



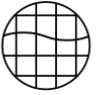
Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme



**AMBASSADE
DE FRANCE
EN AUSTRALIE**
*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*



UNSW
Centre for
Sustainable
Development Reform

3. Promoting and supporting all forms of cooperation, especially at the regional and subregional level.

This theme focuses on strengthening mechanisms for collaboration between nations and stakeholders in ocean management. It encompasses institutional arrangements, information sharing systems, coordinated monitoring and enforcement efforts, and frameworks for joint decision-making on shared marine resources.

Key areas highlighted for consideration, as raised through the UN's stakeholder consultation on panel themes, include developing harmonised policies across regions, establishing data-sharing platforms, strengthening cross-border partnerships, and creating mechanisms for inclusive participation in regional decision-making processes.

Pacific Context

Pacific Island nations frequently encounter transboundary challenges, requiring regional cooperation as a fundamental approach to governance. While Pacific regionalism has deep historical roots predating modern institutions, its evolution has occurred in distinct waves - from early focus on self-determination to current emphasis on broader challenges like climate change and ocean governance¹. Today, it faces growing complexity in an increasingly crowded geopolitical environment, with Pacific leaders consistently emphasising the need for better donor coordination and alignment with regional priorities^{2,3}.

While the Blue Pacific concept brings the region together through shared ocean stewardship, this cooperative approach faces growing pressure from international dynamics. As great power competition intensifies in the region, Pacific-led priorities - particularly on critical issues like climate change - can be overshadowed by broader geopolitical agendas⁴.

The Pacific has a well-established ocean governance architecture led by the Pacific Islands Forum, which sets regional ocean priorities through annual leaders' meetings. A Forum Officials Committee implements these decisions and provides policy direction, while the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) coordinates ocean-related work through its Marine Sector Working Group. This framework is supported by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, the dedicated Office of Ocean Commissioner (OPOC), and the Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA), who facilitate ocean governance by connecting stakeholders and coordinating ocean discussions. Additional sub-regional arrangements, such as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement for fisheries, complement this institutional architecture. This regional architecture is currently under review, which may lead to future adjustments.

These arrangements often lack binding commitments and sufficient resources despite their unique position to build regional capacity and networks⁵. Many regional institutions rely heavily on external funding and must navigate complex relationships with traditional powers who

maintain roles in decision-making. This creates practical challenges for advancing Pacific-led initiatives, particularly as regional bodies compete for limited resources while new international programs are often developed without meaningful Pacific input⁴. The PIF includes only two donors (Australia and New Zealand) among its 18 members, while its Post-Forum Dialogue engages 21 development partners but struggles with prioritisation⁶. Regional fragmentation is further increased by development partners outside PIF holding separate forums, while China's engagement with regional institutions is complicated by some PIF members not recognising the One-China principle⁷.

Despite these structural challenges, there have been notable successes in regional cooperation. The Parties to the Nauru Agreement demonstrates the potential benefits, with member countries seeing fisheries revenue increase nearly eightfold between 2010 and 2018⁷. The Pacific Maritime Boundaries Programme highlights another significant achievement, supporting Pacific Island Countries and Territories to secure their rights and responsibilities over ocean space under UNCLOS. Through the Pacific Maritime Boundaries Consortium, 19 shared boundaries between countries have been successfully declared since 2001⁸. These achievements highlight how regional frameworks can facilitate transformative initiatives when properly resourced and aligned with Pacific priorities.

While regional engagement is resource-intensive and requires compromise, it remains essential for aligning actions with policy priorities and building shared Pacific values. Looking forward, effective regional cooperation depends on focusing implementation efforts on existing frameworks while strengthening both institutional capacity and people-to-people connections through improved connectivity, cultural exchange, and shared initiatives⁹. This requires balancing national sovereignty with collective action while ensuring cooperation delivers tangible benefits to Pacific peoples.

Regional Instruments

- [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#)
- [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#)
- [Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Ocean Statement 2021](#)
- [Fifty-Third Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué](#)
- [Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy](#)
- [Framework for Pacific Oceanscape](#)

The Ocean Action panels at UNOC3 are collaborative, multi-stakeholder sessions designed to:

- Generate concrete commitments and actions to support SDG14 implementation
- Produce specific outcomes that will be captured in the "Nice Ocean Action Plan"
- Contribute to the Conference's overarching theme of "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean"
- Foster partnerships between governments, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders

1. Tim Bryar & Anna Naupa (2017) The Shifting Tides of Pacific Regionalism, *The Round Table*, 106:2, 155-164, DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2017.1296712
2. Pacific Islands Forum, Secretary General Henry Puna, "Morning Address to the 3rd Annual Indo-Pacific Islands Dialogue", Hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, New York, 18 September 2023,
3. Pacific Islands Forum, Boe Declaration on Regional Security, Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Declaration, (Suva: Pacific Islands Forum, 2018), <https://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>.
4. Taylor, M. (2023). Pacific-led Regionalism Undermined. [online] Asia Society. Available at: <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/pacific-led-regionalism-undermined>.
5. Joanne Wallis, Henrietta McNeill, James Batley, and Anna Powles, Mapping Security Cooperation in the Pacific Islands, Research Report, Department of Pacific Affairs, (Canberra: ANU, 2021).
6. Forum Communiqué Fortieth Pacific Islands Forum, Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific, August 2009,
7. Zhang, Denghua and Diamana, Walter. Pacific Regionalism: Opportunities and Challenges. The Australian National University. 2021
8. SPC Pacific Maritime Boundaries Programme
9. Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue, What does it look like for Australia to Support Pacific Regionalism (Canberra 2024): www.asiapacific4d.com