



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE FIJI ISLANDS

MEDIA RELEASE

Pacific Leaders Support Program Creating Sustainable Wealth by Preserving Natural Resources

NEW YORK – Leaders from the Pacific Island nations of Fiji and Kiribati pledged support yesterday to an international effort to join environmental conservation and scientific research with luxury tourism to empower nations to create sustainable wealth from the knowledge held within their natural resources.

Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, the President of the Republic of the Fiji Islands and Anote Tong, the President of Kiribati, endorsed the program, known as “The Economic Power of Wonder: From Oil Wealth to Knowledge Wealth®,” which asserts that through scientific research and discoveries, biodiverse sites offer the potential for enormous wealth comparable to the riches generated by petroleum in the 20th century.

The study was launched at an event on Sunday, September 19 at the United Nations International School in New York, sponsored by Pangea World, a California-based corporation comprised of representatives from government, science, academia and the corporate world.

“The challenge for the Pacific Island Countries lies in the adaptation of the Pangea World economic model to convert the vast reservoir of untapped marine, land and biodiversity natural heritage sites’ knowledge resource to propel and sustain the knowledge economy into the future,” said President Ratu Epeli Nailatikau of Fiji. “The ‘Pacific Bridge to Noble Wealth’ endeavor would provide small Pacific Island Countries with the impetus for investment in scientific research and capacity building as it will increasingly determine the future economic competitiveness and resilience of the countries. The Pangea World development concept provides a great opportunity for close partnership and networking involving investors, developers, planners, the scientific community, economic, corporate and government entities and also amongst nations in working towards sustainable development goals.”

“This endeavour complements well national marine conservation initiatives such as the Phoenix Islands Protected Area and the Pacific Oceanscape which aim at enhancing coherence and collaboration in the management of national conservation areas in the Pacific region,” said President Anote Tong of Kiribati. “The Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at their meeting in Vanuatu last month. The Pacific Bridge to Noble Wealth advocated under the Pangea World Project provides the economic rationale for protecting the natural heritage of future generations and is an innovative concept which offers options available at a time when climate change has highlighted human abuse of this planet.”

Since the realignment from “oil to knowledge” will require a substantial economic investment, the program argues that the hospitality industry – which often is already geographically tied to these precious eco-zones – can provide that boost. The effort calls for a sweeping program that positions the international resort industry as the pivotal link in saving enormous swaths of delicate, endangered ecosystems around the globe and creates a sustainable, vibrant economic base for the world’s poorer nations. The study’s roadmap for implementation includes a blueprint for an alliance of the hospitality industry and the scientific world, one that catalyzes new wealth for economically depressed populations without regard to national borders while rewriting the standards of sophistication and purpose in world travel.

Dr. Hana Ayala, president and founder of Pangea World, added, “Just as the world currently accepts the value of ‘petro dollars,’ we envision a day in the not too distant future when people give even greater value to ‘knowledge ore,’” says Ayala. “The world’s coral reefs, rainforests and other important biologically rich areas offer incredible promise for enriching parts of the world now suffering in poverty, in much the same way that oil enriched nations that were once among the world’s poorest.”

While Ayala acknowledges the task ahead is formidable, the rewards are immeasurable. “If we do nothing, the world’s entire ecosystem is at risk,” she says. “If we act now, we have an unprecedented opportunity to fortify a knowledge bank with incalculable value to strengthen and sustain the emerging global knowledge economy, one that could elevate the conservation of this planet’s most exquisite and vulnerable places into an economic imperative.”

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{Photograph: Left to right: Winston Thompson, Ambassador of the Republic of the Fiji Islands to the United States; Aote Tong, President of Kiribati; Dr. Hana Ayala, president and founder of Pangea World; Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, President of the Republic of the Fiji Islands; Dr. Michael T. Clegg, foreign secretary of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. At the Pangea World launch of “The Economic Power of Wonder: From Oil Wealth to Knowledge Wealth®,” Sunday, September 19, 2010, United Nations International School, New York City.}