



Pacific
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SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme



Liberté
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UNSW
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Sustainable
Development Reform

4. Preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities.

This theme addresses the full spectrum of marine pollution through both preventive and remedial approaches. It encompasses waste management systems, pollution control measures, and frameworks for addressing both land-based and sea-based sources of marine pollution.

Additional considerations, as raised through the UN's stakeholder consultation on panel themes, include developing circular economy models, implementing extended producer responsibility frameworks, strengthening community-driven projects, and enhancing civil society engagement in pollution reduction efforts.

Pacific Context:

Pacific Island Countries and Territories are uniquely exposed to marine pollution through their location within trade winds and ocean gyres. Despite contributing minimally to global marine pollution, they bear a significant burden of its impacts¹. Their economies depend heavily on imported goods which generate waste, while their communities rely on healthy marine environments for fishing, tourism, and cultural practices¹. These essential marine-based livelihoods and traditions face mounting pressure from increasing pollution levels.

Marine debris in the region comes from multiple sources, with land-based activities contributing approximately 80% of the total². Poor waste disposal, industrial production, and agricultural runoff are the main contributors. Areas of high population density show direct links between pollution and decreased marine species diversity and population decline³. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, at 1.6 million square kilometres, demonstrates this challenge's massive scale. It impacts Pacific islands' coastal ecosystems through solid waste from domestic, industrial, and fishing activities that collect and are transported via wind and ocean currents⁴.

Marine plastic pollution creates widespread economic damage through direct and indirect costs⁵. The tourism, fishing, aquaculture, and transport sectors face revenue losses from damaged equipment, needed repairs, and beach cleaning expenses. Broader ecosystem damage reduces fish catches and threatens biodiversity, creating long-term economic impacts for communities⁵.

Limited waste management infrastructure poses a fundamental challenge across the region, especially in remote communities. Multiple pollution sources compound this problem: deteriorating World War II shipwrecks leak oil and metals, agricultural runoff

introduces chemicals, and growing use of sewage sludge adds pollutants to marine systems^{2,6}. Mining and industrial operations contribute heavy metal contamination, while inadequate sewage treatment threatens coral reef health⁶. Geographic isolation makes accessing resources and support for pollution management particularly difficult.

Several Pacific Island nations are leading pollution prevention efforts through product bans and levies, including Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Niue, Samoa, and Papua New Guinea¹. While these initiatives show promise, most national frameworks need strengthening to effectively reduce plastic pollution¹. Research in Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu shows that national recycling systems could reduce plastic leakage by 16-22%, with regional cooperation potentially reducing marine plastic accumulation by 13%⁷. However, the region's scattered geography and poor transport infrastructure complicate waste collection¹. Current approaches prioritize waste management over prevention, directing limited resources toward end-of-pipe solutions rather than addressing root causes¹.

Regional Instruments

- [Pacific Regional Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025](#)
- [Cleaner Pacific 2025 Strategy](#)
- [Global Plastics Treaty \(under negotiation\)](#)
- [Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific \(FRDP\)](#)

International Instruments

- [Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter \(London Convention\)](#)
- [International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships \(MARPOL\)](#)

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

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2. UNEP. Marine and Land-based Pollution. <https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/regional-seas-programme/marine-and-land-based-pollution>
3. Ivan Diarra & Surendra Prasad (2020): The current state of heavy metal pollution in Pacific Island Countries: a review, Applied Spectroscopy Reviews, DOI: 10.1080/05704928.2020.1719130
4. Leah Filho, W., Hausia Havea, P., Balogun, A., Boenecke, J., Maharaj, A., Ha'apio, M. and Hemstock, S. L. (2019) Plastic debris on pacific islands: ecological and health implications. Science of the Total Environment, 670, 181187
5. IUCN The economic impact of plastic pollution and the benefits of reducing mismanaged waste in Fiji. 2023
6. FORD AK, VAN HOYTEMA N, MOORE BR, PANDIHAU L, WILD C, FERSE SCA. High sedimentary oxygen consumption indicates that sewage input from small islands drives benthic community shifts on overfished reefs. Environmental Conservation. 2017;44(4):405-411. doi:10.1017/S0376892917000054
7. IUCN. Summary of the economic impact of marine plastic pollution in Fiji, Samoa, and Vanuatu. 2023