PACIFIC ISLANDS OCEAN CONFERENCE (PIOC) REPORT

Heritage Hotel Honiara,
Solomon Islands
29 September–3 October 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The conference was co-hosted by the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) to advance engagement with member countries and partners.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pacific Islands Ocean Conference (PIOC) was convened in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 29 September to 3 October 2025. The conference was co-hosted by the Pacific Community (SPC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) to advance engagement with member countries and partners.

This regional conference builds on the strengths and outcomes of the first Pacific Islands Conference on Ocean Science and Management (PICOSOM, Sept 2023) and the first Pacific Regional Ocean Policy and Governance Dialogue (August 2023).

The core objective of the conference was to provide a cross-disciplinary space that fosters new knowledge, inspires learning, and strengthens the science–policy interface. It was also a celebration of achievements and progress in ocean science and management, as well as regional collaboration.

The conference brought together 287 participants, including scientists, policymakers, traditional knowledge holders, community leaders and representatives of regional agencies to advance collective action on ocean sustainability in alignment with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Ocean Decade). Building on this shared purpose, the conference featured 160 presenters across 51 sessions structured around four outcomes linked to the Ocean Decade:

- **A productive ocean**
- **A predictable and safe ocean**
- **A clean, healthy and resilient ocean**
- **An inspiring and engaging ocean**

These four outcomes provide a framework for understanding and advancing the many facets of ocean sustainability. These outcomes reflect interconnected goals that rely on coordinated efforts across science, governance, traditional knowledge and culture, and community engagement.

The programme, guided by SPC's call for abstracts, reflected priority areas in:

- **Ocean science:** climate and open ocean science, transformative marine pollution research, fisheries and aquaculture, fisheries and coastal science, coral reefs and ocean acidification, rising temperatures, marine heatwaves and deoxygenation, information portals and databases.
- **Ocean governance and policy** for integrated ocean management (IOM) and marine spatial planning (MSP), regional and national ocean policies and management initiatives, biodiversity conservation and nature-based solutions, biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions (BBNJ) and ocean governance in the Blue Pacific, and migratory species.
- **Integrating traditional knowledge and science in ocean management:** case studies of successful integration of traditional knowledge and science to inform marine management, community-based management of marine resources, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), fishing practices and marine conservation, marine cultural heritage and archaeology, cultural values, indigenous rights and ocean conservation.

- **Cross-cutting themes:** the Ocean Decade in the Pacific, Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP), ocean leadership and capacity building, sustainable ocean financing and communicating ocean knowledge.

Sessions covered innovations and advances in science and explored how new knowledge can benefit Pacific Island communities and community-led initiatives. Topics covered include fisheries science, marine biodiversity, climate innovation, traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, governance and policy, youth development, international processes and the value of the creative arts in knowledge sharing and advocacy.

The conference also underscored strong alignment with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, specifically supporting the following thematic areas: Political leadership and regionalism; People-centred development; Climate change and disaster; Resource and economic development; and Ocean and natural environment.

The conference sessions highlighted the following priorities:

- **Advancing 100% ocean management and finalising maritime boundaries,** recognising these as the legal foundation for sovereignty, security and sustainable management of the Blue Pacific Continent.
- **Support the 100% scaling of community-based fisheries management (CBFM)** so that all coastal communities have the capacity and resources to manage their inshore fisheries and marine resources sustainably.
- **Progressing integrated ocean management (IOM) and marine spatial planning (MSP)** at national and regional levels, linking traditional knowledge, language, science and policy into holistic decision-making.
- **Scaling up decision-support tools and ocean data, turning information into action for sustainable blue economies.** The conference demonstrated its potential to underpin marine spatial planning, blue economy development, and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. The launch of the revamped Pacific Ocean Portal underscored the commitment to providing Pacific Island nations with user-friendly, open-access, actionable ocean data.
- **Strengthening climate and ocean science for resilience:** from monitoring of coral reefs to high-resolution ocean models, participants presented recent developments and technical advances, highlighting the critical role of science, early-warning systems and regional collaboration in building resilience to climate change, disasters and ocean acidification.
- **Fostering ocean productivity and advances in monitoring and understanding oceanic and coastal fisheries:** sustainable aquaculture to improve livelihoods, reduce import dependence and raise national revenue; and managing impacts of marine transport and extractive processes on island ecosystems.
- **Celebrating Pacific youth, culture and traditional knowledge:** the voices of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP), artists and traditional navigators brought forward cultural narratives, creativity and intergenerational knowledge as powerful tools for ocean stewardship.

- **Mobilising partnerships, networks, collaboration and resources to advance the Blue Pacific vision.** The conference highlighted the need for Pacific-led partnerships, regional networks, collaboration, and the coordinated mobilisation of financial, technical, and human resources to support the implementation of shared priorities and advance collective outcomes for the Blue Pacific Continent.

The co-organisers and participants unanimously recognised and praised the value of this format and collective commitment and have agreed to co-organise this event every two years (the next will be in the second half of 2027).

INTRODUCTION

The ocean covers 98% of the total area under the jurisdiction of Pacific Island countries and territories. Understanding ocean systems is thus not only a scientific endeavour but a cultural, environmental, economic and existential imperative.

Robust ocean science and reliable data enable countries to protect marine ecosystems, manage fisheries sustainably, anticipate climate-driven impacts and uphold the well-being of communities whose cultures and economies are shaped by the sea. Strengthening the generation, sharing and use of ocean science knowledge is therefore essential for protecting the large ocean states of the Pacific. Ocean science encompasses the systematic investigation of the ocean (its physical, chemical, biological, geological, and human dimensions) to understand how marine systems function and support life on Earth.

In this context, the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference (PIOC) was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, from 29 September to 3 October 2025. The conference was co-hosted by Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, including the Pacific Community (SPC) through its Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Pacific Islands Forum, the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA).

PIOC builds on the inaugural Pacific Islands Conference on Ocean Science and Ocean Management (PICOSOM) and the Pacific Regional Ocean Policy and Governance Dialogue, both held in 2023. As an endorsed event of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) (Ocean Decade), PIOC featured 51 sessions organised around the Ocean Decade's key **outcomes:**

- **A productive ocean**
- **A predictable and safe ocean**
- **A clean, healthy and resilient ocean**
- **An inspiring and engaging ocean**

Throughout the week, cross-cutting themes such as ocean governance, leadership and engagement, and the integration of traditional knowledge and science were woven into discussions. **More than 160 speakers contributed** through a wide range of formats, including academic presentations, country updates, technical demonstrations, workshops, panel discussions and *tok stori* dialogues (a Melanesian Pidgin language phrase describing storytelling sessions that encourage shared understanding and co-created narratives).

The conference brought together 286 participants representing governments, traditional leaders, technical experts, researchers, youth and regional partners to advance a shared vision for the Blue Pacific Continent. Participants discussed challenges central to sustainable ocean management in the Pacific, including maritime boundaries, climate and ocean science and marine spatial planning, as well as **youth leadership, cultural knowledge and ocean literacy**.

The connections and momentum generated during the week are intended to strengthen ongoing work at the national, regional and international levels. PIOC reaffirmed the **Pacific region's commitment to collective action, shared leadership and the long-term safeguarding of the ocean that sustains its people, cultures and economies.**

CONFERENCE THEMES, ANALYSIS & PRIORITY OUTCOMES

Detailed information relating to the organisation, participation, formats, themes and communication outcomes of the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference is provided in a series of appendices to support transparency, accessibility and future reference. A brief description of the information found in the appendices is provided below.

APPENDIX I PRESENTS THE FULL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME, outlining the schedule of sessions, side events and activities for the five-day conference. It provides a detailed overview of how the programme was structured across the four Ocean Decade Outcomes and serves as a reference point for the sequencing and thematic grouping of sessions.

APPENDIX II PROVIDES A PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS, highlighting the breadth and diversity of engagement at the conference. It summarises attendance figures, representation across sectors and regions, and the inclusion of government officials, regional and international organisations, academic institutions, civil society, Indigenous knowledge holders, youth, the private sector and media representatives. This appendix demonstrates the inclusive and multi-stakeholder nature of the conference.

APPENDIX III OUTLINES THE RANGE OF SESSION FORMATS used throughout the conference. It explains the purpose and role of panels, tok stori dialogues, workshops, conference-style presentations and the press conference, illustrating how different formats were intentionally designed to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, co-creation and engagement aligned with the ambitions of the Ocean Decade.

APPENDIX IV PROVIDES A STRUCTURED SUMMARY OF THE KEY TOPICS AND THEMATIC AREAS addressed during the conference. Sessions are categorised into 10 thematic areas, with an overview of sub-themes and the number of sessions in each category. This appendix offers a consolidated view of the breadth and balance of scientific, governance, cultural and community-focused discussions held during the event.

APPENDIX V DOCUMENTS THE MEDIA FELLOWSHIP and participant feedback. It outlines the fellowship's objectives, selection process and outcomes, including regional representation of journalists and the volume and reach of media coverage generated. This appendix highlights how the conference extended its impact beyond participants, amplifying Pacific voices and key messages on ocean science, governance and traditional knowledge through regional and international media.

Together, these appendices complement the main body of the report by providing detailed supporting information and ensuring that the full scope, participation and outcomes of the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference are clearly documented and accessible.

Priority themes shaped by conference dialogues

Ten main themes were identified across the 51 sessions, reflecting the wide-ranging and multidisciplinary nature of ocean-related work in the Pacific. These themes encompass both scientific and community-driven areas, including fisheries science, marine biodiversity, climate innovation, traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, governance, youth development and international processes. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of sessions across the 10 thematic categories. Appendix IV provides a summary of the key focus areas within each theme.

The top three themes, based on the number of sessions and their presence across conference discussions, were:

- **Ocean governance and marine spatial planning (19%)**
- **Ocean and climate science (16%)**
- **Fisheries science and community-based fisheries management (12%)**

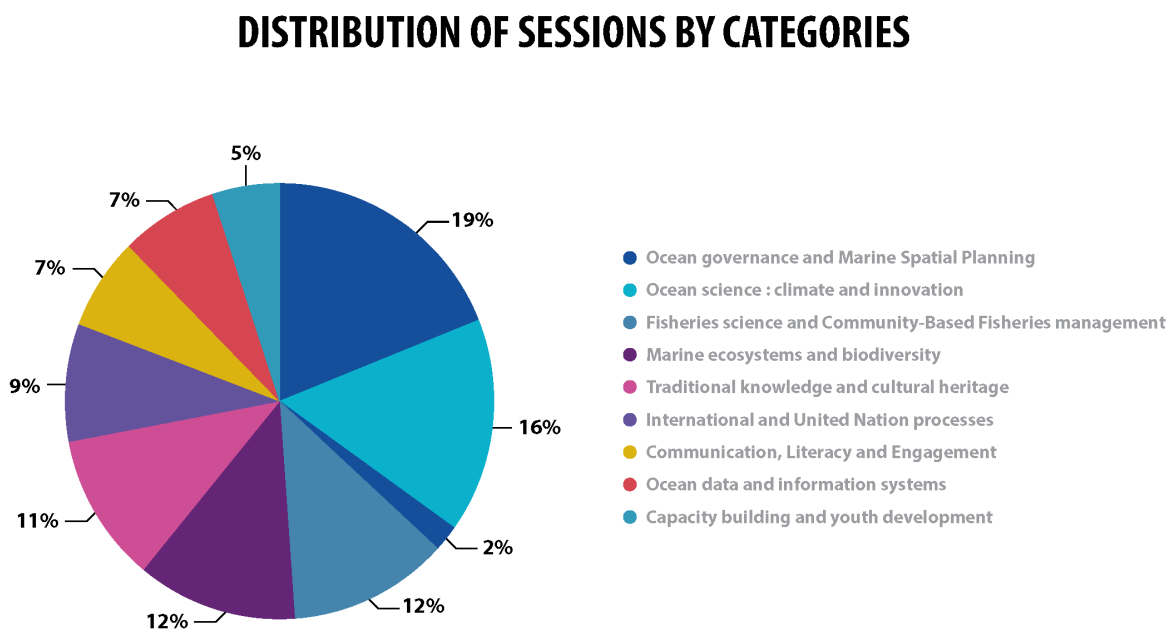


Figure 1. Distribution of sessions by themes (categories)

Comparative breakdown: Science vs. social science sessions

The sessions were grouped into two overarching themes: "**ocean and fisheries science**" and "**social science, cultural and governance themes**", according to the primary emphasis of each subject (Figure 2).

- **Ocean and fisheries science** sessions focus on marine ecosystems, fishing research, climate science, ocean observation, modelling and other technical or ecological facets of oceanography, natural systems, environmental dynamics and science-based strategies for ocean management.
- The themes of **social science, culture and governance** encompass sessions that highlight the human aspects of ocean stewardship, including cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, policy and governance frameworks, youth participation, communication, capacity development and regional or international legal procedures.

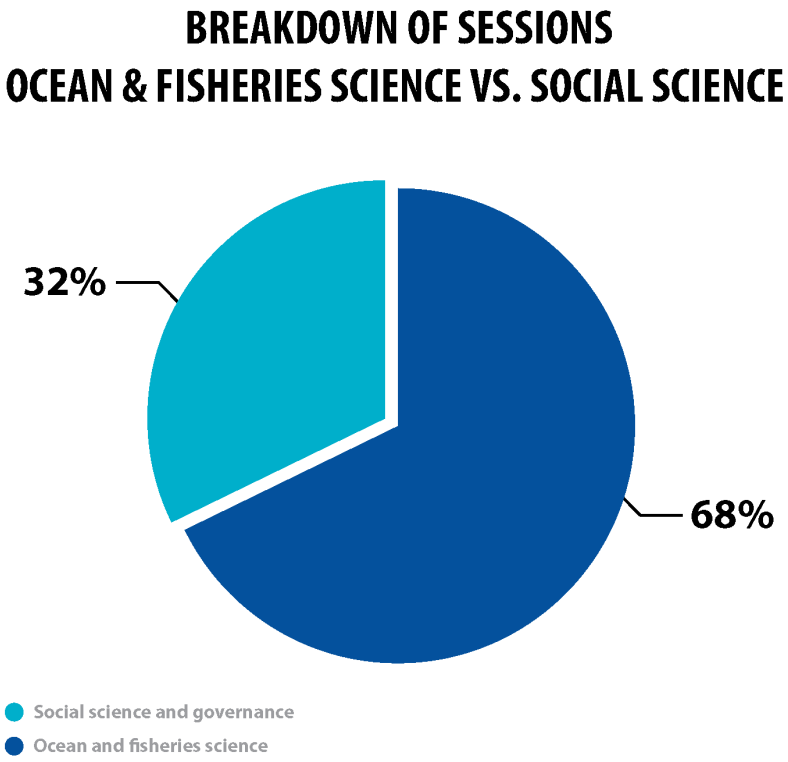


Figure 2. Breakdown of sessions by ocean and fisheries science, and social science and governance

Comparative breakdown by Ocean Decade outcome

The four key Ocean Decade outcomes provide a shared framework for understanding and advancing the many dimensions of ocean sustainability. These outcomes are not isolated pillars; instead, they reflect interconnected goals that rely on coordinated efforts across science, governance, culture and community engagement.

Mapping sessions across multiple outcomes acknowledges the cross-cutting nature of the themes addressed and reflects the full scope of their contributions. This approach demonstrates how diverse areas of work collectively support progress toward a sustainable, healthy and inspiring ocean for all.

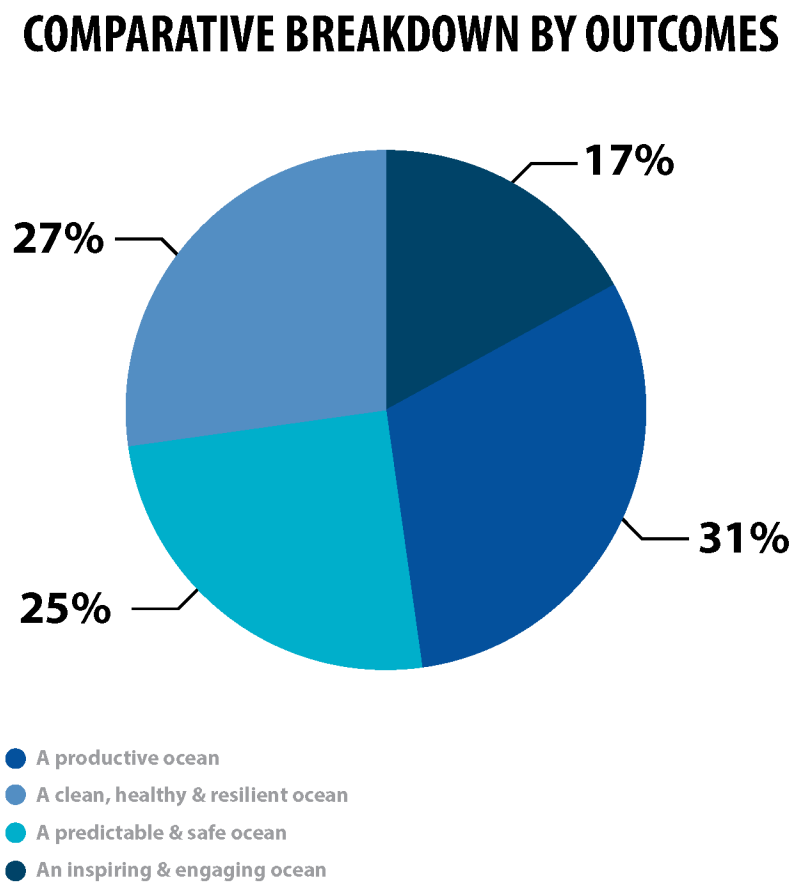


Figure 3. Comparative breakdown by outcomes

Key scientific and technical priorities

The key scientific and technical priorities of the conference are summarised below and reflect the depth of technical discussions and strategic perspectives raised across all sessions. These priorities represent a synthesis of scientific presentations, community insights and policy dialogues, capturing the shared ambition of Pacific countries and partners to strengthen ocean governance and advance ocean science across the region.

