

Contribution to concept papers for UN Ocean Conference Partnership Dialogues

Theme 1: Addressing marine pollution (14.1)

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

Marine debris and pollution have broad economic, social and environmental negative impacts on Pacific communities, both directly and indirectly, via aesthetic, physical, chemical, biological, and human health effects.

The environments and species we depend on for our health and livelihoods are threatened by marine pollution. Pollution places a financial burden on Pacific people both directly and indirectly. Marine pollution is a significant threat to the Pacific, and **land-based sources of pollution** are by far the largest stressors on our coastal and marine ecosystems: Improved solid and wastewater-management is crucial to prevent pollution and litter entering waterways and the ocean.

Pacific states and territories are affected not only by waste produced locally but also by waste and invasive species transported in by foreign vessels and by ocean

currents. Remote, uninhabited island ecosystems show impacts of marine pollution and physical presence of debris.

Ship-based pollutants, including atmospheric pollutants, oil and chemical spills, discarded non-biodegradable waste, and lost or discarded fishing gear (i.e. ghost gear) need to be addressed. Wrecks and derelict vessels, especially fishing vessels, are an eyesore and pollution hazard in many Pacific countries, with the Pacific islands also affected by legacy waste, such as WW II relics, unexploded ordnances, and nuclear testing wastes.

Discarded plastic waste is considered one of the priority marine pollution issues facing the Pacific region. A recent study of ingestion of plastic by fish in the Pacific region found plastic ingestion by 97% of examined fish species. PICs can be particularly vulnerable to marine litter impacts due to financial and institutional challenges in properly managing waste before it is transferred to the marine environment and from the negative socioeconomic impacts of marine litter, especially on poorer coastal communities. The limited information that is available strongly suggests that marine litter is not appropriately managed in most Pacific island communities and many PICs have inadequate systematic management plan or system for marine litter prevention, management, and clean-up/recovery.

Challenges and opportunities

The impacts on Pacific communities include high financial costs of clean-up by coastal communities; negative impacts to local tourism and fishing-dependent economies; reduced food security; hazards to navigation and safety at sea; damage to important and fragile coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves; entanglement of marine wildlife such as turtles and whales; ingestion of marine litter by wildlife with potential for associated toxic chemical transfers; and introduction of invasive species.

The Pacific region does have the strength of existing regional frameworks, such as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, and conventions, such as the Noumea Convention. These frameworks facilitate coordination with and among partners.

We see the following key opportunities for partnerships to:

- Engage the global community because the Pacific is heavily impacted by polluting practices from outside of the Pacific region.
- Recognising that land-based sources produce 80% of marine litter and marine pollution via solid, liquid, and gaseous wastes, countries should focus additional support in an effort to prevent, monitor and reduce marine litter through national, regional, and global efforts.
- Commit to sustainable consumption and production to address Pacific marine pollution, through industry and cultural practices as well as governance arrangements.
- Commit to sustainable maritime transport practices of all vessels following IMO guides, such as the MARPOL Convention.

- Support and use regional frameworks such as the Cleaner Pacific 2025 to deliver actions.
- Address the need for measurement and management of existing risks and pollution, including military debris.

Existing partnerships

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

- . Cleaner Pacific Roundtable
- . Global Programme of Action (GPA) for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (including Global Partnership for Marine Litter [GPML])
- . Pacific Regional Centre for the Basel Convention
- . World Animal Protection Global Ghost Gear Initiative (WAP-GGGI)
- . International Coral Reefs Initiative (ICRI)

Key gaps include resourcing of implementation actions, building national capacity for effective waste management as well as coverage for small, remote islands.

• Who are the main actors involved in existing partnerships?

- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and member countries
- Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, observer programme with data collection on discards at sea from fishing vessels (GEN-6 forms)
- Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI)
- UN Environment Programme

• 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

- . Knowledge collection and management: baselines and monitoring data, data management
- . Support for sustainable marine transport: Reducing shipping emissions and sustainable transport, liaising with new regional recycling and waste collection centres

We propose a partnership between UN Environment and SPREP to cooperate in the delivery of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, a #CleanSeas Campaign for the Pacific and implementation of the Cleaner Pacific 2025 Strategy to reduce marine debris and achieve a Clean Pacific Ocean.

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

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

Country-driven planning is essential for the success of partnership actions in the Pacific region. Given the limitations of numbers of country staff and the demands for implementation and reporting, it is critical to focus on a strong national voice during project and partnership design.

- **What would be critical success factors?**

Objectives:

- Improved understanding of the sources and impacts of marine debris and microplastics in PICs
- Mitigation of the negative impacts of marine debris and microplastics in the Pacific Ocean
- Increased capacity to manage waste and prevent marine litter
- Improved waste management and pollution prevention
- Improved resource efficiency and waste prevention through 4Rs

Implementation Methodologies and Governance:

Given the common waste management issues across PICs and that the impacts of marine litter are transboundary and borne by our shared resource the Pacific Ocean, a regional approach to the issue is proposed with technical assistance also to be delivered at a national level.

The partnership will be implemented through targeted activities divided into five strategic components, linked to Cleaner Pacific 2025 strategic approaches and the GPA/GPML:

1. Regular Waste, Chemicals and Pollution (WCP) data collection and management (including storage, interpretation, dissemination and sharing).
 - a. Identification of major sources of marine debris and local accumulation points to prioritise island States most likely to contribute significant quantities of marine debris in the region – December 2019
2. Development and enforcement of national policies, strategies, plans and legislation, and strengthen institutional arrangements to support and promote best-practice WCP management.
3. WCP prevention and reduction programmes, including best practices demonstrations and private public partnership initiatives
4. Sustainable human capacity development and education and behavioural change programmes for WCP management stakeholders.
5. Improved WCP Management infrastructure and support for sustainable operation and maintenance

Guiding questions for the dialogue

How will partnerships assist with enforcement of existing agreements (such as the MARPOL Convention) and what are the necessary commitments needed to prevent the discard of non-biodegradable waste at sea, particularly in vast oceanic regions such as the EEZs of Pacific countries and to reduce land-based sources of pollution?