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Keynote speech

Biodiversity in the Pacific region

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Biodiversity is the gift from evolution of our planet earth. It encompasses the richness and complexity of life forms all over the globe which took millions of years to evolve from simple and primitive beginnings. We as humans are part of this evolution. Yet, our species has become so dominant that we are now a threat to destroying an ever increasing and significant proportion of our contemporary species. Such threatened and contemporary species belong to life forms that provide with their physical environment much of the human life support system. This threat of destruction has gained government awareness only in recent years with the **Convention on Biodiversity** (CBD in 1992). Since then, biological conservation, together with research coordination, has been promoted internationally by a number of organizations, including the Pacific Science Association with its task force on biodiversity. For research coordination in the Pacific region, the ecosystem model has been considered most useful. It allows for a hierarchical assessment of biodiversity from general to specific ecosystems. This scaled-down approach will be discussed, at sequentially detailed levels, from islands to biomes to landscapes, and to communities. The presentation will be illustrated with examples.