- **Advancing 100% ocean management and finalising maritime boundaries,** recognising these as the legal foundation for sovereignty, security and sustainable management of the Blue Pacific Continent.
- **Progressing integrated ocean management (IOM) and marine spatial planning (MSP)** at national and regional levels, linking traditional knowledge, language, science and policy into holistic decision-making.
- **Scaling up decision-support tools and ocean data, turning information into action for sustainable blue economies.** The conference demonstrated its potential to underpin marine spatial planning, blue economy development and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific.

- **Strengthening climate and ocean science for resilience**: from coral reefs monitoring to high-resolution ocean models, participants presented recent developments and technical advances, highlighting the critical role of science, early-warning systems and regional collaboration in building resilience to climate change, disasters and ocean acidification.
- **Fostering ocean productivity and advances in monitoring and understanding oceanic and coastal fisheries**; sustainable aquaculture to improve livelihoods, reduce import dependence and raise national revenue; and managing impacts of marine transport and extractive processes on island ecosystems.

Key capacity-building and knowledge-sharing priorities

Building a resilient Blue Pacific requires not only scientific expertise but also the strengthening of people, networks and systems that support collective action. The following priorities reflect this commitment to nurturing capacity, strengthening collaboration and amplifying the diverse voices that drive ocean stewardship in the Pacific.

- Celebrating Pacific youth, culture and traditional knowledge: the voices of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP), artists and traditional navigators brought forward cultural narratives, creativity and intergenerational knowledge as powerful tools for ocean stewardship.
- Mobilising partnerships, networks, collaboration and resources to advance the Blue Pacific vision.

CONFERENCE OPENING AND *TOK STORI* PLENARY

Conference opening and grounding session

The opening session set the foundation for the conference, bringing together cultural tradition, spiritual grounding and regional leadership.

The Paramount Chief of Tandai, Chief Peter Araiasi Sagelivera, welcomed the conference participants at a traditional ceremony and presented a gift to the organisers. Dreamcast Theatre Solomon Islands supported this traditional welcome. A prayer was offered by Reverend Dr Cliff Bird, which helped centre the event in purpose and unity.

The Honourable John Tuhaika Junior, Supervising Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade of the Solomon Islands Government, welcomed participants. Opening remarks from regional institutions were delivered by Dr Noan Pakop, Director General of FFA, and the keynote address was delivered by Dr Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner.

Dreamcast Theatre Solomon Islands concluded the opening session with an artistic performance that provided a creative reflection of the conference's overarching theme. The presentation featured 40 artists, including dancers and musicians. It portrayed the deep relationship between people and the ocean, highlighting our identity as part of it, our reliance on it for economic livelihood, the richness of its natural resources and the growing challenges posed by marine pollution.

Dr Katy Soapi, Coordinator for partnerships and engagement at PCCOS (SPC), provided an overview of the conference background and its objectives, and led participants into the *tok stori* plenary session.

Tok stori: Weaving ancestral knowledge with ocean science for the future of the Pacific

Moderator: Lysa Wini, Early Career Researcher, One Ocean Hub/University of Strathclyde (UK) and Nature Foundation, USA

Objective: To ground the conference theme of integrating science and traditional wisdom.

The opening included this session to establish the conference's foundation. It explored how culture, language and traditional knowledge guide Pacific communities in caring for the ocean and served as a reminder to preserve this wisdom. The discussion highlighted the value of intergenerational learning and the role of women and youth in strengthening climate resilience and ocean conservation.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Traditional culture reflects the connection between land and ocean, and shapes people's livelihoods and identity (ecology, economics and people).
- Mothers play a vital role in the community, both in passing traditional knowledge to future generations and in contributing to important decision-making.
- While a gap remains in the documentation of traditional knowledge, much of it can be shared, although some must remain sacred and be taught orally.
- Climate change presents significant challenges, and traditional knowledge plays a crucial role in helping communities adapt to these impacts.

Presentations

Rev Dr Cliff Bird, Regional Coordinator, Mission Catalyst – Pacific Australia Labour Mobility, NSW-ACT Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. Aligning Faith, Culture, and Climate Resilience in Oceania for Sustainable Development in the Pacific

Life is central to traditional culture, serving as the centre of daily interactions among local people. It reflects the deep connection between the ocean and the land, shaping both livelihood and identity. Seasonal cycles also play a significant role, marking the times of planting, harvesting and cultivating the land, which are vital to sustaining life. This interconnectedness is essential, linking cultural heritage to development and weaving together the four fundamental dimensions of home, ecology, economics and people. Together, they form the foundation of traditional life. When the connections among these dimensions weaken or are disrupted, challenges and pressures inevitably emerge.

Chloe Molou, Erromango Cultural Association, Vanuatu. Empowering Pacific Youth through intergenerational learning and sharing of experiences

Colonisation continues to shape the traditions of the young generation in Vanuatu. One major challenge is the language gap, which creates distance not only between tradition and science but also between traditional knowledge and modern understanding.

A key recommendation is documenting traditional knowledge to ensure its preservation and accessibility. It is equally essential that the voices of young people are heard, as this will prepare them and future generations to carry forward their heritage while engaging with the modern world.

Leausalilo Leilani Duffy, Technical Director, Conservation International Samoa. Safeguarding Cultural Heritage and Biodiversity Through Community-Based Marine Conservation in Pacific Islands

Conservation is not new to the Pacific Islands; it has been practised for generations by our ancestors. This includes sacred practices and taboos that guided the sustainable use of resources. More importantly, there is a need today to expand this traditional knowledge to ensure its relevance and applicability in addressing challenges and in sharing it with future generations.

The governance system plays a vital role in managing marine resources, with chiefs serving as key decision-makers. In Samoa, village bylaws are incorporated into national law, thereby helping safeguard and manage resources more effectively. Moreover, when village bylaws are incorporated into national law, they create space for these frameworks to be recognised at the regional level.

Salanieta Kitolelei, Postdoc Position at Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research (Indigenous knowledge in Fiji). Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Marine Species Relationships for Inclusive Ocean Governance

Language is highly significant, as it not only reflects cultural identity but also helps protect and sustain marine biodiversity. Language is important because research and academic papers must be translated into local languages, ensuring that knowledge captures the essence of specific resources to support effective protection of marine biodiversity.

Simon Salopuka, Executive Director of the Vaka Valo Association and representative of the Taumako Indigenous Knowledge Institution (TIKI), Solomon Islands. Wayfinding wisdom: navigating oceans and identity in the Pacific

Voyages are vital, serving as a powerful means to share stories, sustain livelihoods and make important decisions. More importantly, they play a key role in bridging relationships between communities. One key challenge is that climate change significantly affects navigation, particularly due to changes in wind direction. However, traditional knowledge helps us adapt to change.

Conference sessions: Key discussions and speaker summaries

The full conference programme is presented in Appendix I. Sessions are organised according to their corresponding Ocean Decade outcomes.

A productive ocean

According to the Ocean Decade, a productive ocean is defined as:

"The ocean is the foundation for future global economic development and human health and wellbeing, including food security and secure livelihoods for hundreds of millions of the world's poorest people. Knowledge and tools to support the recovery of wild fish stocks, implement sustainable fisheries management practices, and sustainably expand aquaculture while protecting essential biodiversity and ecosystems will be essential. The ocean also provides essential goods and services to a wide range of established and emerging industries, including extractive industries, energy, tourism, transport and pharmaceutical industries."

Community-based fisheries management (CBFM)

Moderator: Watisoni Lalavanua, Community-based Fisheries Management Adviser, SPC

Objective: To share experiences and learnings from local and regional initiatives in implementing Community-based fisheries management (CBFM) in the Pacific.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Alignment of CBFM efforts with national policies and government priorities can be difficult, and not all frameworks are universally applicable due to cultural and regional differences.
- The Pacific regional CBFM framework endorsed in 2021 has been extended to 2030, providing an opportunity to progress efforts to scale up the current 10% of communities managing their coastal resources to 100%.
- Some pilot initiatives have proven to be financially demanding, which may limit their scalability or accessibility for specific communities.
- Tailored efforts to scale CBFM in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands have had success where policy and strategy are combined with capacity building and implementation through support of CSOs, government and small grant funding.
- A growing regional community of practice is bringing together community practitioners, scientists and researchers to share knowledge and inspiration.
- In Micronesia, CBFM is being applied as a nature-based solution for coastal resilience.
- FAO is calling for the need to properly value small-scale/coastal fisheries in the Pacific, given their key role in livelihoods and food security. There are several global platforms relevant to CBFM.
- Integrated approaches for CBFM should acknowledge that there is a complex mix of interacting activities, such as fishing, farming, logging, tourism and aquaculture, and these should be addressed holistically.
- IUU (illegal, unreported, unregulated) fishing is impacting coastal communities. It must be addressed through appropriate monitoring and improved governance, including relevant legislation and enforcement efforts, and integration with traditional/community rules.

- There are gaps in technology available to communities and a need for research to provide fishers with practical benefits.
- Community-centred tools that empower fishers, offering real-time value, decision-making support and localised solutions are needed.

Presentations

Community-based fisheries management (Session 1)

Ivory Akao, Community-Based Fisheries Management Officer, SPC. Strengthening Community-based fisheries management through a regional community of practice
SPC, guided by the CBFM Scaling up Framework, is supporting countries and territories through a regional community of practice that amplifies community voices and enables collaborative learning. Key initiatives include the Echoes of Oceania portal, a CBFM Facebook group, and training and webinars. SPC encourages communities, organisations and ocean partners to share stories and lessons through these platforms.

Caroline Vieux, Network coordinator, LMMA Network International. Lessons learned in scaling up Community-based fisheries management in Melanesia
The large Melanesian countries present unique challenges for CBFM, and only a small fraction of communities are supported to implement CBFM. Lessons from pilot activities conducted by the LMMA Network International, in collaboration with country partners in Melanesia, demonstrate the value of strategic, low-cost approaches that better utilise limited national/local government funds to support more communities. Scaling CBFM ensures that all communities receive helpful information and that both the government and communities sustain the necessary activities over time. Approaches that have been piloted include disseminating information to communities, scaling through community champions, supporting Provincial Fisheries Officers in delivery, supporting two-way communication between communities and government, and implementing a small-grant programme to scale CBFM.

Trenton Skilling, Marine Program Manager, Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization and Daysha Ngirur Adelbai, Financial lead, One Reef Micronesia. The Kiwa Initiative's MiCOAST Project
MiCOAST is a three-year, Kiwa-funded partnership in the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Nauru, advancing CBFM as a scalable, nature-based solution that couples reef recovery with resilient livelihoods. It aims to strengthen CBFM implementation at 12 sites across four countries through nature-based solutions, including integrating traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) with Western science and documenting and preserving traditional, sustainable practices.

Dua Rudolph, SPC's Community-based Fisheries Advisory Group, Marshall Islands. Local wisdom, regional impact: making local voices heard and count
The Community-based Fisheries Dialogue (CBFD) is a regional platform that amplifies the voices of Pacific civil society organisations (CSOs) and communities in coastal fisheries governance. It provides a space for non-state actors to identify priorities, share lessons and inform regional decision-making. It serves as both a learning forum and an advocacy mechanism, bridging community experience with policy action.

Niegel Rozet, SPC's Community-Based Fisheries Dialogue Advisory Group and Caroline Vieux, Network coordinator, LMMA Network. Unlocking the Potential of Community Small Grants to Scale Community-Based Fisheries Management in the Pacific

The 4th CBFD (CBFD4) emphasised that effective small grants must be co-designed with communities, grounded in Pacific realities and supported by civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) to scale CBFM, as implemented by the LMMA-PEUMP. Six grants were implemented in Kosrae, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands over 10 months. Information dissemination was a vital component of utilising the grant provided. Lessons from the pilot programme highlight that grantees face barriers, including limited access to training in proposal development, financial management and reporting. Grantors, meanwhile, often struggle to reconcile donor requirements with diverse cultural, linguistic and infrastructural contexts. CBOs and CSOs bring local knowledge and insights, as well as community- and people-focused approaches.

Mele Tauati, Fishery Officer, Food and Agriculture Organisation. Small-Scale fisheries: FAO Global small-scale fisheries perspectives

Small-scale fisheries are a vital source of livelihoods and food security and are recognised as a key livelihood sector across the Pacific. However, they are often marginalised, and their full contribution to communities and economies is not fully appreciated. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries were developed to promote sustainability and equity in the sector.

Recent global meetings co-led by the FAO, including the Small-Scale Fisheries Summit in Rome, the FAO Committee on Fisheries and the Subcommittee on Fisheries Management held in Iceland in February, have placed particular emphasis on Community-based Fisheries Management (CBFM). These discussions reaffirm that fisheries resources and the livelihoods they support are of international importance. There is now a call for collective action at all levels to work closely with fishing communities and ensure the sustainable management of our shared resources.

Community-based fisheries management (Session 2)

Serema Kwato'o, Research Assistant, Solomon Islands National University (SINU). Traditional "Oko" (Rope) fishing method for rabbitfish at Foueda in the Lau Lagoon, Solomon Islands

The traditional fishing method known as the 'Oko' is significant to communities in the Lau Lagoon in the Solomon Islands. Coordination to utilise traditional methods requires knowledge of target fish behaviour, their habitats during tidal changes and the effects of sound on their behaviour.

Aubrey Vavu, Ecological Solution, Senior Research Assistant, Solomon Islands. Development of a spatially integrated approach to support livelihoods planning in small-scale fishing communities in Solomon Islands

Many livelihood projects in the Pacific focus on a single sector – such as fisheries, tourism, agriculture, or logging – without recognising that Pacific people often rely on multiple, interconnected livelihoods and face overlapping environmental risks. In Solomon Islands, a three-year project was designed to help small-scale fishing communities strengthen their livelihoods in more equitable, sustainable and climate-resilient ways. The project developed a spatially oriented, risk-based Integrated Livelihoods Approach to support communities and decision-makers in planning livelihood adaptations. This approach combines scientific data, local knowledge and existing governance systems to improve community-based processes for assessing, prioritising and implementing livelihood actions.

William Sokimi Junior, Monitoring Control and Surveillance Officer, SPC. The insidious threat of IUU fishing: Impacts on coastal fisheries and communities

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing impacts coastal fisheries and the communities that depend on them. It undermines fisheries management, disrupts ecosystems and erodes livelihoods. There are numerous drivers of IUU fishing, which can be separated into illegal, profit-driven activity and subsistence-based non-compliance driven by need (poverty and inequity).

Effective enforcement requires not only legal authority but cultural competence, community trust and strong communication skills, especially in contexts where illegal fishing is normalised or socially pressured. Successful approaches combine monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement (MCS&E) with community engagement and education. There is a need for a shift in mindset from seeing IUU fishing as an external problem to embracing collective responsibility. Sustainable coastal fisheries depend on inclusive governance, equitable regulation and empowered communities committed to protecting marine resources for future generations.

Laitia Tamata, Managing Director, TAMATA's Enterprise. Pacific-driven technology for sustainable fisheries

Data collection and continuous monitoring can be enhanced through mobile technology and effective AI use. SmartCatch AI Sustainable Fishing is a Pacific-led digital solution that not only collects data but also delivers actionable information directly to fishers. It helps fishers identify and better understand their catch, gain greater control over sales and ensure sustainably caught fish reach consumers directly. Unlike systems that primarily serve scientists or intermediaries, this tool empowers fishers to actively apply CBFM practices rather than have them observed or managed by others.

Jone Tamanitoakula, Fisheries Officer, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Integrating scientific knowledge, appropriate legislation and enforcement efforts to strengthen adaptive CBFM and rules

In Fiji, community fisheries management would be best supported by integrating scientific research (ecological assessment and fish stock monitoring) with Community-based Fisheries Management Rules (CBFMR), traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and fisheries legislation. CBFMR has often been compromised by a lack of scientific and TEK information to address community-specific needs. A lack of integration and connectivity between CBFMR and Fiji Fisheries legislation is enabling illegal fishing to disrupt community goals and objectives for a sustainable fishery.

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is working with the Ministry of Fisheries and the communities of five local districts in Fiji to integrate scientific data, CBFMR and legislation, thereby enabling communities to be better informed and to develop their fisheries management strategies.

Hannah Gilchrist, Coastal Fisheries Scientist, SPC. Proposing a tiered approach to CBFM monitoring, supported by the new CBFM monitoring guide

To ensure CBFM achieves local objectives, regular monitoring of resource status and their management response is required. This presents a challenge, as communities often lack access to the technical skills, expertise and financing needed to conduct regular monitoring. A tiered approach to monitoring of CBFM effectiveness was proposed to support CBFM across diverse Pacific contexts. This includes:

(i) Fisheries management associations record fisher perceptions of resource status to enable local management action.

(ii) National CBFM programmes conduct in-depth monitoring in a sub-sample of communities where the status of resources needs more investigation to support management adaptation or

programme evaluation; and regional technical agencies or academic institutions conduct in-depth research at a few sites to test the assumptions underlying CBFM.

This approach is supported by the soon-to-be-released CBFM monitoring guide, which collates monitoring methods used in the Pacific for CBFM contexts. Examples and guidance on methods suitable for use by communities or NGO/government representatives are presented, along with information on cost, complexity and resulting data quality. Monitoring isn't just about data; it is about decisions. The guide helps communities move from observation to action.

Maritime transport and connectivity

Moderator: Malakai Vakautawale, Maritime Boundaries Adviser, SPC

Objective: To provide a forum to discuss different aspects of maritime transport, connectivity and solutions for sustainable ocean management.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The cruise tourism industry has a significant impact on fragile small island ecosystems. Potential management options include a quota-based system and rotational zoning that allows for rest periods.
- Other presentations discussed safety assessments through bathymetry surveys, which enabled re-entry of shipping vessels following Vanuatu's 2025 earthquakes, and the value of scientific and technical evaluations in maintenance of safe shipping routes, port operations and marine spatial planning.
- The discussions also included the impacts on small islands of the decision to implement the IMO Net-Zero Framework and the related costs.

