

## *Comments on Lake Toba brief*

This Brief has improved from the first draft reviewed in August 2003. A map and a description of catchment degradation issues is now included while the earlier descriptions of other issues and attempts to organize cross sectoral management of the lake have been retained.

The brief describes the importance of the lake to the regional economy as well as its spiritual importance to the Batak culture. The biophysical issues of dropping water level, a declining artisanal fishing industry, water quality pollution from fish farms and urban development, forestry for a synthetics factory and sedimentation are all well described.

The strength of community involvement in bringing about changes in the operation of the dam providing hydro-power to the Al industry and in opposing the harvesting of native trees and their replacement with exotic species is one of the strengths of the region. Nevertheless, the attempts to put the lake management on a sound cross-sectoral basis have been fraught with difficulties despite the evident willingness of many parties to see this happen. The description of these attempts makes it clear that top-down Presidential decrees without adequate preparatory work to get acceptance by the local stakeholders will fail.

The relationship that was developed between this lake and Lake Champlain in USA appears to have been a useful catalyst for better understanding of improved lake management. However, it is not clear exactly what this relationship contributed – exactly how did it lead to better management?? This one of the few examples of such international lake management cooperation (Lakes Ohrid and Baikal are others) and this issue would be worth examining in more detail.

Finally the role of science in providing independent, factual advice is not described although there are a couple of references to issues whose resolution would have been aided by a scientific study (e.g. the role of eucalypts in drying rivers).

While the brief would be improved if the above two issues were expanded on – role of international cooperation and role of science – this brief is well written and will contribute to the report on lake management.