

Contribution to concept papers for UN Ocean Conference Partnership Dialogues

Theme 3: Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification (Target 14.3)

Prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

Preamble:

In our Pacific Islands Region, the ocean unites and divides, connects and separates, sustains and threatens our very survival. Our Ocean faces many present-day and longer-term challenges. In recognising this, Leaders have developed robust regional ocean policy including the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. Leaders have also established effective coordination arrangements including a Pacific Ocean Commissioner. There is strong alignment and resonance between SDG14 and national and regional policies, including sector-based policies.

Decades of previous effort, investment and learning in integrated ocean management in the region must be combined with innovation to optimise the benefits to be gained from implementing and achieving SDG14.

Partnerships are vital for progress toward SDG14 targets, but they need to be functional and proactive. Prior experience shows that they need to be country-owned and -driven, must be durable, must be sustainable and must be held accountable. Partnerships should be an integral part of national and regional planning and implementation processes.

This input reflects our interpretation of the outcomes from the Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting, which included a 2 day senior officials meeting and a 1 day leaders meeting, held 15–17 March 2017, and the contributions of the regional technical working groups to these meetings.

Status and trends

Regional context

Increased global emissions of greenhouse gases have decreased the pH of the tropical Pacific Ocean.

In the Pacific Islands region, ocean acidification will affect fisheries, particularly through degradation of coral reefs and the effects on the early life stages of reef fish and invertebrates. Ocean acidification will also impact tourism; aquaculture of pearl oysters, marine ornamentals, and possibly shrimp; as well as the role that coral reefs play in coastal protection.

Accurately measuring and monitoring marine chemistry is technically intensive, with even the global capacity limited for this crucial data collection. Capacity for monitoring data and analysis is a critical need for Pacific states, and this capacity development is encouraged under UNCLOS XIII and XIV. Addressing present stressors and management issues for coral reefs and coastal fisheries will also build resilience to ocean acidification.

While focusing on the specific targets of SDG14, we also recognise the interdependence of ocean and climate and the central role of oceans in regulating climate and in mitigation and adaptation. Climate change impacts will exacerbate and/or put increased pressure on achieving the other SDG14 targets.

We also note the need to take an integrated approach to managing interactions with the ocean, one that takes into consideration the complexity associated with ocean and coastal ecology and marine uses and that also extends beyond the marine ecosystems to include the land-based sources of ocean impacts.

Pacific Priorities

- Promoting and strengthening integrated oceans management and governance
- Increasing the global recognition of the interdependence of oceans and climate
- Enhanced country capacities and regional coordination on addressing the vulnerability of Pacific coastal and ocean ecosystems and communities

Challenges and opportunities

- Mainstream and increase the monitoring and research of ocean acidification and ocean ecosystems into national, regional and international action programmes to better inform policy makers and to guide meaningful adaptation and mitigation activities
- Mainstream ocean acidification and ocean management into the UNFCCC process by meeting and exceeding the commitments made under the Paris Agreement and through Pacific advocacy at COP23, noting the impact of climate change on the Pacific and other SIDS
- Support the access to climate finance to address the impacts of climate change on the ocean and its resources, noting the need for simplified access and the special circumstances of SIDS

Existing partnerships

- NZ Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification (PPOA)
- The Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOA-ON)
- The Ocean Acidification international Reference User Group (OAI-RUG)
- Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) - UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Council for Science (ICSU), UNEP
- Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System (PI-GOOS)
- Pacific Ocean Research Alliance – in conceptualisation stage (SPREP)
- Coastal Ecosystem Resilience program (GCF Proposal)
- Coalition of Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CANCC)

- International Blue Carbon Partnership
- International Coral Reef Initiative

Are many existing partnerships covering the theme of the dialogue? Are there identified gaps in coverage?

Who are the main actors involved in existing partnerships?

Do we know how well existing partnerships are performing? What have been success factors? What are the main challenges identified with existing partnerships?

Have successful partnerships on the theme been narrowly focused in scope, or more holistic, encompassing several related areas?

Possible areas for new partnerships

Given challenges, opportunities and gaps, how could new partnerships help with implementation?

- Establishment of a regional ocean acidification monitoring network
- Expansion of the Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification to include more partners and technical experts

What actors would need to be involved for new partnerships to succeed?

What would be critical success factors?

Partnerships need to be ambitious enough to make meaningful progress in helping coastal communities and ecosystems adapt and build resilience to ocean acidification and climate change. For the Pacific islands region this means recognizing that globally we have already lost 50% of our coral reefs, and if we continue with business as usual we will lose 90% of them by 2050. For the Pacific islands this would mean a devastating loss to our way of life, and that need to be making serious investments in aquaculture and other alternate livelihoods in the immediate future.

Guiding questions for the dialogue

- How will partnerships result in comparable data for ocean chemical, biological, and physical parameters, taking into account technology and training differences?
- How will partnerships help communities and ecosystems minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification in a meaningful way?