Presentations

Juliana Brown, Commerce Student, Victoria University, New Zealand. Rotational Cruise Ship Zoning
Cruise tourism is a valuable part of many Pacific island economies. However, it also has significant impacts on fragile small island ecosystems. The proposal is to adapt New Zealand's proven Quota Management System (QMS) to visitor flows rather than to fish stocks. Distributing cruise ship itineraries across multiple zones on a rotational basis would allow rest periods for the recovery of both natural ecosystems and communities. Co-governance is essential, with indigenous knowledge holders sharing in decision-making and application of traditional management systems. This concept could support the health of reef and coastal ecosystems, prevent overcrowding and balance economic opportunities, thereby strengthening indigenous sovereignty and cultural resilience.

The calls to action are to: collaborate through a pilot working group of governments, indigenous leaders, scientists and cruise operators; contribute to the sharing of data, knowledge and support for zoning design and monitoring; and champion the Pacific as a global leader in regenerative, climate-resilient marine tourism.

Judah Vamamberi, Inspections & Enforcement Officer, Papua New Guinea Ports Corporation Ltd. Navigating sustainable ports: Ocean governance, biodiversity conservation and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)
Papua New Guinea's ports are not only gateways for shipping; they also connect communities and support livelihoods. Ports also pose challenges, including marine pollution, dredging, and shoreline

modification. Ports must comply with various ocean governance frameworks, including national laws, MARPOL, IMO conventions, and biodiversity and conservation conventions.

Papua New Guinea's ports are in biodiversity hotspots, and threats include dredging, spills, invasive species and shoreline changes. Management and conservation tools that can be applied include Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), habitat restoration and robust environmental impact assessments (EIAs).

NbS can also be applied to address port challenges, including mangroves and seagrasses as buffers, artificial reefs for marine life, and green port infrastructure. These can provide cost-effective, resilient, and community-inclusive benefits. Sustainable, climate-ready ports can be achieved by embracing governance frameworks to integrate NbS and biodiversity conservation into infrastructure development and operations.

Salesh Kumar, Hydrographic Surveyor, SPC. Navigating resilience: Bathymetric survey and the Blue Economy in post-disaster contexts
Natural disasters and seismic events such as earthquakes often result in landslides, submerged debris and changes in coastal morphology. These impacts threaten navigation by altering seabed topography. Bathymetric technologies enable nations to safeguard maritime trade, respond effectively to natural disasters and unlock sustainable ocean-based opportunities. In Vanuatu, bathymetric surveys provided the basis for a safety assessment that enabled the harbour to reopen soon after the 2025 earthquake.

Increased investment in hydrographic capacity, regional collaboration and real-time data integration would benefit Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as seen in Vanuatu.

Dr Michael Prehn, International Relations researcher, PhD, Counsellor to IMO for Solomon Islands. The IMO net-zero framework
Agreements made at the international level will have significant consequences at the national level. The IMO Net-Zero Framework is a draft international regulation to reduce emissions from international shipping; if approved, it will have implications for the Solomon Islands. The framework uses a tiered emissions pricing system in which ships exceeding an agreed-upon emissions threshold pay a fee. Those in compliance can receive credits (that can be used or sold). The Solomon Islands will require significant investment to transition its local shipping industry.

Pacific aquaculture

Moderator: Chinthaka Hewavitharane, Inland aquaculture specialist, independent researcher

Objective: This session aims to share advances and practical experiences with aquaculture initiatives implemented across the Pacific Islands region, highlighting both community-driven and commercially oriented models.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Among all the sectors involved in food security, aquaculture still has significant growth potential.
- The farming approach adopts local and sustainable methods in aquaculture and coastal resource management across the Pacific islands.
- Aquaculture is supporting food security, livelihoods and economic development across the Pacific.

- Scaling aquaculture requires combining ecological suitability, local feed and seed independence, inclusive participation (especially of women), cost-effective production systems, and integration of traditional knowledge with modern science.

Presentations

Emmy Elim Musuota, Researcher, Solomon Islands National University (SINU). Dietary carbohydrate for local strain of Mozambique tilapia (Oreochromis mossambicus) in Solomon Islands: Effect on growth and fry production
Research in the Solomon Islands demonstrated that locally available carbohydrate-based feed formulae (corn starch and wheat flour) can partially replace tuna meal without significantly reducing growth or breeding performance in Mozambique tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*), lowering costs and reducing dependence on imported fishmeal.

Further research is needed to address limitations, including missing attractant ingredients that hinder diet palatability and feed effects. The experimental scope was limited by a lack of essential equipment in the country; haematology and histology assessments were not performed. Institutional partnerships are being sought to address this.

Lindsey White, Professor of Psychology and Fisheries, Auckland University of Technology. Unlocking the potential of seaweed farming in Pacific Island nations: A spotlight on the Solomon Islands
The Solomon Islands have strong ecological and community-based conditions for developing seaweed aquaculture, with opportunities for income diversification, food security and ecosystem benefits, provided that traditional knowledge and equitable benefit-sharing are integrated. Collaboration with Lindsey and funding opportunities presented at the workshop to gauge interest are also possibilities.

Neiribati Tabe, Senior Fisheries Assistant, Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Kiribati. Technical development for the isolation and mass culture of indigenous microalgae to support hatchery seed production in the Republic of Kiribati
Kiribati successfully isolated and domesticated indigenous microalgal strains for hatchery live feed, thereby reducing reliance on costly imports, improving biosecurity and building local biotechnological capacity for self-sufficient aquaculture. This is a success story that can be upscaled to other Pacific Island countries and territories.

Sangita Maharaj, Master of Agriculture student, University of the South Pacific (USP). Women's role and economic analysis of small-scale fish farming in Serua and Namosi Provinces of Fiji
Small-scale tilapia fish farming in Fiji is economically viable and enhances food security. Women's contributions within this sector must be examined, as gender-inclusive policies, training and financial support are essential to realise the full community benefits. The tools discussed for her research included mixed methods approaches and surveys. The capacity development ideas here were centred on women in the community. There were limitations in the data analysis. Way forward: to reanalyse data with a redirected focus and the use of proper statistical analysis tools.

Coastal fisheries science

Moderator: Hannah Gilchrist, Coastal Fisheries Scientist, SPC

Objective: To share research and activities being conducted in the field of coastal fisheries science.

Key discussions and takeaways

- There is a critical need for better inshore fisheries data and coordinated approaches to information acquisition, management and analysis to guide decision-making for coastal fisheries across the region.
- A variety of instruments are being used for mapping, monitoring and understanding coastal fisheries, with a breadth of applications including fish trade and distribution, setting limits on the weight/size of sea cucumbers and understanding predictors of ciguatera poisoning.
- Mapping fish trade informs management and post-disaster support.
- Advances in ciguatera knowledge exist, but uncertainties remain; attention is needed to support livelihoods and food security.
- Life history data are vital for stock assessment and reef fisheries management; SPC tools aid data collection and analysis.
- Risk assessment identifies species most vulnerable to fishing/trade, guiding management priorities.

Presentations

Jeremie Kaltavara, Doctor of Philosophy, Fisheries Management, University of Wollongong (ANCORS)/ Vanuatu Fisheries Department. Fish trade and distribution from Vanuatu's Community-based fisheries
Small-scale fisheries (SSF) are the backbone of community, culture, identity, food and income generation. Multi-species, multi-gear and multi-habitat characteristics characterise SSF. Understanding fish catch, trade and distribution systems improves understanding of trade networks, links to markets and consumers, and governance arrangements. A study mapping the structure and function of coastal fish market systems in Vanuatu found that the fish trade is complex and that traders (middlemen and retailers) are significant across both formal and informal systems. Fishing supports livelihoods (e.g., deep-sea fisheries), and fish trade systems remain active during disasters and pandemics.

A holistic management approach will be required, including regulating traders and providing subsidies/schemes to support actors.

Phoebe Argyle, Marine Ecology, Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands. Ciguatera in the Cook Islands: a brief history, the current situation, and future directions
Ciguatera is caused by benthic dinoflagellates (*Gambierdiscus* sp.). There is no specific cure for ciguatera poisoning. Ciguatera affects ~500,000 people/year and is a serious food security and economic issue. In the Cook Islands, 52% of the population has experienced ciguatera. High-risk fish include: maito (*Ctenochaetus striatus*), parrotfish and groupers. Local knowledge identifies species at higher risk of causing ciguatera poisoning and traditional cures for it.

Ciguatera occurrence correlates with El Niño, reef disturbances such as periods of high river runoff, and with fish densities that traditional knowledge indicates carry ciguatera. There is an urgent need for more research in the Pacific.

Leonore Page, Research Assistant, SPC. Digital innovations for life history data in coastal fisheries: the Ikasavea bio-sampling module
SPC's digital application, Ikasavea, enables fisheries surveyors to collect market, landing and socio-economic survey data offline. Digital innovations such as Ikasavea empower local scientists, enhance

knowledge and support effective fisheries management through more informed, locally grounded decision-making.

A new module in the app enables data collection on biological sampling, including fish maturity staging, otolith extractions and muscle tissue samples. All this data is vital to establishing life-history information for stock assessments. The app streamlines this data collection and is paired with automated analyses, making fisheries science and technical calculations more accessible for scientists working in the Pacific.

Viliami Fatongiatau, Senior Fisheries Officer, Ministry of Fisheries, Tonga. Applying Productivity Susceptibility Analysis to Support Sustainable Management of Tonga's Aquarium Fishery

Tonga's aquarium fishery provides livelihoods and employment, with an export volume of 551 mt valued at $2.8 million TOP over the last 5 years. It is therefore a valuable industry, but managing aquarium fisheries poses challenges due to limited scientific information to support decision-making and the unknown ecosystem impacts.

Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) is a risk analysis tool for determining how a species may be impacted by fishing pressure. PSA was used to identify the species most at risk from fishing and/or trade, where effective management is critical to ensure their sustainability.

Species to focus on were determined based on historical harvest data for the aquarium trade. Information on productivity factors (fecundity, maximum size, etc.) and susceptibility factors (ecological niche and distribution, trade volume, life cycle stage at harvest) for that species was compiled and entered into a model to determine each species' vulnerability level. The focus was on hard coral species. The findings, currently in the preliminary phase, will inform improved management of coral species.

Louis Charles Dziegala, Fisheries Management Facilitator, Coastal Fisheries Observatory of New Caledonia. Monitoring to Improve Marine Resource Management in New Caledonia: The Example of the Holothurian Technical Committee

In New Caledonia, the Holothurian Technical Committee has been established to monitor sea cucumber fisheries and exports.

Studies were conducted to determine conversion ratios for different sea cucumber species by comparing live weight to post-processing weight. Conversion ratios between processing stages (salted, boiled, semi-dried, dried) are key tools for analysing and comparing catch volumes. They enable estimation of harvested quantities when initial weights are missing, support fishery monitoring, and are used to convert processed catches to live-weight equivalent (LWE). Developing these ratios is essential to ensure reliable data (e.g., comparisons with quotas, export data or stock estimates) to support effective management decisions.

The research also determined the weight at which a species reaches maturity, thereby setting a minimum threshold for sustainable exploitation, assuming individuals above this limit have reproduced at least once. Determining maturity weight enables setting a minimum weight (in LWE or dried form) as a threshold for sustainable exploitation, assuming individuals above this limit have reproduced at least once. From this, dorsal length at maturity can be estimated to define the minimum catch size, supporting potential updates of fisheries regulations.

Pacific Islands coastal fisheries strategic research and monitoring network

Moderator: Tim Adams, Fisheries Management Consultant

Objectives: To discuss the main issues that Pacific Island coastal fisheries managers in government fisheries departments and communities must deal with; identify existing networks and service providers relevant to coastal fisheries monitoring and research; and consider draft elements for a potential Pacific Islands Coastal Fisheries Strategic Research Network.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Participants discussed issues in coastal fisheries that need better or more timely scientific advice. Several specific issues related to science requirements for coastal fisheries management were addressed. One was the need for management systems to adapt to the realities of the information that would be needed to operate them
- The idea of SPC facilitating the creation of an active regional coastal fisheries science network centred around a curated hub for data and metadata, a library of good practices and standard operating procedures for commonly used analyses, was generally seen as applicable.
- This initiative would support interoperability, data sharing and specialist capacity-building among practitioners. Active networking, promoting mutual support among national coastal fisheries scientists and mentoring arrangements with experts and specialists could also enable more nimble access for stakeholders to expert opinions and advice without requiring expenditure or travel.
- There is a need to collaboratively define and refine good practices and standard operating procedures for coastal fisheries risk assessment, stock assessment, and data management. Some concern was expressed about the potential promotion of a single standard or monitoring tool at the expense of more innovative or appropriate tools.
- Capacity building is needed through attachments, annual workshops and online training material.

Climate and Innovation

Moderator: Molly Powers-Tora, Pacific Strategy and Engagement Advisor, Earth Science New Zealand

Objective: This session discussed innovations in ocean science related to climate change and how science can best be applied to support decision-making in ocean management and policy.

Presentations

Bernadette Sloyan, Senior Principal Research Scientist, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). Environmental Indices to track ocean change

SPC is leading work to address information gaps on the effects of climate change on tuna fisheries by developing ecological indicators to track ocean change and improve understanding of impacts on regional tuna stocks and migration.

Kakau Foliaki, UNIDO consultant. Towards a Pacific Renewable Ocean Energy Program (PROERP)

The Pacific Regional Ocean Energy Readiness Programme (PROERP), led by UNIDO and the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PCREEE), is designed to help Pacific Island countries meet their ambitious renewable energy targets (aiming for nearly 100% renewable electricity) by exploring ocean energy options. The readiness project involves step-by-step preparedness through resource mapping, policy development, skills training and regional cooperation.

Ocean energy options have been assessed and include tidal energy, focusing on high-flow reef passes near communities; wave energy utilising oscillating water columns; fixed offshore wind turbines;

floating offshore wind turbines; floating solar; seawater air conditioning; and ocean thermal energy conversion. The PROERP Baseline Needs and Assessment Report will be tabled for endorsement at the Pacific Senior Energy Officials Meeting in 2025. This will lay the foundation for coordinated action and shared understanding across the region and could mark a new era in ocean energy development.

Mathilde Maslin, Research Engineer, MAREPOLIS. Marine biodiversity and ecological awareness in Bora-Bora: from a necessary environmental preservation to a shift of thought patterns

A case study from French Polynesia highlighted the impact of a healthy ecosystem on the economy. It demonstrates a socially inclusive, sustainable approach that integrates science, tradition, and innovative policies with communities, institutions, and private actors, such as tourist resorts, to collaboratively manage natural marine resources in a high-value tourism area.

A holistic approach was adopted to balance traditional practices with scientific evidence (cruise liner entries and entry locations) to manage tourism's impact on lagoon health. In addition, there was unified action on wastewater management, resulting in full access to drinking water for residents. Overall, there is a need for a paradigm shift in social education that encourages:

- Moving beyond consumerism and technological fragmentation
- Transitioning to a society based on solidarity, resilience, responsibility and sustainability
- A multidimensional approach (scientific, educational, political, religious)

Mike Williams, Oceanographer, Earth Science New Zealand. Understanding the deep ocean in a changing world: how science can inform decision making

The deep ocean can be affected in many ways; having frameworks to consider these impacts can support adaptation or management. Understanding the potential and influence of data for the Pacific Ocean: scenarios include adapting to the effects of climate change on fisheries (e.g., tuna migration), assessing the impacts of deep-sea mining, understanding deep-sea communities and the Pacific Ocean's potential to sequester gigatonnes of carbon globally. The current challenge is to develop research knowledge and data skills and to identify research opportunities.

Ocean fisheries management and science: Building knowledge and innovation for sustainable and climate-resilient Pacific tuna fisheries

Moderator: Marina Abas, Fisheries Management Advisor, FFA

Objective: The session will cover all aspects of tuna fisheries management: from the foundation of any fisheries management, which is the science, and how this informs decision making, to tools and innovations for monitoring and enforcement, and the governance systems in place, with insights into room for improvement to the latter.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Over half of the world's tuna comes from the exclusive economic zones of Pacific Island countries.
- The value of tuna caught in our waters is estimated at over USD 26 billion annually, with about USD 7 billion in direct revenue to Pacific SIDS.
- Science is providing sharper tools for understanding and addressing the impact of climate change on tuna.
- Innovation is reshaping monitoring and fisheries practices.

- Pacific leadership and governance remain central to resilience.

Presentations

Caisy Ata, ECOP, Solomon Islands National University (SINU). A young scientist's perspective from the Kaiyo Maru cruise on tuna ecology

A research cruise to assess the spatial distribution of tuna stocks is underway in collaboration with SPC and the Japanese Fisheries Agency. Caisy Ata, a final year fisheries studies undergraduate, was part of a cruise on board the Kaiyo-Maru research vessel. Tuna is the most significant catch and most traded commodity, underscoring the significance of the research. The research involved collecting zooplankton, measuring environmental DNA, manipulating and analysing DNA, and using acoustic data.

Pearse Buchanan, Postdoctoral Researcher, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). Key indicators of skipjack tuna variations in the western Pacific Ocean

CSIRO research is examining the distribution of skipjack tuna (SJT) in the western Pacific Ocean. SJT are projected to shift eastward due to climate change, with significant economic impacts on Pacific Island countries (e.g., Kiribati and Papua New Guinea). By identifying the environmental conditions and other variables that drive this shift, countries can use these indicators as early warning signals. The study also considers how different oceanographic conditions impact the biology of SJT.

Jimmy Freese, CEO of AkuShaper LLC, Ai.Fish, USA/Hawaii. AI-assisted longline fishing for sustainable tuna

The Ai.Fish initiative is using AI to enable a more sustainable approach to tuna fishing by targeting only specific-sized fish in the longline fishery. The approach involves determining the location of larger bigeye tuna (BET), which are often found at lower depths in the water column. The lines are then set accordingly. A limitation of AI is that it requires significant human input to identify the necessary data.

