minister of the Cook Islands

THE PROBLEM

Invasive species are plants, animals and diseases that enter a country - often accidentally on ships, in agricultural goods, in people's airline luggage - and then spread. Once established, they cause extensive, on-going problems. Invasive weeds smother our forests and gardens and displace our important food crops and native plants. Predators eat our native wildlife. Insects and diseases damage our crops. Invasive species can also harm human health.

Invasive species are now known as one of the leading and most rapidly growing threats to food security, human and animal health, and biodiversity. Invasive species are a main cause of animal extinctions at the global scale and a threat to our efforts to prepare for

climate change. Invasive pests, weeds and diseases cost the global economy many hundreds of billions of dollars each year through their damage to agriculture, human health and ecosystems.

Islands are especially vulnerable to invasive species and in the Pacific they are already causing great hardship to our families, our farmers, and our governments as well as devastation for our ecosystems. Much is at risk. This is not just about feeding our people or protecting our environment. It is about our economies, our health, our growth and our future. Invasive species have the ability to undermine all our hard work and our dreams for our children's futures.

THE GOOD NEWS

During the past decade many Pacific Islanders and their supporters have come to understand the terrible risk that invasive species pose for us. As a result there are a number of strong initiatives already established in our fight against invasives. There have also been some important victories.

Our regional organisations, SPREP and SPC, have invasive species programmes underway. They seek to educate and inform Pacific governments and people about the risks of invasives and what can be done about them.

Several governments have improved the capacity of their border control by receiving training for detecting and managing invasive species as they enter our countries. Much remains to be done to reduce the risk of new invasions and address existing ones.

In March 2012, the Micronesia Chief Executives' Summit recognised the threat posed by invasive species to Micronesia and resolved to direct their staff to integrate invasive species concerns in the actions and policy development of many sectors.

Several high-level partnerships have been formed in the region, linking governments and non-governmental organisations, to provide practical training and effective Pacific-centred solutions to invasive species. Under these initiatives some invasives have been controlled, eradicated or prevented from arriving on vulnerable islands.

An issue of this seriousness and of these dimensions requires leadership from the Pacific Islands Forum.

Leadership from the PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

A statement of concern and commitment

A statement of concern and commitment from the Forum is required to give this issue the profile and standing to make it a priority across the region. An example of a statement like this would be:

Leaders considered the serious economic, environmental and social threats presented by invasive alien species to Forum Island countries and expressed their commitment to seeing these threats addressed. They noted and commended Resolution 7 from the 17th Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit regarding proactive efforts to address invasive species, and recognised the excellent work done so far to combat these threats by local communities, governments, inter-government agencies and the many non-government organisations of the Pacific Invasives Partnership. The Leaders further called upon each Forum Island Government to integrate invasive species threats into their actions and policies; provide dedicated staff and budgets for invasive species management including enhanced biosecurity, eradication and control, share knowledge and skills with other countries in the region and requested donors to recognise that invasive species management is a priority for the region.

The local community of Kayangel Atoll, together with its conservation partners, successfully eradicated all rats from their Atoll. Not only have they saved the endangered Micronesian Megapode, they can now safely grow tapioca and a variety of fruits and vegetables. Before the eradication, rats destroyed their crops and passed on diseases.



Master fisherman **Davis** and his niece **Julie**, Bellona, Solomon Islands.

\\ If invasive species reach our reefs like has happened in the Caribbean, our children will not live the rich lives we live today. //



Tepaikea Puia and his granddaughter **Bellona**, Solomon Islands.

\\ The bongo (taro) beetle is attacking our crops. If something is not done we will have to move to town. //

Ratu Josaia Tamanikaubau, Muaivuso village, Fiji.

\\ The pispis (African tulip tree) is the worst threat to livelihoods in our area. //



Henry Cappelle, Chair, Micronesia Regional Invasive Species Council.

\\ Having eradicated rats from Cocos Island, Guam has reintroduced their culturally important and endangered ko'ko' bird. //



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