



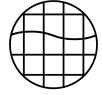
Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique



**SPREP**  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme



Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité



UNSW  
Centre for  
Sustainable  
Development Reform

## 6. Advancing sustainable ocean-based economies, sustainable maritime transport and coastal community resilience leaving no one behind.

This theme explores the development of economic activities that sustainably utilise ocean resources while ensuring community resilience. It encompasses maritime transport practices, coastal development strategies, and frameworks for sustainable ocean-based economic activities.

Additional considerations, as raised through the UN's stakeholder consultation on panel themes, include exploring alternative fuels for shipping, optimising vessel speeds for environmental benefits, enhancing port infrastructure sustainability, and ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities in ocean-based sectors.

### Pacific Context

Pacific Island Countries and Territories have a deep relationship with their ocean environment, which provides essential food security, income opportunities, and resources for coastal communities. The ocean and its coastal habitats form the foundation of Pacific Island economies through diverse activities including subsistence and commercial fishing, tourism, and shipping, among others. The scale of these ocean-based activities is substantial with tourism contributing \$1.5 billion to the region while employing more than 5 million people in 2019<sup>1</sup>.

Maritime transport underpins Pacific economies, connecting communities scattered across vast ocean distances, enabling trade, and supporting key sectors including fisheries and tourism. In PICTs, there is a heavy reliance on maritime transport for critical needs beyond economic means, including cargo, passenger transport, medical evacuations, disaster response, and coastal subsistence fisheries. However, the lack of connectivity among many communities that remain underserved due to aging infrastructure, high operational costs, challenging navigation conditions and climate impacts creates economic disparities and hampers development opportunities for isolated populations<sup>2</sup>. Further Maritime transport within and between Pacific islands is the most expensive per unit distance and per capita in the world, yet these countries are also the most dependent globally on imported fuels<sup>2</sup>.

Climate change poses significant challenges to the resilience of PICTs, particularly due to the vulnerability of coastal infrastructure, which is critical to sustaining ocean-based economies, maritime transport, and the livelihoods of coastal communities. Approximately 57% to 65% of built infrastructure in the region is located within 500 meters of the coastline, representing a combined replacement value of US \$21.9 billion<sup>3</sup>. For many nations, such as Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu, over 95% of infrastructure is concentrated in

these coastal areas, reflecting the central role of coastlines in economic and social activity<sup>3</sup>. The impacts of climate change, including increased intensity of tropical cyclones and shifting wind and wave patterns, heighten the risks to coastal infrastructure. Industrial, commercial, and public buildings are disproportionately exposed, with over 60% located near coastlines compared to 52% of residential infrastructure<sup>3</sup>.

The "Blue Pacific" identity recognises Pacific Island nations not as small, vulnerable states but as large ocean states with stewardship over vast marine resources. This perspective offers opportunities for economic diversification through sustainable tourism, renewable ocean energy development, innovative maritime initiatives, sustainable aquaculture, coastal and nearshore resource development, deep sea mining prospects, and submarine cable networks. However, realising these opportunities requires addressing infrastructure gaps, enhancing maritime safety, and ensuring equitable access to economic opportunities.

### Regional Instruments

- [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#)
- [Regional Strategy for Pacific Women In Maritime 2020-2024](#)
- [Taraho'i Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy-2019](#)
- [Pacific Roadmap for Economic Development \(PRED\)](#)
- [Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific](#)
- [Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy](#)
- [Framework for Pacific Oceanscape](#)

### International Instruments

- [2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships](#)

#### **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. TRC Tourism for SPTO and UNESCO Office of the Pacific States. UNESCO Pacific World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Assessment. 2023
2. World Bank. Pacific Islands - Systematic Country Diagnostic Update : Growth and Resilience (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.
3. Kumar, Lalit and Subhashni Taylor, 'Exposure of Coastal Built Assets in the South Pacific to Climate Risks' (2015) 5(11) Nature climate change 992