Lisa Buchanan, Chief Technical Adviser, FFA. Pacific peoples' leadership in tuna fisheries transformation

The 20-year FFA Oceanic Fisheries Management Project (OFMP) highlights Pacific leadership and governance as central to resilience. Regional cooperation has led to healthy tuna stocks, significant licence revenue, and much stronger national and regional systems, including the mitigation of IUU (illegal, unreported, unregulated) fishing through coordinated surveillance. Unified action is needed to mitigate climate change, which tests resilience, sovereignty and national budgets. Regional collaborative efforts require fairness and adaptability, a focus on people and access to usable science.

Emalus Malifa, Senior Coordinator, Conservation International. Jurisdictional Approaches in Pacific tuna

In the Pacific, despite relatively strong fisheries management and legal frameworks, human and labour rights violations are a significant risk. These include violations of civil and political rights (e.g., exploitation of workers) and violations of economic, social and cultural rights (e.g., exploitation of an EEZ and the resulting undermining of local livelihoods, cultural practices and food security). Conservation International is at different stages of working with the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Samoa to conduct risk-based assessments of the human rights implications of tuna fishing.

Panel session: A productive ocean

Moderator: Tim Adams, Fisheries Management Consultant

Objective: To capture ideas and issues arising from the first four days of PIOC relating to "A productive ocean" – one of the UN Decade of Ocean outcomes and an outcome dimension of the Pacific Community Ocean Flagship.

This session was not structured around panellists; instead, the moderator delivered an introductory presentation followed by an open discussion with participants.

The session on "A productive ocean" considered "production" sectors only and did not include tourism and shipping, which use the ocean but do not extract tradable commodities from it.

- In the context of productive oceans, the fisheries sector dominates the discussions. Industrial fishing is now a mature sector with no further growth potential. Most fisheries in the region have reached their target sustainable production levels. However, oceanic fisheries still have considerable additional economic development potential for Pacific Islands by continuing to replace distant water fishing fleets with locally-owned or flagged vessels and by increased processing of tuna at appropriate hubs in the region instead of in Asia and Latin America – all without needing an increase in total catch. There is an encouraging upward trend in both activities across the region.
- Coastal fisheries remain very important for food security and rural livelihoods. Still, most governments and national and regional institutions are essential to the sustainable management and rehabilitation of these fisheries. The region has a long history of exploring alternative sources to supplement coastal fisheries production (aquaculture, coastal FADs, deep reef-slope fisheries, etc.), but this does not replace the need to ramp up support for effective and sustainable 100% management of existing reef and lagoon food sources.
- Aquaculture, by contrast, offers real growth potential. Inland freshwater systems have shown that simple, low-input methods can boost productivity and reduce reliance on external resources. However, compared with Asia, the Pacific Islands region has yet to realise much of the blue expansion potential of marine aquaculture (mariculture), mainly due to economic factors and, in some cases, natural environmental constraints (particularly storm-related). Development is currently focused on high-value products such as penaeid shrimp, those that do not require supplementary feed (e.g., mussels, oysters and seaweed), and those that require both (e.g., black pearls). High initial investment costs often limit access for individuals and small businesses in the Pacific. Public incentives could support private initiatives, provided the cost-benefit of projects is realistically assessed.
- Several marine technology developments that are not directly concerned with extracting commodities from the ocean were also discussed, including seawater air-conditioning using cold water from the deep sea – now in place at three sites in French Polynesia, including a hospital. The economic and climate-mitigation potential, as well as the largely unknown risks, of large-scale oceanic carbon sequestration were discussed.
- There are also questions about the impact of the optimised management of oceanic fisheries on coastal populations that exploit these resources using traditional methods. Coastal reef fisheries are already depleted and increasingly vulnerable to climate change, necessitating greater attention and support.

- Other productive ocean sectors are also emerging. Among these are deep-sea minerals, the exploitation of which is the subject of growing debate, with widely divergent views across countries. However, these debates sometimes obscure the fact that, by volume, the primary material mined is sand and gravel. This is particularly critical in the context of sea-level rise. At least one Pacific Island country has considered deep-sea mining a practical economic diversification option amid pandemic travel restrictions. Still, others note that ecosystem risks could be profound and that assessing potential risks is expensive.
- Finally, as the carbon market matures and sets a price on carbon sequestration, we are beginning to see the emergence of a global marine carbon dioxide removal (MCDR) industry, with the Pacific Ocean's vast surface likely to attract global industrial initiatives for carbon sequestration.
- It was noted that this session could have benefited not just from science, technical and policy input, but also from more economics and social science to bring perspectives on community and stakeholder values. All are needed to inform national governance of ocean production sectors. Without access to comprehensive analysis and information, governments sometimes commit to things they have no real chance of delivering. There is also a continuing need for better explanation of issues, research results, technical advice and government activities to stakeholders.

A predictable and safe ocean

According to the Ocean Decade, a predictable and safe ocean is defined as:

"The ocean remains largely unexplored and is vulnerable to climate change and to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Better data, forecasting, early-warning systems, and a better understanding of ocean systems are vital for adaptive management and risk reduction to protect communities and economies".

Advancing ocean observations for climate resilience

Moderator: Bipen Prakash, Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System Coordinator, SPC

Objectives: The session showcased innovative ocean observation technologies and initiatives in the Pacific Islands. It highlighted partnerships and capacity-building efforts that support regional monitoring. Discussions identified gaps, challenges and opportunities to improve ocean observations for climate resilience. The goal was to raise awareness and generate recommendations for future collaboration and funding.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The 2026 GO-SHIP P15S voyage will conduct repeat full-depth, multi-disciplinary ocean observations along the 170°W line to track long-term environmental and biological changes and improve climate models. It will run in two legs: from Fiji toward the Equator, and from New Zealand toward the South Pole, with opportunities for Pacific Early Career Ocean Professionals to participate.
- The Pacific Partnership project is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-led effort to strengthen ocean observing capacity in the Pacific Islands, particularly Federated States of Micronesia, by combining technical and cultural approaches to deliver locally relevant data for climate adaptation and storm surge planning. It includes deploying instruments, training programs and regional collaboration to ensure sustainable networks and careers.

- The SPC's Fishing Vessel Observing Network (FVON) leverages tuna fishing vessels to collect subsurface ocean temperature data, filling gaps in traditional systems and improving climate models and forecasts. This initiative enhances cyclone prediction, fisheries management and resource planning while delivering industry benefits, including training and real-time data tools.
- Backyard Buoys is a co-designed programme that equips Indigenous and remote coastal communities with affordable wave buoys and tools to improve safety at sea in a changing climate. It promotes local autonomy, education and resilience by enabling community-led data collection and decision-making, with deployments already in Majuro, American Samoa and Guam.

Presentations

Bernadette Sloyan, Senior Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO. Multidisciplinary Ocean Observations in the Western Pacific

The 2026 GO-SHIP P15S voyage is a cornerstone activity for repeated multidisciplinary ocean observations along the 170°W line. The objectives of the Global Ocean Ship-based Hydrographic Investigations Program (GO-SHIP) are to collect full-depth measurements to identify drivers of environmental and biological change, explore interactions across ocean systems, and extend baseline datasets for calibrating autonomous platforms and improving Earth system models. The programme operates on a decadal repeat cycle, reoccupying reference lines to detect long-term trends and variability.

Leg 1 of the 2026 P15S voyage will depart Fiji on 29 September 2026, towards the Equator, and arrive in New Zealand on 9 September 2026. Leg 2 will leave New Zealand on 14 November 2026 for the pole and arrive in Australia on 19 December 2026. An expression of interest to participate in the voyage will be issued to Pacific Early Career Ocean Professionals soon.

Cheyenne Stienbarger, TPOS and Extreme Events Program Manager, NOAA. Pacific Partnerships for Ocean Observing & Capacity Building

The Pacific Partnership project is a NOAA-led initiative supported by The Ocean Foundation's Ocean Science Equity Initiative (EquiSea) and the Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS) that aims to build long-term ocean observing capacity in the Pacific Islands, especially in the Federated States of Micronesia. The initiative combines technical and cultural approaches to deliver locally relevant data on tides, currents, and sea-level rise, while supporting climate adaptation and storm-surge planning. Key milestones include regional workshops, fellowship programmes and the appointment of a local coordinator.

Planned actions include deploying buoys, tide gauges and uncrewed systems, as well as training and knowledge transfer with SPC, PacIOOS and other partners. More than 70 stakeholders have helped identify priority needs to ensure the long-term sustainability of equipment and careers. Future efforts aim to reinforce observing networks and maintain collaborative momentum to address critical weather and climate challenges.

Cynthia Wickham, FVON Coordinator, SPC. Collaborating with Tuna Vessels for Ocean Data Collection

The Fishing Vessel Observing Network (FVON), introduced by SPC, uses commercial tuna fishing vessels as Ships of Opportunity to collect subsurface ocean temperature data, filling gaps in existing systems such as Argo floats. SPC is partnering with the University of the New South Wales (UNSW), the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS) and the Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System (PIGOOS) to install temperature sensors on tuna fishing vessels across Pacific Island countries to capture temperature profiles, thereby supporting fisheries management and improving weather

forecasts. Data is quality-checked, anonymised and shared through global networks to improve climate models and operational forecasts. Pacific nations benefit through enhanced cyclone prediction, resource planning and informed tuna management, while industry gains free calibration, training and strategic insights. Recent developments include real-time data applications and cross-border data sharing, reinforcing FVON's role in advancing ocean science and resilience.

Kelley Anderson Tagarino, American Samoa Community College, Hawaii Sea Grant & PacIOOS Liaison Officer, American Samoa. Backyard Buoys: meeting coastal Indigenous community needs for wave data through co-design and co-production
Backyard Buoys is a community-driven programme that provides wave data to Indigenous and remote coastal communities in the Pacific Islands, Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. The programme addresses the lack of accessible wave data needed for safe navigation at sea in a changing climate. Using affordable Sofar Spotter buoys and co-design principles, the initiative enables communities to deploy and maintain their own systems, supported by multilingual apps and education programmes.

The project fosters trust and autonomy with Indigenous partners from the outset. Outcomes include community-led buoy operations, integration of wave data into decision-making and youth engagement in ocean science. Buoys have been deployed in Majuro, American Samoa and Guam, with additional deployments planned. Lessons learned emphasise relationships, iterative co-production and sustainability to ensure long-term resilience and climate adaptation.

Strengthening early warning systems (ews) in the pacific: innovations, barriers and opportunities

Moderators: Herve Damlamian, Team leader, oceanography (SPC) and Zulfikar Begg, Project Manager, Climate and Oceans Support Program (SPC)

Objective: To raise awareness on innovative approaches to strengthening EWS in the region and foster knowledge sharing towards identifying barriers and opportunities to meet EWS-related national and regional aspirations.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Early warning systems require several components: access to disaster risk knowledge; detection and warning services; dissemination and communication; and adequate response capabilities were highlighted as the key components of early warning systems.
- Presentations discussed efforts to predict swell-induced coastal inundation in Solomon Islands; use of mechanical learning (AI-assisted) modelling to accelerate forecasting of coastal flooding events; and developing models to correlate hazard data with post-disaster impact data to build nationally tailored vulnerability/damage functions.
- Discussions highlighted the need for localised data that enable models to work at a higher resolution and better reflect the reality of a small island.
- Challenges faced by Pacific Islands countries have included the lack of relevant, updated data, which are often too costly to manage/update.

Presentations

Lenny Konamauri, Research Officer, Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS). Swell Wave and Inundation – a case study of the Solomon Islands, January 22–24, 2024
Many Pacific islands are highly vulnerable to swell events, which cause flooding and significant damage to homes and infrastructure. Work is underway in the Solomon Islands to predict these events by analysing conditions during the early development of specific historical events. The research process has been outlined.

Solomon Islands proposed a process for early warning for coastal inundation:

- Observe sea level data, especially during the boreal winter
- Employ satellite and NWP analysis
- Employ the Copernicus marine wave forecast dataset for wave observations based on thresholds observed for past events

However, the challenge is the lack of historical data. Early warning for swell events is constrained by legislation and limited public awareness.

Moritz Wandres, Physical Oceanographer, SPC. Predicting Coastal Flooding on Reef-Fronted Islands Using a Deep-Learning Based Surrogate Model
Not all Pacific meteorological services have the right tools to predict coastal flooding caused by systems other than local tropical cyclones, including:

- Remote tropical cyclones that generate waves
- Extratropical cyclones causing sporadic waves to hit the beach

Various models are available for inundation modelling; however, they are computationally expensive. AI (machine learning) is being used to develop a model based on historical wave conditions and to accelerate forecasting. The model produced forecasts within one hour for the next seven days, providing inundation expectations for specific areas of a small island (Niue). The key to effective mechanical learning is the validity of the data collected.

Orisi Naivalurua, Project Implementation Officer, SPC. Building National Systems for Ocean Hazard Risk and Damage Assessment in the Pacific
The Pacific Risk Tools for Resilience Phase 2/2+ (PaRTneR 2.2+) is strengthening national capacity to enhance risk-informed decision-making, leveraging decades of investment in hazard and exposure data. National-scale tools have been developed to assess coastal inundation risk under climate change and sea-level rise. These tools estimate population exposure and economic impact across key sectors (e.g. infrastructure, agriculture, health).

A Tropical Cyclone Rapid Impact Assessment Tool provides wind- and inundation-hazard and impact estimates within 24–48 hours post-event to support emergency response and recovery and improves loss and damage (L&D) quantification by integrating hazard and impact data. Persistent challenges include coarse hazard data, incomplete and costly exposure databases, and vulnerability models that lack local relevance. Priority actions include investing in high-resolution LiDAR and bathymetry data, strengthening asset valuation and conducting post-event surveys to develop context-specific vulnerability and damage functions to support more accurate, resilient risk assessments.

Faoliu Teakau, Assistant Environmental Officer, Tuvalu Meteorological Service. Flipping the Script: Community Values Define Coastal Inundation Risk Assessments
The Tuvalu Meteorological Services has adopted an approach that incorporates community values into coastal inundation risk assessment and uses LiDAR data to understand Tuvalu's infrastructure and assets. Some limitations to the model have been identified and are being addressed. These include changes in building locations and asset differentiation (e.g., cemeteries/pigpens and households).

Vensel Margraff, PhD researcher, University of Auckland. Exploring lessons learnt from past tsunamis: An Agent-based Assessment of Tsunami Resilience in PICs: Case Study Communities in Samoa
Despite significant advances in early-warning technology and resilience science, many Pacific coastal communities continue to face the same vulnerabilities. Regarding tsunami resilience, there is limited literature contextualised for the Pacific islands and little recognition of non-economic loss and damage, or of meaningful community engagement. Globally, risk is often prioritised over resilience, leading to a focus on minimising damage rather than building stronger communities.

The Tsunami Resilience of Pacific Island Countries (TRoPIC) Toolkit aims to provide an accessible, validated resource that can be adapted for other Pacific Islands countries and, eventually, for other coastal hazards. The toolkit includes a protocol for engaging resilience assessment work with cultural communities and an assessment protocol to evaluate baseline and strengthened resilience using a hybrid agent-based GIS model. The model is an agent-based simulation of a community comprising multiple actors (people, institutions, infrastructure and tsunami waves).

Climate and open ocean science

Moderator: Moritz Wandres, Physical Oceanographer, SPC

Objectives:

- Advance high-resolution, locally relevant ocean and climate monitoring to address data gaps in Pacific Island contexts.
- Strengthen scientific understanding of ocean dynamics (sea level, waves, currents, climate variability) to inform adaptation and resilience planning.
- Build decision-support tools and models that enable communities, policymakers and researchers to anticipate and respond to climate-driven coastal hazards.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Scientific understanding of climate change impacts on small island states is being improved by monitoring of sea level, waves, currents, climate variability and extreme events.
- Improving local data collection, tailored to smaller Pacific Island countries, is essential to bridging the gap between global datasets and regional realities.
- High-resolution 3D ocean modelling (CROCO) developed for small island nations like Niue to support safer seas and climate resilience.
- Flagship simulations downscaling CMIP6 projections to EEZ and island scales for improved climate planning.
- Tropical cyclone climatology analysis is showing increasing trends in Category 4 and 5 cyclones.

- WHACS: A next-gen global wave hindcast model focused on extremes and spectral reconstruction.
- Enhanced modelling of marine heatwaves, island effects and coastal hazards to support national adaptation plans.
- Community-supported Ocean data networks in American Samoa for sea-level rise planning.
- 44-year hindcast of Fiji's wave climate using the SWAN model for adaptation planning.
- There is a need to continue model refinement and validation using in-situ data; expand regional training and deployments of ocean sensors; integrate models and data products into national planning and emergency response; and promote open access to ocean data via platforms like the Ocean Portal.

Presentations

Thibault Delahaye and Anne Lou, Research Engineers, IRD. Ocean Downscaling Simulations at High-Resolution for Pacific Islands with the CROCO model in the Climate Change Flagship framework
Downscaling CMIP6 climate projections to EEZ and island scales (from ~100 km to ~2 km resolution).

EEZ-scale data are often required to support fisheries management (e.g., tuna). Understanding how tropical cyclones and extreme waves will evolve under ongoing and future climate change is crucial for public policy and national adaptation plans.

Globally available data (IPCC projections) show that a changing climate impacts coral reefs. The Climate Change Flagship enables regional simulations of the ocean and atmosphere at the scale of the Pacific Islands EEZ to support future projections and inform countries' adaptation plans (e.g., impacts of marine heat waves).

Claudia Gabriel Mayorga Adame, Oceanographer, SPC Navigating Climate Change: How High-Resolution 3D Ocean Models Support Safer Seas, Fisheries Management, and Climate Resilience—A Niue Case Study
Development of flagship high-resolution ocean and atmosphere simulations tailored for Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). High-resolution 3D ocean modelling (CROCO) for small island nations such as Niue has been developed to support safer seas, fisheries management and climate resilience. Future plans include refining and integrating it into the ocean portal.

Moleni Tu'uholoaki, Ocean Science Officer, SPC. Climatology of Tropical Cyclones in the Southwest Pacific
Tropical cyclone (TC) climatology, a comprehensive analysis of TC variability and trends, was conducted for the Southwest Pacific using multi-decadal datasets (1970–2024). The study identifies regional TC hotspots, genesis zones and intensity trends, with a focus on ENSO phases and their influence, often highlighting the increasing trend in Category 4 and 5 cyclones despite a slight decrease in total TC numbers. The analysis is of regional relevance, covering 13 Pacific Island countries and territories.

