

# **WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK**



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# Western Indian Ocean Environment Outlook





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## Preface

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The *Western Indian Ocean Environment Outlook* (WIOEO) report is part of a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) project to produce state of the environment assessments for the countries of the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific, funded by DG VIII of the European Commission (EC). The objective of the WIOEO is to provide information on the state of the environment in the Western Indian Ocean, help identify regional environmental concerns, and highlight policy priorities.

The report comes at a critical time for these island countries, as the international community reviews agreements reached at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), held in Barbados in 1994. The WIOEO will provide a forum for the promotion of issues of priority importance to SIDS at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) and subsequent fora. The analysis produced as a result of the project could also provide another opportunity to focus SIDS priorities. It could serve as a basis for SIDS to revisit their own national and regional priorities with regard to the programming of development assistance which they receive from various donors. The report could also play a role in the consultations between SIDS and donors, for instance during the ongoing post-Lomé negotiations.

This report provides an overview of the state of the environment (SOE), focusing on the Lomé countries of the Western Indian Ocean – the Federal Islamic Republic of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles – (Réunion, which is an overseas department of France, is not included), followed by a review of current policy responses including multilateral environmental agreements, and regional and national policy initiatives already undertaken in the region. A concluding chapter takes a look into the future

at emerging environmental issues in the region, which should be addressed and require further research, as well as proposing some alternative policies.

The production of the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean and Pacific Islands environment outlooks closely followed the process established for the production of UNEP's *Global Environment Outlook* (GEO) report. GEO uses a regional and global participatory assessment and reporting process. This participatory process is crucial in ensuring that the assessment involves stakeholders and experts from all over the world and from every discipline that relates to environment and development. As with GEO, the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean and Pacific Islands environment outlooks aim to incorporate regional views and perspectives and to build consensus on priority issues and actions through dialogue among policy-makers and scientists at the regional and global levels.

The main components of the GEO process are the collaborating centres, regional policy consultations, international working groups and the UN System-wide Earthwatch (Box 0.1). The main partner for the production of the *Western Indian Ocean Environment Outlook* was the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC or Commission de l'Océan Indien (COI)) and a network of national co-ordinators from each country. The WIOEO report is based on existing published reports, documents and data available for the region. Although many national-level and some regional-level reports exist, there is very little published work to draw on that examines environmental issues affecting the countries of the region in an integrated manner. It is therefore hoped that this study will make a valuable contribution to sustainable development planning in the region.

### Box 0.1: The GEO process

The production of the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean and Pacific Islands environment outlooks closely followed the process set up for the production of UNEP's *Global Environment Outlook* (GEO) publication. Both *GEO-1* (published in 1997) and *GEO-2000* (published in 1999) were produced using a regional and participatory process. This process was of crucial importance in ensuring that the assessment involved stakeholders and experts from all over the world and from every discipline relating to environmental and development issues. As with GEO, the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean and Pacific Islands environment outlooks aim to incorporate regional views and perspectives and to build consensus on priority issues and actions through dialogue among policy-makers and scientists at both regional and global levels. The main components of the GEO process are:

- GEO Collaborating Centres
- Regional policy consultations
- International working groups
- UN System-wide Earthwatch

**GEO Collaborating Centres** are multi-disciplinary centres of excellence from all the regions which form a co-ordinated network for making policy-relevant assessments. The GEO 2000 network consists of some 25 such Collaborating Centres. The three Collaborating Centres chosen to help implement the UNEP/EC project were:

- the University of the West Indies, Centre for Environment and Development (UWI-CED), Kingston, Jamaica;
- the Indian Ocean Commission, Quatre-Bornes, Mauritius, and
- the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), Apia, Western Samoa.

**Regional policy consultations** were held in each of the subregions to ensure the participation of all the stakeholders, especially policy-makers, regional organizations and NGOs. Regional consultations not only provide a forum in which governments are able to provide inputs into the GEO process, but also stimulate dialogue between scientists and policy-makers – a crucial step in ensuring that assessments are geared towards policy formulation and action planning.

The regional consultations provided advice and feedback from governments and scientists on the early drafts of the reports. As with the regional consultations for the GEO reports, the consultations for the Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean and Pacific Islands environment outlooks provided inputs that resulted in substantial improvement to the respective documents.

**International working groups** on modelling, scenarios, data and policy provided technical support to the GEO process by developing and recommending methodologies for achieving harmonized and integrated assessments.

**United Nations System-wide Earthwatch** ensures the participation of UN agencies in the GEO process.

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