Grant Smith, Oceanographer, Bureau of Meteorology, Australia. WHACS: Global Wave Hindcast for the Australian Climate Service with focus on Extremes
WHACS is a next-generation global wave hindcast model focused on extremes and spectral reconstruction. WHACS incorporates enhanced extreme wind calibration, superior wave-model physics, improved accuracy, increased spectral outputs, higher global coastline resolution and cutting-

edge spectral reconstruction. It is recommended that WHACS be adopted for coastal hazard modelling and climate resilience planning. WHACS outputs could be used for downscaling projects, especially in Pacific EEZs.

Lency Muna, Doctoral Researcher, University of New Caledonia. Spatial and Temporal Wave Climate Variability and Trends in Fiji: Insights from Four Decades of Hindcast Data

Wave inundation in Fiji has resulted in a loss of 10–15 m of coastline over recent decades. The assessment output includes Fiji's first high-resolution, multi-decadal (44-year) hindcast of its wave climate, generated with the SWAN model. The data provide spatial and temporal insights into wave climate variability and long-term trends, which are crucial for coastal adaptation and planning. This information is not only nationally relevant but also of regional significance, as the derived data and insights are applicable across the Pacific Islands for coastal planning.

Kelley Anderson Tagarino, University of Hawaii Sea Grant Extension Agent of American Samoa Community College. Community Supported Ocean Data
NOAA data confirmed that an earthquake increased sea-level rise in Pago Pago, which required integrating subsidence data, tide gauges, reef-crest monitoring and wave modelling to build a localised understanding of relative sea-level rise (RSLR) as well as the use of interactive sea-level rise viewers to visualise future flooding scenarios. Opportunities and lessons learned include using local tide gauge installations and reef-crest monitoring to improve the precision of sea-level assessments. These interactive tools empower communities to visualise and plan for future flooding. The strategic collaboration across agencies (UHSLC, NOAA, NASA, PacIOOS) enhances data quality and accessibility.

Information portals and databases

Moderator: Zulfikar Begg, Project Manager, Climate and Oceans Support Program, SPC

Objective: To highlight innovations in ocean and environmental data platforms, demonstrate practical applications of information systems, promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing, inspire action through case studies, and explore pathways for sustainability and scaling up.

Key discussions and takeaways

The range of presentations in this session highlighted the value of a wide variety of databases and discussed work undertaken to improve their accessibility and use.

- SPC introduced a regional Oceanographic Data Management System applying FAIR principles to harmonise fragmented datasets, improve accessibility and support long-term data governance.
- Capacity building includes training on SOPs and dashboard tools.
- The Pacific Ocean Portal V2.0 is a modernised, cloud-hosted platform offering real-time, forecast and historical ocean data. It supports regional decision-making and climate resilience, with emphasis on portability for training and national customisation.
- WWF's ShellBank project is applying genetic traceability to track marine turtle populations, aiding conservation and enforcement. It includes DNA toolkits and open-access databases, with strong community engagement and regional collaboration.
- SPC's use of Kobo Toolbox and participatory mapping workshops empowers Pacific women and girls in geospatial science. It blends traditional knowledge with digital tools to foster community-driven climate-resilience planning.

- Digital Earth Pacific (DEP) leverages satellite imagery to monitor mangroves and seagrasses. It offers scalable, cost-effective tools for ecosystem management and climate reporting, with a focus on national integration and stakeholder engagement.

Presentations

Gregoire Salles, Scientific Researcher. Bridging the Data Gap: Advancing Ocean Data Access in the Pacific
SPC has developed an oceanographic data management system, a regional platform that consolidates, discovers and manages oceanographic datasets across the Pacific. The system enables metadata discovery and supports data governance. Metadata standards are based on international conventions (e.g., the CF Conventions and ISO 19115). The work includes developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for data processing and archiving that align with community best practices. It applies FAIR principles (findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability) to ocean data to harmonise fragmented datasets and improve long-term data accessibility and utility.

Divesh Anuj, Systems Developer, Oceans Prediction and Monitoring, SPC. From Collaboration to Action: Unlocking Ocean Information Through Pacific Ocean Portal V2
The revamped Pacific Ocean Portal Version 2.0 is a modernised, cloud-hosted, containerised platform that provides real-time, forecast and historical ocean data to support decision-making and regional collaboration. Data types include real-time tide, sea level, wave, weather, chlorophyll, coral bleaching alerts, salinity and sea surface temperature (SST).

Within the region, the portal enables access to regional data and supports decision-making through a centralised system. In contrast, at the national level, countries can access tailored data for national planning and climate resilience. The Pacific Ocean Portal Version 2.0 was officially launched at an evening side event during the conference.

Michael Paul Jensen, Marine Biologist, WWF Australia. Strengthening Regional Turtle Conservation through ShellBank: A Genetic Traceability Toolkit to Understand Population Structure and Connectivity
ShellBank is a genetic traceability toolkit and global DNA database for marine turtles. The platform uses DNA as a natural tag to trace the origin and connectivity of turtle populations, supporting conservation, enforcement and community management. The innovation lies in applying genetics to conservation and wildlife crime, enabling cross-border insights into turtle movements and trade. Gaps include limited baseline data on hawksbill, leatherback and olive ridley turtles—there are connectivity gaps in understanding migratory routes and nesting origins.

Zahrah Ali, GIS Technical Assistant, SPC. Using the Kobo toolbox to support Women in Mapping
KoboToolbox, a free and open-source data collection tool, is currently being utilised to empower Pacific women in geospatial mapping. The innovation lies in combining participatory mapping with digital tools to support community-driven data collection, especially in climate-affected areas. KoboToolbox utilises mobile field data collection and enables real-time capture of environmental, social and livelihood data. It also uses QGIS for spatial data analysis and visualisation. Opportunities to use this platform include blending traditional knowledge with digital tools to enrich mapping outputs. Community ownership of data and maps fosters sustainability.

Shyam Lodhia, Geographic Information Systems Officer (GIZ) and Nicholas Metherall, Hydrologist (SPC). Monitoring Pacific Blue Carbon Ecosystems through Digital Earth Pacific
Digital Earth Pacific (DEP) is a cloud-based earth and marine observation platform that monitors blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves and seagrasses) across Pacific Island countries. DEP transforms

satellite imagery into user-friendly, standardised and regionally consistent products to support climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

DEP is powered by Microsoft's Planetary Computer, which provides access to over 750,000 satellite images and processes 500 TB of data. Information derived from the database includes mangrove and seagrass extent maps (2017–2024); coastline change analysis (22 years, 34,000 km); water observations from space (WoFS) (11 years); and satellite-derived bathymetry (0–30m depth). Data gaps include areas that lack sufficient historical or high-resolution data. DEP enables temporal and spatial change detection for coastal ecosystems and supports climate reporting, policy development and rehabilitation planning.

Ocean acidification (OA) dialogue in the Pacific: Policy science

Moderator: Lindon Havimana, Senior Lecturer (Solomon Islands National University) and Aleuia Taise, Research Manager (National University of Samoa)

Objective: To develop clearer pathways for embedding OA monitoring into policy frameworks.

Key discussions and takeaways

- OA has crossed the planetary boundary, posing risks to ecosystems, food security and economies. Unlike coral bleaching, the impacts of OA are not immediately visible but will be profound once fully realised.
- Policy integration, capacity building (PIOAC), traditional knowledge, youth engagement and development of practical tools will enable improved action.
- Key gaps identified were data availability, research prioritisation and sustained funding for Pacific-driven initiatives.
- Ongoing research and monitoring are necessary to understand OA and its impacts. However, immediate action is needed, and OA should be integrated into policies and initiatives that build resilience, such as coral reef protection and effective marine resource management.

Presentations

Kim Currie, Consultant, Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC). The Global context for OA monitoring: GOA-ON, PI-TOA, and OARS programmes
Ocean acidification (OA) has crossed the planetary boundary and moved into the risk phase. Marine life is at risk of dying out. The Global Ocean Acidification Network (GOA-ON) focuses on improving our understanding of global OA conditions, enhancing understanding of ecosystem responses to OA, and acquiring and exchanging the data and knowledge required to optimise forecasts of OA and its impacts.

Katy Soapi, Coordinator for partnerships and engagement at PCCOS (SPC). Building Pacific capacity and resilience to ocean acidification: partnerships, progress, and the path ahead As the ocean becomes more acidic, the risk and impact on marine ecosystems, the economy, and livelihoods increase. The Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC) serves as a hub for capacity building, training and knowledge exchange. It provides technical support and access to monitoring equipment for Pacific islands scientists and stakeholders. Partnership and collaboration are the main stronghold of the PIOAC – data collected must be shared. There is also a need to focus on sensor repair and maintenance support.

Salesa Nihmei, Director, Climate Science and Information, SPREP. Mainstreaming OA into National Policies

SPREP's work has focused on embedding OA into broader policy frameworks. Resource materials available from SPREP include 'Mainstreaming Ocean Acidification into National Policies: A Handbook for Pacific Islands' and 'Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Vulnerability Assessment'. Current research includes the Regional OA Vulnerability Assessment and the Vulnerability Assessment of Pelagic Fisheries. The research/information informs Pacific negotiators at the UNFCCC COP. Collaboration is key, and we need to engage young people in projects to secure long-term contributions and integrate traditional knowledge into the definition of OA to ensure its relevance. A collaboration with NZPPOA (New Zealand) on aquaculture and OA adaptation measures was noted.

Christina McGraw, Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Otago. Commonwealth Policymakers' Handbook for Addressing the Impacts of Ocean Acidification

A policy handbook to address the impacts of ocean acidification has been developed by the Commonwealth Ocean Acidification Action Group. The handbook provides a framework for developing region-specific actions and strategies, with case studies from across the Pacific.

Ocean acidification (OA) dialogue: Country perspectives and Pacific horizon scan

Moderator: Rachel Hale, Benthic Ecologist and Marine Biogeochemist, Earth Sciences New Zealand and Jill Balindu, ECOP, Papua New Guinea

Objective: To provide an opportunity for Pacific Islands countries and territories to share lessons learned from OA monitoring and learn from one another and from other OA monitoring experts.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Countries share their experiences in monitoring ocean acidification, including lessons learned and challenges faced.
- OA monitoring is emerging but fragile. Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Samoa have begun OA monitoring with GOA-ON kits, sensors and buoys, but programmes remain new and vulnerable to capacity loss and equipment failure.
- Technical capacity and maintenance are key bottlenecks. Limited expertise in instrument use, calibration and maintenance, along with the absence of local spare parts, threatens the continuity and quality of time series (e.g., Vanuatu).
- Partnerships are driving progress. Collaboration with SPC/PIOAC and international partners (e.g., KIOST, NIWA) has been essential to initiate OA monitoring and align it with global processes, including SDG 14.3.1.
- Data use and reporting are the next frontier. Countries are now working to submit OA data to the SDG 14.3.1 portal, embed OA information in national decision-making and use case studies and awareness-raising to build political support.

Presentations

Merianne Tabius, Technician, University of the South Pacific, Vanuatu Campus. Ocean Acidification Monitoring in Vanuatu – country perspective

OA monitoring in Vanuatu using the GOA-ON kit enabled the successful collection of alkalinity and pH data via spectrophotometry from February 2019 to March 2020 (Raw data). A challenge in using the

GOA-ON kit is that the analyst has limited knowledge of instrument use and maintenance, and few to no spare parts are sold locally.

Wycliff Tupiti, Resource Policy Analyst, Solomon Islands Government. Ocean Acidification Monitoring in Solomon Islands – country perspective

The application of the GOA-ON kit in the Solomon Islands has been successful, with the next step being to submit data to the UN portal. Plans include confirming government support, establishing the Solomon Islands National University OA Monitoring & Research Hub and building capacity for relevant stakeholders.

Azaria Pickering, Ocean Monitoring and Technical Officer, SPC. Ocean Acidification Monitoring in Fiji – country perspective

In Fiji, the ISAMI pH and CTD Sensor has been deployed in Suva, with discrete water samples collected monthly. Fiji is one of nine countries in the region that monitor OA using a GOA-ON kit. Next steps are: expand monitoring to include biological studies; adopt a case study approach to the impacts of OA on pearl oysters in Fiji; raise awareness of ocean monitoring devices; collaborate with relevant stakeholders; and explore opportunities for future funding.

Aleluia Taise, Research Manager (National University of Samoa). Ocean Acidification Monitoring in Samoa – country perspective

Samoa has adopted the use of the GOA-ON kit and ocean buoy, and has established a partnership (MOU) with the Korean Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST). Further plans include continuing to collect OA data for submission to SDG14.3.

Manibua Rota, Fisheries Officer, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development, Kiribati. Ocean Acidification Monitoring in Kiribati – country perspective

In Kiribati, there is no direct OA data collection; instead, efforts have shifted to the rehabilitation and restoration of coral reefs, seagrasses and mangroves. Planned OA monitoring is within MPAs and the coral rehabilitation sites.

Ocean acidification dialogue: Abstract presentations

Moderator: Azaria Pickering, Ocean Monitoring and Technical Officer, SPC and Miri Vuiyasawa, Ocean Monitoring and Technical Assistant, SPC

Objective: To improve understanding of technical and practical challenges in OA monitoring and strengthen knowledge sharing.

Key discussions and takeaways

The session on OA dialogue discusses countries' OA mobilisation activities, which continue with data collection and the identification of mitigation responses, supported by national governments. Various techniques have been adopted to monitor OA, each with its own advantages and challenges.

Presentations

Meagan Gary, Programme manager, The Ocean Foundation. Advancing marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR) capacity throughout the Pacific Islands

The Ocean Foundation is exploring ways to mitigate ocean acidification by enhancing natural processes of marine carbon dioxide removal (mCDR). The ocean can take up carbon through the solubility cycle, abiotic processes that involve carbonate chemistry, or the biological cycle involving photosynthesis.

Aleluia Taise, Research Manager, National University of Samoa. Variation of carbon chemistry in identified MPAs in Samoa

At the Savaia village MPA in Upolu, Samoa, local-scale OA monitoring is revealing how variable carbon chemistry can be used across a small reef system. Using iSAMI sensors and CO2SYS modelling, the team documented significant pH differences between sites, with direct implications for aquaculture and reef health. The work demonstrates how community-based science can generate high-quality data to inform national OA strategies, while also highlighting the need for sustained monitoring, follow-up laboratory experiments, and supportive policies to build and sustain local research capacity.

Kim Currie, Consultant, Pacific Islands Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC). Practical Best Practices for Ocean Acidification Monitoring

Many countries and laboratories still lack the resources, instrumentation, expertise, long-term funding and affordable methodologies needed to implement and sustain ocean acidification (OA) observing programmes. To overcome these barriers, investment in capacity-building initiatives is ongoing. These include training, GOA-ON in a Box kits and Pier2Peer exchanges, as well as strong partnerships with the IAEA, IOC, The Ocean Foundation, GOA-ON, OTGA, KIOST and PIOAC. The partnerships have enabled the development of practical monitoring kits and community-reviewed SOPs, available in multiple languages, making OA observations accessible to non-specialists and expanding equitable access to OA science. These efforts strengthen local evidence for policy and management, contribute to regional and global understanding of OA trends and support countries in reporting on SDG 14.3. Our vision is for Pacific scientists to be fully empowered and recognised as active contributors to the global OA research community.

Rachel Hale, Benthic Ecologist and Marine Biogeochemist, Earth Science New Zealand. Future actions for the ocean acidification research community to support marine industries and coastal communities of Aotearoa New Zealand

The OA research community in New Zealand is supporting marine industries and coastal communities by re-engaging with policymakers and updating the 2016 OA draft Action Plan. A second priority is to maintain funding for current observation platforms, such as NZOA-ON, which is assessing 30 sites across New Zealand and is linked to GOA-ON. Within the NZOA-ON, the Munida Transect Time-Series, established in 1998, is the Southern Hemisphere's longest-running record of pH measurements, with water samples collected from eight stations along a 65 km transect every two months. Priority Action 3 involves a focus on solutions during engagement actions and, last but not least, continued funding for OA research.

Charity Lee, Principal Research Specialist at Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST). KIOST Contributions to Pacific Islands: Focus on OA monitoring

The Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST) assisted in the monitoring of OA in the Pacific, including in Chuuk in Federated States of Micronesia, Koror in Palau and Samoa. In Chuuk, operations focus solely on data collection by KIOST and NOAA, with local permission, and do not include capacity-building components. Samoa's approach contrasts with Palau's, prioritising local capacity for water analysis using GOA-ON and VINDTA equipment provided by KIOST. The goal is to establish a self-sufficient, self-sustaining Samoan national OA monitoring program led by the SAMET-NUS collaboration with minimal external support.

Panel: A predictable and safe ocean

Moderator: Herve Damlamian, Team Leader Ocean Prediction and Monitoring, SPC

Objectives:

- Highlight regional efforts in ocean forecasting, maritime safety and disaster preparedness.
- Explore institutional coordination across sectors for ocean-related risk reduction.
- Elevate inclusive practices that ensure ocean safety systems serve all, especially vulnerable populations.
- Recognise and address loss and damage from ocean hazards as a cross-cutting issue in the Pacific.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration towards safer coastal communities.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Strengthening people-centred ocean-related early warning capacity to support navigational safety, coastal community resilience, sound medium to long-term climate change adaptation strategies and loss and damage initiatives.

Speakers

Agnes Gaote'e, Deputy Director Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (SIMA)

Salesa Nihmei, Director Climate Services and Information, SPREP

Alick Haruhiru, Director Solomon Islands Meteorological Services (SIMS)

Casper Joseph Fa'asala, CEO of the Disabled People's Association of Solomon Islands

Summary

The Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS), represented by Director Alick Haruhiru, highlighted its core role in strengthening ocean safety through prediction and monitoring services that enable mariners and coastal communities to make life-saving decisions. Alick, together with Deputy Director Agnes from the Solomon Islands Maritime Authority (SIMA), emphasised the strong institutional partnership between SIMA and SIMS, anchored by a Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration supports navigational safety and compliance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). SIMS currently utilises critical tools such as real-time tide gauges and wave buoys and is preparing to launch an ocean portal to provide timely warnings for ocean hazards. However, key challenges remain, including bridging the gap between global forecasts and localised, impact-based services. Alick called for investments in high-resolution data, such as LiDAR, to develop localised and actionable forecasting and enhance warning services. He also stressed the need to improve feedback mechanisms to validate forecasts against observed impacts and to strengthen national and regional ocean monitoring networks and the systematic recording of hazard impacts as priorities for improving forecast accuracy and warning effectiveness.

Agnes reinforced Alick's point that improved ocean prediction is essential to enhanced warning services and risk-informed decision-making for mariners. Agnes noted that forecasting is only one aspect of creating a "safe ocean". Meaningful change requires a holistic approach: even the best ocean forecast system becomes ineffective unless information reaches the intended audience, is understood, is tailored to their needs and triggers appropriate actions. Agnes highlighted the collaborative

approach between SIMA and SIMS to sustain key ocean monitoring stations and advance the Solomon Islands' compliance with SOLAS standards.

From a regional perspective, Salesa Nihmei, Director of Climate Information Services at SPREP, acknowledged SPC's leadership in supporting strengthened ocean services within National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and its role in convening the Pacific Islands Marine and Ocean Service (PIMOS) expert panel. Salesa emphasised Solomon Islands' leadership in advancing NMHS progress toward SOLAS compliance, noting that SIMA Director Thierry Nerval has been leading the PIMOS task team on SOLAS compliance and guiding the development of a checklist to help NMHSs prepare for International Maritime Organisation audits. He emphasised that compliance with SOLAS Chapter 5 is a key function of NMHSs, particularly for Pacific Island countries, which are large ocean states. Salesa also highlighted the Weather Ready Pacific programme, a decadal initiative endorsed by Pacific Forum Leaders, which aims to transform NMHS services—including ocean prediction and monitoring—into sustainable, high-quality and fit-for-purpose systems.

Casper Joseph Fa'asala, CEO of the Disabled People's Association of Solomon Islands (DPASI), highlighted the importance of people-centred services. He emphasised that lifesaving services must be usable, useful and used, and called for meaningful engagement with vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, through associations like DPASI. "To be effective, lifesaving services cannot be designed without us," he stated. Casper highlighted a promising pilot project developed in partnership by SIMS, SIMA and DPASI that converts forecast and warning products into a flag system to improve the accessibility and dissemination of ocean safety information. While acknowledging progress, he noted that the journey toward comprehensive, people-centred services in the Solomon Islands is only beginning and will require sustained effort.

In conclusion, the panel identified several key priorities: investing in high-resolution data such as LiDAR for localised forecasting; strengthening feedback loops to validate forecasts against observed impacts; sustaining ocean monitoring stations and networks; ensuring SOLAS compliance across Pacific NMHSs; and engaging vulnerable communities in the design and delivery of ocean safety services.

A clean, healthy and resilient ocean

According to the Ocean Decade, a clean, healthy, and resilient ocean is defined as one in which sources of pollution are identified and eliminated, and marine ecosystems are comprehensively mapped, protected and able to withstand environmental pressures.

Discovering, monitoring and assessing coral reefs

Moderators: Juney Ward, Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Adviser (SPREP) and Nicolas Rocle, Marine Environment and Conservation Specialist (SPREP)

Objective: Share key research findings and monitoring results on Pacific coral reefs and identify priority knowledge gaps and recommendations, including input to regional conservation and management efforts.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Coral communities living under extreme conditions offer valuable insights into coral responses to environmental variability and the adaptive potential of corals facing climate change.
- Identifying and protecting refugia is a key conservation priority that could also progress the 30 x 30 conservation target.

- Mesophotic reefs (30–150 m depth) act as refuges for shallow-water species during disturbances such as climate change and may help reseed and replenish degraded shallow reefs. Research by the InkFish programme is advancing knowledge on the processes that shape reef biodiversity at mesophotic depths.
- Benthic cyanobacterial mats (BCMs) are dense mats formed by some cyanobacteria. They could exacerbate reef degradation, and there is a need to monitor the growth of these cyanobacterial mats better.
- Preliminary findings from a regional assessment of coral monitoring in 11 Pacific Island countries carried out under the Pacific BioScapes Programme offer a better overview of current coral reef monitoring in each country, key gaps and constraints, as well as key recommendations to support improved coral reef monitoring and management.

Presentations

Cinzia Alessi, Aquarium Researcher, Palau International Coral Reef Centre. Extreme environmental conditions do not affect fecundity and egg size in Acropora tenuis, Montipora digitata and Manticora stellata

A study on the correlation between extreme environmental conditions and the reproductivity of three coral reef species – *Acropora tenuis*, *Montipora digitata* and *Manticora stellata* – found that extreme environments did not affect the species' fecundity. The study showed that corals that live in extreme environments can produce gametes and can reproduce; environmental variability did not affect the spawning window; and that, although (in one location) the oocytes of *A. tenuis* and *M. digitata* were smaller, they had high polyp-level fecundity.

The study concluded that coral communities living under extreme conditions offer valuable insights into coral responses to environmental variability and the adaptive potential of corals facing climate change, and that protecting these communities is therefore a key conservation priority.

Janice Taga, Coral Reef Ecologist, Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji. Identifying climate-resilient coral reefs in Fiji to advance 30 x 30 ocean conservation targets

Under projected climate change scenarios, identifying and protecting refugia is a priority for conservation because they have been shown to support the survival of biota under adverse conditions. Refugia are habitats that components of biodiversity retreat to, persist in and can potentially expand from under changing environmental conditions. WCS is supporting Fiji in advancing its 30 x 30 ocean conservation targets through a national analysis of climate-resilient reefs, informing the Fiji National Coral Reef Hub Action Plan and the implementation of Fiji's National Ocean Policy.

In total, 961 sites were surveyed. The study used the Marine Ecological Research Management Aid (MERMAID) tool to assess and track coral reef health. The findings are currently informing the development of Fiji's Coral Reef Action Plan, which is expected to be completed in 2026.

Joanne O'Callaghan, Physical Oceanographer, Oceanly Science. Uncovering the hidden biodiversity of mesophotic reef ecosystems

Climate resilient reefs (or refugia) offer the best chances of survival under climate change, making their identification important for conservation. Research by the InkFish programme is advancing knowledge of the processes that shape reef biodiversity at mesophotic depths (30–150 m). Mesophotic reefs are significant because they act as refuges for shallow-water species during disturbances, such as climate change, and may help reseed and replenish degraded shallow reefs. They

are also crucial habitats for biodiversity, supporting commercially and ecologically important fish species. Research also focused on wave processes and on mapping the seabed and coral reefs. The project seeks to collaborate with national governments and experts to design ocean expedition studies and to deliver technical, specialised training for local scientists/practitioners. The study integrates existing data/information from the national authorities to verify/inform findings. This knowledge will help identify where unique ecosystems occur, why they thrive and how best to protect them.

Kimberly Samson, Marine Scientist, Talanoa Consulting. Unpacking the problem of benthic cyanobacterial mats on coral reefs – ongoing research in Fiji

Some cyanobacteria can form dense mats over coral reefs; however, the ecological impacts of these mats are not well understood. A scientific study on benthic cyanobacterial mats (BCMs) was conducted in Fiji from 2022 to 2025. BCMs are predominantly found on reefs near sewage points. The research aimed to identify where and when BCMs proliferate and assess their association with fish stocks, corals and diversity. Previous studies indicate healthy reefs have, on average, 1% BCM coverage. This study, which assessed over 159 sites across Fiji, found that BCMs occur across all Fiji reefs at high abundance (>10% BCM coverage); they may be more abundant during the warm/wet season; and do not appear to be eaten by herbivorous fish. BCMs cause bleaching and mortality upon contact with corals.

The study recommends consistent monitoring of BCMs and treating them differently from algae, given their distinct impacts on coral health, disease and herbivory. The study also suggests that in situ studies, such as mapping BCMs using photogrammetry, are problematic and often lead to underestimates of BCM coverage.

Belinda Norris, Coastal and Marine Specialist, SPREP. Pacific coral monitoring assessment – key findings and results

The Pacific Coral Reef Monitoring review, led by SPREP, recognises the complex governance and mandates for coral reef monitoring across the environment, fisheries, NGO and community sectors. The review found a regional need to strengthen coral reef monitoring and to improve data management and storage capabilities across member countries. Gaps include limited funding availability and access, and the limited capacity and capabilities of national governments to undertake and sustain coral reef monitoring. There is a need to standardise the monitoring approach to enable meaningful comparison across locations and contexts.

Safeguarding heat-tolerant corals in a warming ocean

Moderator: Nicolas Rocle, Marine Environment and Conservation Specialist (SPREP)

Objectives: To raise awareness of ocean warming, marine heatwaves, thermal stress and coral bleaching; to discuss research findings and decision-support tools that enhance coral resilience and tolerance to thermal stress and heatwaves; and to provide examples of ongoing activities and initiatives aimed at safeguarding heat-tolerant coral reefs.

Key discussions and takeaways

Significant work is underway to identify and nurture heat-resilient corals and restore them successfully. The presentations shared progress on various initiatives, including technology-assisted mass seeding, laboratory-based selection and breeding, and community-led efforts to establish coral gardens that serve as nurseries for heat-resilient corals.

Presentations

Petra Lundgren, Environmental Consultant and Catalina Reyes-Nivia, Senior Manager, Pacific Coral Restoration (Great Barrier Reef Foundation). Decision-support tool for upscaling heat-resilient corals
The Great Barrier Reef Foundation was established in response to the mass bleaching event in 1988. The rehabilitation programme through the Reef Seeding Initiative is currently co-designed to enhance reef resilience in the Pacific by seeding over a million heat-tolerant corals annually, with ReefSeed technology as its primary component. Selecting the project sites is a critical component of success. Through a pilot development programme on the Great Barrier Reef and three Pacific restoration hubs, multiple organisations and technologies are brought together to conduct regional and national assessments, identify and develop locally appropriate solutions, and advance sustainable financing mechanisms.

Cinzia Alessi, Aquarium Researcher, Palau International Coral Reef Centre (PICRC). Enhancing thermal tolerance through selective breeding in Palau: what has been done and future directions
Research on selective coral breeding is being undertaken in collaboration with the University of Newcastle. Selective breeding (selecting specific traits that can be passed on through sexual propagation) can help coral populations face climate change through heritability of heat tolerance – heat-tolerant colonies will start bleaching later and die later than non-heat-tolerant corals. There are also weaknesses to selective breeding, including the risk of passing on genetic correlations between traits, the risk of inbreeding and high maintenance costs. One way to address this is to use mass crossing, which involves placing several colonies together to spawn. This is less labour-intensive and offers the advantage of increased genetic diversity.

The process of selective breeding (the "pipeline of activity") involves, in phase 1, collecting samples, selecting parents for heat tolerance, subjecting them to heat stress and separating the high- and low-performing corals. The second phase is spawning and crossing, followed by phase 3: larval rearing and settlement on prepared substrates or devices. The PICRC devices are designed to prevent accidental predation by fish.

Restoration activities involve placing the devices in appropriate locations and monitoring their growth. Selective breeding offers a potential solution to coral reef preservation amid climate change, but it cannot be implemented without prioritising climate mitigation.

Austin Bowden-Kerby, Founder of Coral for Conservation. Interventions to prevent impending coral species extinctions in the face of severe marine heat waves in the South Pacific
Acropora corals are the most diverse coral group and provide the foundation for coral reefs and the best fish habitats. They are also the most sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Some corals are heat-adapted (super corals) and can survive in hot water (33–35°C) without bleaching.

There have been significant bleaching events across the Pacific islands, resulting in high coral mortality.

Some of the findings include:

- Post-bleaching predation is an issue (COTS, some fish species, *Drupella* snails).
- Increasing the distance between surviving coral colonies inhibits coral reproduction.
- Damsel fish help protect bleached reefs.
- Heat resilience only evolves in areas of high thermal stress.

The strategies applied include translocating heat-adapted corals from hot to cooler waters, growing diverse genotypes together, restoring reproduction, removing post-bleaching predators, planting regeneration patches and supporting community-based protected or managed areas, community education and youth involvement.

Coral reef management and governance strategies

Moderators: Juney Ward, Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Adviser (SPREP) and Nicolas Rocle, Marine Environment and Conservation Specialist (SPREP)

Objective: To share latest initiatives, projects and outcomes regarding coral management strategies and conservation models across different Pacific locations; discuss research findings and decision-support tools to enhance coral resilience and tolerance to thermal stress and heatwaves; link research and monitoring to conservation action, including education, innovation and policy; and support coral conservation, sustainable management and restoration measures towards the 30 x 30 targets through evidence-based insights and existing governance frameworks.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Protection of coral reefs requires effective management and governance strategies.
- In Palau, a climate-innovative adaptive management framework has been co-developed with communities to protect their coral reefs.
- Fiji has established a government-endorsed advisory body – the Fiji National Hub for Coral Reef Conservation – and is developing a national coral reef Action Plan.
- Solomon Islands has a coral reef hub, which is integrated into the national coral reef triangle initiative hub.
- The University of Queensland outlined an online training platform to enable access to resources and training on coral reef/marine conservation.

Presentations

Lauren Piot, Aquarium Researcher, Palau International Coral Reef Centre (PICRC). Development of a Climate-Smart Adaptive Management Framework for Palau's Coral Reefs

Eighty percent of Palau's EEZ is protected by the Palau National Marine Sanctuary, with a fishing moratorium as needed. Palau has not experienced a mass bleaching event since 1998. It can prepare reefs for expected warming by implementing the Framework for Coral Reef Rehabilitation, co-developed with the Palau community. The climate-smart framework provides [1] Guidelines for establishing appropriate coral reef rehabilitation and [2] guidance on implementing climate-smart rehabilitation (plan, implement, monitor, learn). PICRIC is working to create an empowered workforce that can be mobilised as needed to provide education and training for restoration activities.

Neelam Bhan, Coral Reef Rescue Project Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society, Fiji. Strengthening Efforts to Safeguard Fiji's Globally Significant Coral Reefs through Fiji's National Hub for Coral Reef Conservation

The Fiji national hub is a government-endorsed advisory body that seeks to safeguard Fiji's coral reefs, including the Great Sea Reef, the third-largest barrier reef in the Southern Hemisphere. Science and community development plans inform the management. WCS is leading the Coral Reef Rescue Project in partnership with the local community, which is committed to conserving and preserving its coral

reefs. Effective and targeted communication has had a positive impact on project implementation. A national action plan for Fiji's coral reefs is being developed.

Christian Tutui Manepolo, Marine Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society, Solomon Islands. Protecting, conserving, and rescuing Solomon Islands' coral reefs.
The Coral Reef Rescue Project in the Solomon Islands aims to build capacity and develop solutions to ensure the long-term survival of coral reefs by conserving diversity and supporting communities and livelihoods. Human-induced threats to coral reefs are increasing, including pollution and sedimentation. The National Coral Reef Hub in Solomon Islands incorporates the National Action Plan for Coral Reefs and a Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Jennifer Dunn, Project Manager of the GEF-funded Coral Reef Rescue and Erin Lord-Lynch, education and capacity building specialist, University of Queensland. Resilient Reefs, Resilient Communities: Advancing Marine Conservation Through Education & Innovation
Although there is substantial effort in coral reef research and conservation globally, there is a gap between available information and information relevant to communities. The Coral Reef Rescue Portal aims to address this gap by making existing scientific and data resources available to support on-the-ground decision-making. A key facet of this free, open-access online platform is its aim to match users (government officers, NGO workers, community members and field operators) with resources that best suit their needs.

Four online courses are also available, offering time-independent training that can be accessed from home. This benefits women and others who may not otherwise have access to training.

Mapping, measuring and valuing Pacific Blue Carbon

Moderator: Turang Teuea, SPREP-MACBLUE Coordinator, SPREP

Objective: To showcase new findings on the ecological and carbon value of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems in the Pacific, particularly emphasising advances in quantifying carbon and nitrogen stocks, developing biodiversity monitoring baselines, and demonstrating how ecological evidence can be translated into policy-relevant insights that guide mitigation and sustainable development strategies.

Key discussions and takeaways

- A landmark standardised carbon stock assessment was carried out in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in 2024–2025 through the MACBLUE project. The assessments provide insights into the amount of carbon captured and sequestered by mangrove and seagrass ecosystems and serve as a foundation for countries to consider carbon trading opportunities.
- Research focusing on mangrove diversity, sequestration potential and ecosystem services in Marau Sound in Guadalcanal found that there are 26 mangrove species alone in Marau, and that carbon stock (contained in biomass only) is significant and comparable to the literature.
- Community knowledge and traditional practices are vital: local communities and women in particular hold significant knowledge about blue carbon ecosystems such as seagrass and mangroves, with conventional knowledge being a primary source.
- There is a recommendation to integrate a cultural index score into environmental impact assessments as a measure to recognise the cultural values of blue carbon ecosystems in decision-making and development.

- SPC led the groundwork on the mapping of seagrass and mangroves. The maps are publicly available on SPC's Digital Earth Pacific platform, and improvements to machine-learning methods for digitally mapping these ecosystems are ongoing.
- Challenges for blue carbon include unclear benefit distribution in carbon markets, misunderstandings and the need for stronger community governance and transparency, capacity building and continuous support for youth and women.

Presentations

Emily Saeck, Senior Ecologist, Alluvium Group. Charting Pacific Blue Carbon: a landmark assessment of mangroves and seagrass ecosystems

In 2025, a landmark blue carbon study was conducted in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu through the MACBLUE project (Management of Blue Carbon Stock Assessment in Pacific Island Countries). The assessments provide insights into the amount of carbon captured and sequestered by mangrove and seagrass ecosystems and serve as a foundation for countries to evaluate carbon trading opportunities. The seagrass and mangrove maps are available on SPC's Digital Earth Pacific platform. A field training manual and the reports of the carbon stock studies will be made available to countries.

Kevin Sese, PhD in Environmental Management, University of the South Pacific. Diversity of mangrove flora of Marau, Solomon Islands

Research on mangrove diversity, sequestration potential and ecosystem services in Marau Sound, Guadalcanal identified 26 mangrove species in Marau alone and reported a significant carbon stock (in biomass only) comparable to the literature.

Raphael Linzatti, Project Manager, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Valuing coastal ecosystems for resilient Pacific futures

The valuation of seagrasses and mangroves highlights the cultural value of blue carbon. Valuation is important because it quantifies the economic value of marine ecosystems, making their benefits visible to policymakers. It also supports policies that balance conservation and development, protection with production. The study recommends integrating a cultural index score into environmental impact assessments (EIAs) to recognise the cultural values of blue carbon ecosystems in decision-making and development.

Nicholas Metherall, Hydrologist (SPC) and Maivunijale Waqa, GIS Specialist & Analyst (SPC). Collaborative mapping of blue carbon ecosystems and capacity building within the MACBLUE project

Digital Earth Pacific (DEP) is a public technology infrastructure that makes decades of satellite data accessible and easy to use for decision-makers, scientists and the public. It leverages artificial intelligence and large-scale computing to analyse this data and show how ecosystems are changing.

SPC collaborated on the MACBLUE project, leading on-the-ground mapping of seagrasses and mangroves through preliminary field surveys in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, in partnership with the Pacific Geospatial Women Network (PGWN).

Community leadership and integrated approaches to blue carbon ecosystems

Moderator: Raphael Linzatti, Project Manager, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Objective: To examine community-led strategies for conserving and managing blue carbon ecosystems. It will highlight the significance of customary ownership and Indigenous knowledge in sustaining mangroves and seagrass meadows, while also recognising the importance of local well-being.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Community knowledge and traditional practices are vital: local communities hold significant knowledge about blue carbon ecosystems, such as seagrass and mangroves, with traditional knowledge being a primary source. Women often play a key role in valuing and protecting these ecosystems.
- Integrated, locally tailored management approaches deliver results: effective conservation involves localised actions, education materials in local languages, and management plans that reflect the unique context of each community, as demonstrated in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.
- Community-led conservation enhances engagement and sustainability: high community involvement, including the creation of local committees and ownership of management actions, leads to better outcomes in ecosystem protection, resource use and sustainable livelihoods.
- Combining culture and science underpins innovative solutions: blending traditional cultural practices with scientific tools and policy innovations (e.g., carbon and biodiversity markets, ecosystem service valuation) incentivises stewardship and increases the resilience of blue carbon ecosystems.
- Challenges remain in benefit sharing and long-term success: issues such as unclear benefit distribution in carbon markets, misunderstandings and the need for stronger community governance highlight the importance of transparency, capacity building and continuous support for youth and women.

Presentations

Ceceilia Louis, Vanuatu Environmental Scientist. Assessing Seagrass Condition and Community Knowledge in Vanuatu

The seagrass condition was assessed for two areas in Efate. A perceptions survey found that community understanding of seagrass primarily comes from local knowledge, with other sources including social media and schools. Community respondents were more aware of *tabu* areas than of local or national MPAs, and more women than men recognised the importance of seagrass. Communities believe government-led MPAs should involve them more effectively and that the rules should be better explained. Otherwise, the *tabu* area rules (which are known) should be retained. It was also noted that it is hard to control *tabu* conservation areas, which are respected by local villagers but less by outsiders.

Stanley Wapot, Managing Director and advisor for environment and climate change, Infinity Blue (Papua New Guinea) Limited. Community-based mangrove and seagrass conservation in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea. Nature-based solutions rooted in culture and science

Infinity Blue (Papua New Guinea) Limited is a natural resource products marketing company based in New Ireland province, Papua New Guinea. The New Ireland Mangrove and Seagrass Biodiversity Conservation, Livelihoods and Blue Carbon Project is funded by the Australian Government in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the Blue Carbon Accelerator Fund (BCAF). The project aims to develop an investment-ready proposal for blue carbon offsets for the international market, channelling revenue back to the mangrove and seagrass

communities to boost their efforts in biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and the development of sustainable livelihoods through a payment-for-ecosystem-services scheme.

Papua New Guinea imposed a moratorium on carbon markets due to projects promoted by foreign developers that lacked robust protection of customary land rights, resulting in land disputes, elite capture and accusations of “carbon cowboys” selling credits without genuine consent or local benefit.

Papua New Guinea has established policies and adopted formal national REDD+/safeguards and FPIC (free, prior and informed consent) guidelines published/endorsed in 2022–2023. There are explicit requirements to obtain consent from customary landholders for carbon projects, elevating FPIC from “best practice” to a legal/regulated expectation for many carbon activities. The new FPIC materials establish clearer institutional roles, step-by-step FPIC procedures, linkages to safeguards, benefit-sharing and dispute resolution, and make the application of FPIC to nationally recognised NRS/REDD+ activities mandatory.

For communities, the guidelines strengthen the legal and policy basis for refusing or negotiating carbon projects; consent must be collective, culturally appropriate and documented. Project developers/donors must budget time and resources for robust FPIC and expect national authorities to request FPIC evidence during registration.

The work in New Ireland involved a significant effort to map the different clan groups, in line with communities advising that agreements would be with clans rather than at the village level. This ensured accountability and avoided illegitimate claims to ownership of mangroves. Operating at the clan level also ensures broad community leadership in management and monitoring and may encourage self-regulation.

Salanieta Kitolelei, Postdoctoral Researcher and PhD scholar, University of the South Pacific. Local management approaches for the MACBLUE project in Rewa, Fiji

There is no mangrove registration system in Fiji. Communities have been assisted in developing and implementing local management actions (in Muanaira and Narocake). Localised scientific information is available, and training was provided to assess mangrove health. Key issues include pollution and the lack of environmental impact assessments for development.

Local mangrove management information and action sheets have been developed, including a plain-language summary of the national Fiji mangrove guidelines (English and iTaukei). All actions need to be location specific.

The value of mangroves to people was often determined to be for firewood, food or ties, or for construction. The drivers of mangrove degradation were explained in simple terms. Of the 12 mangrove species in Fiji, eight are in Rewa. These species are described in the information sheets in Fijian, with plant parts labelled accordingly.

Jury Kuri, Senior Community Engagement Officer, WCS Papua New Guinea Marine Programme. Community management in Papua New Guinea

Mangroves and seagrass are inherent to community livelihoods. WCS has supported local community-based management approaches for seagrass and mangroves in New Ireland under the MACBLUE project. A detailed process was undertaken to obtain consent, understand governance structures, ensure community understanding and awareness, and develop enforceable management mechanisms. Four management plans were developed and management committees established. Communities took ownership of the work with collaborative arrangements with partners and stakeholders.

Challenges included: misunderstanding of the work (rumours that the project was a land grab); people expecting physical benefits such as money, water tanks as part of the project; divisive local leadership/politics where leaders agree to the project and "claim" the project-related benefits such as catering and accommodation; and ongoing land disputes.

Panel: A clean, healthy and resilient ocean

Moderator: Salesa Nihmei, Director, Climate Science and Information, SPREP

Objective: This session used a roundtable approach to capture ideas and issues arising during PIOC related to "A clean, healthy and resilient ocean," one of the outcomes of the UN Decade of Ocean Science. The session focused on issues which are not fully addressed during PIOC sessions – specifically, marine pollution regarding "clean and healthy" dimensions.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Marine pollution issues of shipwrecks, oil spills, plastics and other land-based pollution must be addressed as significant challenges to sustainable ocean management.
- A "clean, healthy and resilient ocean" is interconnected with a "productive ocean"
- There is a need to focus on the human aspects (e.g. socio-economic impacts on women and children during an oil spill incident) in addition to the environment, when addressing marine pollution issues.
- Challenges highlighted include limited financial and human resource capacity, lack of public awareness, geographical challenges (e.g. for oil spills) and lack of preparedness and readiness.

Speakers

Panellists discussed national barriers to progress towards a clean, healthy and resilient ocean and shared their current initiatives.

Matthew Carter, Marine Archaeologist, InkFish Australia

World War II shipwrecks are a major contributor to marine pollution. There are significant costs associated with assessing and remediating shipwrecks, including the removal and disposal of oil. This is further complicated by political implications related to the ownership of the American and Japanese wrecks. Published scientific reports can be valuable tools for gaining momentum to address these issues. Scientific research should have an outcome and a meaningful purpose for the people working on it.

Sheridan Rabbitt, Centre Manager, Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research

Dealing with oil spills in the marine environment requires engagement that not only addresses environmental issues but also incorporates social, cultural, economic and health impacts on communities.

Lack of baseline data in the Pacific: Robust baseline data are essential, yet currently insufficient across the region. This gap undermines key processes, including damage assessment and compensation mechanisms, following oil spills. Researchers and technical organisations can play a critical role in addressing this shortfall. At the regional level, there is a clear need for a coordinated data-sharing mechanism to support effective oil spill preparedness, response and recovery.

How science and research partners can support other stakeholders:

- Produce robust baseline data, science, and monitoring – currently lacking strong baseline data on marine ecosystem health, water quality and existing pollution – needed for claims and compensation.
- Regional data-sharing mechanisms, such as online data-sharing platforms, are needed to enable real-time incident response and facilitate the systematic sharing of lessons learned across the region.
- Strengthen local expertise and lab capabilities – crucial for quick analysis, could look to build on existing capacity at USP with international support to upskill.
- National and regional training – including simulation exercises for hands-on training to highlight gaps; regional lessons learned.

Halatoa Fua, Director of the National Environment Service, Cook Islands
Plastic pollution spreads through water, soil and land, and plastic production is unsustainable, with 400 million metric tonnes produced annually. Plastic waste is expected to exceed the number of fish species in the ocean by 2050. The challenge is that globally, only 9% of plastic is recycled.

The Cook Islands have adopted a Waste Act and introduced a ban on single-use plastics. These activities will require financial support, and there is a national review of disposal fees. There is a need to tap into regional data on plastic and other waste management, as well as to identify treaties that national policies can align with. There are no proper recycling facilities in the Cook Islands.

Kimberly Samson, Marine Scientist, Talanoa Consulting
The ocean space is complex, with competing interests and activities, including fisheries, conservation, tourism and shipping. For countries, resources are diminishing as they try to manage other challenges, such as pollution and climate change, which are exacerbating them. The instinct is to work in silos, given the challenges to get people/organisations to work together towards a common goal. At the community level, there are also trade-offs; communities want to conserve but must meet socio-economic needs, and the burden of conservation often falls on them.

Contributions from Talanoa Consulting were highlighted, including a collaboration with SPREP under the Kiwa Initiative to integrate GEDSI (gender equity, disability, social inclusion) into nature-based solutions, as well as training and skill building to engage more effectively with communities. Additional work is underway to review innovative financing mechanisms and to integrate NbS into policy frameworks (e.g., with the iTaukei Land Trust Board in Fiji through the Promoting Pacific Island Nature-based Solutions (PPIN) Project).

Guillaume Marchand, Nature-based Solutions Programme Manager, CNRS (French Polynesia)
Compartmentalisation of knowledge and action exists between institutions and research units, and also between marine and terrestrial actions. Current work includes coordinating a living lab and establishing links between other academic researchers and NGOs. The focus is on adopting nature-based solutions to reduce physical pollution from land-based sources and reintroduce herbivores into lagoons to limit microalgae proliferation. There is an opportunity to bridge gaps and foster dialogue across all parts of society to test, replicate and develop solutions for the Polynesian Islands.

An inspiring and engaging ocean

A fourth outcome that describes the “ocean we want” at the end of the Ocean Decade is “an inspiring and engaging ocean where society understands and values the ocean”. This outcome highlights the

need to shift society's relationship with the ocean to catalyse behaviour change and ensure the effectiveness of solutions developed under the Ocean Decade. Ocean literacy approaches, formal and informal educational and awareness-raising tools, and measures to ensure equitable physical access to the ocean can together drive change, increasing understanding of the ocean's economic, social and cultural value and inspiring scientists, policymakers, government officials, managers and innovators.

For the Pacific Islands, the ocean is intertwined with people's culture, traditions and practices. Understanding and encouraging positive traditional practices is key to ocean management at all levels. As our understanding of ocean science advances, it is essential to communicate these insights effectively to engage all audiences and foster renewed dedication to ocean stewardship.

Tok stori: Ocean discoveries in the Pacific

Moderator: Chris Hines, Director of Education, Pristine Seas project (National Geographic Society)

Objective: To discuss how scientific expeditions can support government and community decision-making in ocean management.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The session was an introduction to the National Geographic Pristine Seas Expeditions undertaken in response to the invitation of governments and in support of community initiatives.
- Pristine Seas works with local communities, Indigenous peoples, government and partners to protect our ocean, but also areas that human activities have somehow degraded so that they can bounce back. Marine life thrives in these marine protected areas and provides multiple benefits to people, from food and coastal protection to jobs and economic revenue.
- Governments need the science to back appropriate and effective policy.
- The objective of Pristine Seas is to support informed decision-making around ocean conservation.
- There is a strong focus on the education of young people as well as teachers. The expedition not only brought new experiences but also a wealth of data, which could inform national policies and management plans and be utilised at regional and international platforms.
- The expedition found different levels of ocean health within each country; some areas with thriving reefs and biodiversity, others with significant bleaching and other places with very low levels of big fish/apex predators.
- The inshore and offshore areas are interconnected; when one is affected, the other is impacted as well.
- By-catch may be a significant issue for some coastal areas.
- Country representatives who participated in the expedition shared how the expedition encourages involvement of local communities and NGOs with government stakeholders.

Janice Taga, Coral Reef Ecologist, Wildlife Conservation Society, Fiji

Janice noted that it was critical to the success of the expedition that key community players were involved. The expeditions have developed an understanding of the status of Fiji's coral reefs. She mentioned that *"It was really good to see how science can elevate understanding of the status of the marine environment across Fiji."* Data from the Fiji expedition (which covered several areas and included coastal and deep-water surveys) will inform the country's 30 x 30 planning efforts.

Christian Tutui Manepolo, National Coordinator of the Marine Spatial Planning Program, Solomon Islands

Christian stated that the exchange between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge was a significant part of the expedition, and it is essential that marine resource management incorporates the Indigenous knowledge of coastal communities. The government is developing a National Action Plan, utilising data from the expedition. The discovery of the most extensive coral system in the Solomon Islands was a milestone of the expedition and changed locals' views of coral reefs, generating greater public interest. The Solomon Islands government is developing a national action plan for coral reefs; the findings from the expeditions will be vital to its development. He stated that the impacts of overfishing are now evident and clearly signal the urgent need for action.

Brendon Pasisi, Vice President, Niue Ocean Wide NOW

Brendon commended the value of films and their positive impact on the local community and government leaders. The two Pristine Seas expeditions for Niue have been vital in gathering further information on the Beveridge reef (240 km offshore) and have underpinned Niue's MSP work and assisted in decisions to close off a greater area of EEZ for protection. It is critical to maintain strong partnerships to advance commitments to ocean management (as reflected in scientific reports) and to report to donors and partners.

There is a need to increase the younger generation's understanding and appreciation of Niue's ocean space and marine resources. He noted the connection between offshore and inshore areas and stated that the loss of tuna species and the associated bycatch are significant issues. He mentioned that "Climate change is an existential threat – we have little control over this, but we can better manage our pelagic and inshore fisheries".

Ocean Literacy for a sustainable Pacific: Integrating science and Indigenous wisdom

Moderator: Maeva Tesan, Information and Knowledge Management Officer, SPC

Objective: To highlight the role of education and Indigenous perspectives in strengthening human–ocean connections, illustrate practical examples of culturally grounded curriculum frameworks, and demonstrate how traditional knowledge and scientific approaches can be integrated to enhance ocean literacy across the Pacific.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Ocean literacy is about building a shared understanding of the ocean's influence on humanity and humanity's influence on the ocean. It includes targets such as schools, communities, institutions and officials.
- In the Pacific, sustainable ocean management goes hand-in-hand with valuing traditional knowledge and cultural identity alongside modern scientific approaches.
- The Pristine Seas project (National Geographic) highlighted that Pacific expeditions and ecosystem surveys support policy, education and ocean literacy initiatives. This includes co-design approaches to curriculum development and initiatives to ignite interest in marine research among young people. In collaboration with SPC, a Pacific Ocean Literacy repository was recently launched, including Pristine Seas education videos focused on coral reefs.
- The Solomon Islands National University offers a full fisheries education pathway grounded in practical learning, traditional knowledge and applied research. Youth engagement is

strengthened through scientific field experience, including student participation in research cruises such as the Kaiyo-maru, supported by partnerships with Japan and regional institutions.

- The Kanak Vision of the Ocean association (New Caledonia) provides a unifying cultural framework for ocean conservation, resulting in major achievements such as customary leaders' involvement in governance committees, strong protection measures in the Coral Sea Natural Park and the adoption of the Kanak name *Nèkwiè pûû möŕu*.
- Ethnomathematics (Indigenous mathematical knowledge) is used in canoe building, navigation, fishing patterns and measurement by communities. It offers powerful pathways to integrate culture into mathematics education, helping students understand conservation, ratios, patterns and spatial reasoning.
- Events such as the Roviana Lagoon Festival (Solomon Islands) revive traditional ocean practices, especially those related to canoe construction, while supporting intergenerational knowledge exchange and strengthening community cohesion.

Presentations

Chris Hines, Director of Education, Pristine Seas project (National Geographic Society). Ocean literacy for teachers and schools in the Pacific region

Since 2008, the Pristine Seas project has conducted 45 scientific expeditions across more than 30 locations, resulting in over 170 peer-reviewed publications and 22 documentaries that highlight the importance of ocean conservation. Building on this foundation, National Geographic expanded its efforts to strengthen ocean literacy across the Pacific, conducting expeditions in Niue, the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

Key initiatives include the Science Teaching and Learning Summit, co-organised with SPC, and ship days, which offer students and community members hands-on opportunities to learn about ocean science and conservation. An education expedition with the Fiji Ministry of Education further links scientific exploration with classroom learning. The summit brought together curriculum developers, assessment specialists and teachers to co-create an engaging, culturally grounded and effective repository of ocean literacy resources designed specifically for Pacific learners.

Lindon Havimana, Senior Lecturer, Solomon Islands National University. Fisheries science and higher education in the Pacific

The Solomon Islands National University (SINU) offers a comprehensive fisheries education pathway, including certificates, diplomas and a four-year Bachelor of Fisheries Studies, designed to be both practical and locally relevant. SINU is also strengthening its focus on practical research by undertaking projects that document traditional fishing methods, assess environmental conditions and support broader scientific efforts, such as studying ocean acidification and engaging coastal communities.

Partnerships are central to SINU's approach to ocean literacy and capacity building. The university collaborates with the Government of Japan through the development of the Centre of Excellence in Fisheries Studies. It maintains academic and research links with institutions such as the University of Wollongong in Australia. Students also gain practical exposure through participation in scientific cruises, including those on the research vessel Kaiyo-maru, led by the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency. Recently, two SINU students, Caisy Ata and Wendy Kafo, took part in this expedition,

a unique opportunity that strengthens youth engagement and deepens their commitment to ocean protection.

Josine Tiavouane, Customary liaison manager, Kanak Vision of the Ocean (VKO), Conservation International, New Caledonia. Integrating Indigenous wisdom and knowledge to shape institutional practices and education related to ocean conservation: VKO in New Caledonia

Over the past three years, and with the support of Conservation International and local partners, Kanak representatives have worked to ensure that their voices are heard and their vision for the ocean is recognised. Through extensive community engagement, they have socialised their Vision Kanak de l'Océan (VKO) across New Caledonia and strengthened their participation in the Coral Sea Natural Park (CSNP) management committee.

Several significant achievements have emerged from the VKO initiative, including:

- The formal adoption of a Kanak name for the Coral Sea Natural Park: Nèkwiè pûû möřu.
- The full participation of customary representatives in all consultative committees of the park, where they played a key role in securing strong protection for 10% of the CNSP.
- The publication of an illustrated outreach brochure to help share this knowledge with the general public, institutions and schools.
- Artistic residencies are being promoted across the country to document traditional knowledge, such as stories, dances and songs, and to strengthen ocean literacy through cultural expression.

Raynier Tutuo, Researcher, University of the South Pacific (USP). Ethnomathematics and ocean care: integrating indigenous knowledge into mathematics education

Ethnomathematics is the study of the relationship between mathematics and culture. In coastal communities, traditional practices such as navigation, fishing and canoe building rely on advanced mathematical concepts, including geometry, patterns and measurement.

Integrating these practices into classrooms helps students grasp abstract mathematics while affirming the value of Indigenous knowledge. For example, the Indigenous people in the Solomon Islands have their own informal ratio concept: one medium-sized fish can feed two people (1:2), which supports fish conservation. Indigenous people use patterns (e.g., lunar phases) to determine when to fish for different species. Solomon Islands Indigenous people also used the ratio concept (length: width), measurements (using bush rope or body parts, e.g., arm span), symmetry lines, volume and spatial reasoning (visual thinking) when making traditional canoes, a skill passed down through generations.

Indigenous people managed their ocean with wisdom shaped by traditional mathematical knowledge. If we integrate this same wisdom in our mathematics classroom today, students will understand the importance of conservation and be exemplary stewards of the ocean.

Dorothy Wickham, Journalist, Solomon Islands. The cultural reawakening of Roviana lagoon: passing knowledge on canoe construction in the Solomon Islands

The Roviana Lagoon Festival, held at Lambete Station in Munda (Solomon Islands), brings together hundreds of community members in a vibrant celebration of culture, heritage and identity. The opening ceremony showcases an impressive flotilla of rafts representing four Roviana Lagoon communities, symbolising unity, resilience and shared cultural pride. A central highlight of the event is the unveiling of Tomoko, a traditional Roviana war canoe, exceptionally crafted from six different tree species and marking the first vessel of its kind.

The festival reflects a renewed commitment among Roviana communities to reconnect with the ocean in the same spirit as their ancestors. It aims to educate communities and ensure access to key knowledge on canoe construction through canoe races, the Tia Varane strongman competition, Tomoko construction and koku, delivered via knowledge-sharing sessions that link elders and youth.

Beyond celebration, the festival plays a vital role in promoting ocean literacy among local communities. Through storytelling, practical demonstrations and intergenerational exchange, it deepens understanding of the ocean's importance and strengthens community-led stewardship of the Roviana marine environment.

Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) presentations

Moderator: Nazymento Sine, ECOP, Vanuatu and Turia Bokai, ECOP, Kiribati

Objective: To share experiences of early career ocean professionals and highlight the value of the programme.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The Pacific ECOP Programme aims to empower, build capacity and leadership among Pacific Early Career Ocean Professionals in ocean science and management.
- Presentations by ECOPs highlighted the integration of science into traditional systems to establish marine protected areas in Vanuatu; the value of participation in national and international events and research expeditions in the Solomon Islands; hands-on experience in sampling, data collection and ecosystem observation to support marine spatial planning and policy in Kiribati; and exposure to Papua New Guinea's ocean governance framework through the National Oceans Office under the Department of Justice and Attorney General.
- A research cruise is planned for 2026 through a collaboration between the Pacific Island Global Ocean Observing System, the Pacific Community, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and Earth Sciences New Zealand, which was highlighted as an opportunity for further capacity building of early-career ocean professionals.
- Recommendations include introducing structured onboarding and orientation for ECOPs; defining ECOP roles and expected deliverables; and increasing the number of ECOPs.

Presentations

Miriama Vuiyasawa, Technical Assistant, SPC. Background on the Pacific ECOP programme
The ECOP programme is a collaborative network that provides young graduates in the ocean sector with access to professional opportunities, supports national ocean offices in advancing their ocean-related priorities, and facilitates knowledge and skill sharing among early-career peers, senior researchers and managers.

Nazymento Sine, ECOP (Vanuatu). Scientific contribution by Pacific ECOP
As an ECOP embedded in the Ocean Affairs Office, they contribute to a wide range of work, including ocean finance, extended continental shelf (ECS) issues and maritime boundary negotiations with Fiji and France. Through these roles, they have strengthened the national team's capacity to engage in and support discussions on the Ocean Act and related policy processes, bringing new skills, energy and perspectives to government work on the ocean.

While the programme has faced administrative and logistical challenges, particularly in managing stipends and payments due to staggered start dates, it nonetheless provides valuable hands-on experience for young professionals, supports critical government priorities in the ocean space, and gives ECOPs a strong foundation to advance their careers while contributing to long-term national ocean governance capacity.

Jason Surii, ECOP (Solomon Islands) and Jill Balindu, ECOP (Papua New Guinea). Pacific ECOP Placement programme testimonials (Alumni and current fellows)

Jason Surii discussed his experiences with the Solomon Islands Ocean 12 Steering Committee and the review of the maritime boundary and extended continental shelf. In addition to professional knowledge, he has developed skills such as prioritising, navigating challenges under heavy workloads and adapting to new environments.

Jill Balindu is placed with the Papua New Guinea National Ocean Office (NOO). The challenges included quickly adapting academic knowledge to real-world government processes, with a primary focus on policies and guidelines. Recommendations include establishing onboarding and orientation structures; defining ECOP roles and expected deliverables; and increasing the number of ECOPs.

Taekabu Tebwaraina, ECOP (Kiribati). Pacific ECOP highlights the experience of participating in a shipboard expedition in the Indian Ocean

Taekabu discussed her experiences aboard the RV research vessel during an ocean expedition focused on the Central Indian Ridge. The expedition objectives included collecting samples from hydrothermal vent systems; investigating the formation processes of hydrothermal minerals; studying the area's geological structure; and assessing the physical and ecological characteristics of the hydrothermal vent environments.

Taekabu was part of the biology team and assisted with organising rock samples, gaining hands-on experience in sampling, data collection and ecosystem observation, and gaining practical insights into deep-sea survey operations. She believes these skills and knowledge can be applied to marine spatial planning in Kiribati, particularly for mapping vent systems and developing ocean policy.

Steve William Hango, Senior Desk Officer to the Oceans and Maritime Affairs Division, Vanuatu's Department of Foreign Affairs. Country perspective on the Pacific ECOP programme: benefits, challenges and path ahead

ECOPs have been involved in a wide range of work, including finance, extended continental shelf issues and maritime boundary negotiations with Fiji and France. The information gathered through these engagements will inform the development of the new Oceans Act for Vanuatu. Current challenges to ECOP Vanuatu include local logistical issues.

Translating knowledge into impact: Communicating ocean science in the Pacific

Moderator: Maeva Tesan, Information and Knowledge Management Officer, SPC

Objective: The session aimed to equip researchers with effective communication and storytelling skills to translate complex science into engaging narratives for non-expert audiences, including policymakers, NGOs, community leaders and the media. It emphasised the importance of adapting key messages and using diverse channels, including traditional media, digital platforms and community forums, to enhance the visibility and impact of scientific work.

Key points and takeaways

- Integrating community knowledge into national research (e.g. coral surveys) enhances understanding of how people value the ocean and improves the accuracy, relevance and uptake of scientific findings.
- Solomon Islands engages communities through radio, school outreach, public events, social media and direct consultations, with communication in Indigenous languages that enables two-way dialogue.
- A four-pillar partnership mode (government, NGOs, communities and media) ensures conservation messages are scientifically robust, culturally grounded and widely shared.
- In French Polynesia, the FishKit approach combines data collection, community participation and audiovisual storytelling to make fisheries science accessible and actionable.
- Storytelling reconnects Pacific peoples and amplifies shared identity. For example, *the Moanan* project uses podcasts, social media and community workshops to bring Pacific Islanders together.
- Delivering information to the "last mile" requires adapted approaches: the Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific supports national meteorological services to communicate climate and ocean information in formats appropriate for remote and marginalised communities.

Presentations

Steve William Hango, Senior Desk Officer to the Oceans and Maritime Affairs Division, Vanuatu's Department of Foreign Affairs. Integrating traditional knowledge and building strong partnerships with communicators helps amplify research findings

Steve Hango explained that effective communication, grounded in respect for community protocols and meaningful consultation, is essential at every stage. Lessons from a national coral survey revealed that traditional knowledge was the missing link in earlier communication efforts. When traditional knowledge was incorporated into discussions, communities were able to articulate how they value the ocean as a source of salt and food, and as a spiritual space with deep cultural significance, including as the final resting place of the soul.

Moreover, community knowledge must be integrated into communications. Mr Hango noted that when communities ask scientists for findings, the first experts and knowledge holders are often the community members themselves, as they have observed changes long before technicians have. This exchange is two-way: scientists and communicators should also learn from the communities they engage with.

The need for collaboration and tailored key messages was also highlighted, as he noted that during the International Court of Justice (ICJ) process, Vanuatu partnered with regional agencies, such as SPC, to amplify Pacific voices on the international stage effectively.

David Aram and Jasmine Rahii, Fisheries officers, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands (MFMR). Ensuring community-centred communication to strengthen fisheries engagement

Effective communication of scientific information requires practical, community-centred approaches that go well beyond printed materials. To engage communities on inshore fisheries, the Ministry uses a range of channels, including radio, public events, school programmes and social media. Community consultations create space for genuine two-way dialogue, enabling the exchange of local knowledge, gathering of community feedback and strengthening of trust and ownership.

Communicating in Indigenous languages also demands more than simple translation; it requires a fundamental understanding of the language and the ability to hold meaningful conversations in it.

The MFMR Inshore Division engages with the public through diverse and complementary methods. These include weekly radio broadcasts, awareness booths at public events and school outreach activities. The Division also produces video documentaries showcasing fieldwork, distributes brochures and pamphlets, and conducts direct consultations with communities. In addition, they respond to public inquiries in the office, use platforms such as Facebook to reach broader audiences, and apply the *Solwata blo Umi* toolkit to strengthen their communication and outreach further.

Genezy Ilolahia and Suelaki Tiatia, Journalists at The Moanan, New Zealand. Reconnecting Pacific communities through shared narratives

The Moanan project was created to bring Pacific Islanders together around shared values, cultures and histories. Beyond serving as a platform for podcasts and personal stories on Pacific voyages, climate justice and ocean conservation, it recognises a core reality: for many Pacific Islanders, especially those raised outside their ancestral homelands, ethnic identity is deeply tied to well-being. The project provides a space where people can reconnect with their roots and recognise the similarities between their stories and lived experiences.

At the heart of the platform is The Moanan Podcast, which links Pacific cultures, people and histories across generations and regions. The approach combines digital outreach (podcasts and social media) with in-person community workshops that bring together traditional knowledge holders, academics and practitioners. These interactions help translate scientific and cultural knowledge into forms that resonate with communities. A powerful example of this engagement is the unexpected success of T-shirts designed with the names of all Pacific Island nations. The strong response from young Pacific Islanders highlighted a shared identity they are proud to express, an identity that must be recognised and valued in any communication effort.

Samuel Ravatua-Smith, Producer and Director, Hāloa Production, French Polynesia. Translating scientific knowledge into meaningful behavioural and policy change

The translation of scientific knowledge into meaningful behavioural and policy change is neither automatic nor straightforward. The FishKit is an effective tool for turning knowledge into sustained action. The FishKit embodies an integrated approach to community-based marine stewardship. Co-designed by the Centre for Marine Trades of French Polynesia, The Nature Conservancy, government agencies and media partners, the programme uses scientifically grounded, participatory methods. Trained local samplers collect fisheries data, including species composition, size and age structure, and reproductive indicators such as gonad analysis and identification of mega-spawners. These results are then shared in public forums, allowing communities to incorporate scientific evidence into customary *Rāhui* management practices.

Its durability stems from a four-pillar collaborative model: government agencies ensure legitimacy and support, NGOs provide technical methodologies, communities serve as data collectors and co-managers, and media partners translate findings into accessible audiovisual narratives. This multi-layered communication approach ensures that conservation actions are scientifically robust, culturally aligned and widely understood.

Laurence Lessire, Communications and strategic engagement adviser, SPC

The goal of communication is to package information so that it is delivered accurately, without distortion or loss of meaning, and in a format that remains useful all the way to the “last mile.” The

last mile refers to marginalised communities and individuals who are often excluded from traditional communication channels, whether due to remoteness, limited infrastructure, language barriers or low literacy. For information to be practical, it must be delivered in a format that is easy to understand and act on. Hence, establishing two-way communication is essential. It allows communities to provide feedback, ensures messages are correctly interpreted and increases the likelihood that information will be used in decision-making. Delivering meteorological and climate information to last-mile communities faces several challenges, including literacy constraints, language diversity and limited internet access.

The Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific works to address these barriers by visiting national meteorological services, such as recent engagements in Palau and American Samoa (2025), and equipping them with tools and methodologies to reach last-mile audiences better. Through this support, information becomes more accessible, actionable and responsive to community needs.

Developing capacities for ocean science and management

Moderator: Narissa Lewis, Programme Manager, Pacific Fisheries Leadership Programme, SPC

Objective: This workshop focused on raising awareness about capacity-building initiatives across the Pacific and how they support development and growth in the integrated oceans management space. It also explored how participants conceptualised capacity building, identified what they felt made initiatives successful, and gathered insights into current needs and gaps in provision. These reflections will help focus future efforts and inform the design of more responsive and impactful capacity-building initiatives.

Key points and takeaways

- Several opportunities exist promoting hands-on learning for various areas in the ocean space. Learning from these will help improve future initiatives.
- Discussions emphasised the importance of collaboration, contextualising capacity building at the national level, strengthening agency coordination and addressing practical fisheries and coastal management needs.
- There is a need to create greater links and connections between the various capacity-building initiatives.

Presentations

Molly Powers-Tora, Pacific Strategy and Engagement Advisor, Earth Science New Zealand. Progress on a Floating University for the Pacific

The Floating University offers an immersive, capacity-building experience for ocean professionals, with participants actively participating in ocean expeditions aboard a research vessel. Participants gain first-hand experience in ocean research, complemented by lectures and community partnerships. The 2026 programme application process was launched.

Katy Soapi, Coordinator for Partnerships and Engagement at PCCOS, SPC. Progress on a Pacific ECOP Programme – and 2026 opportunities

New Zealand sponsors the Pacific ECOP Programme, empowering young ocean professionals through placements, internships, events, mentorship and a growing regional network. Information was shared on the application process and criteria.

Narissa Lewis, Programme Manager, Pacific Fisheries Leadership Programme (PLFP), SPC. The PLFP objectives

The Pacific Fisheries Leadership Programme (PFLP) aims to develop leadership capabilities of professionals who work in fisheries and related sectors. Phase 1 of the programme (2018–2024) saw over 400 people from 17 Pacific Island countries and territories engage with PFLP offerings. The programme received positive feedback from participants who noted increased confidence and capabilities in leadership. Narissa shared opportunities that are available in Phase 2 which includes a full programme with individual coaching included (by application), and an online workshop series that focuses on discrete professional and leadership capability topics.

Celina Garcia, Ministry for Primary Industries (New Zealand), Te Pātui Team Leader. Update on capacity-building offerings under the Te Patui Programme

The MFAT-funded Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Programme includes several capacity-building initiatives, including PFLP. Specifically, the capacity building offered through MPI's Te Pātui Programme includes development in fisheries compliance and management, amongst other areas. There are critical links to integrated ocean management, and the programme offers a holistic approach to sustainable fisheries management. She also discussed how Te Pātui integrates traditional knowledge into its approaches, working closely with Māori, the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand.

Panel: An inspiring and engaging ocean – the ocean in us

Moderator: Katy Soapi, Coordinator for partnerships and engagement at PCCOS (SPC)

Objective: The session featured traditional knowledge holders, traditional navigators and a theatre group to demonstrate how Pacific artists engage communities in dialogue about the ocean's challenges and possibilities. Their work embodies the "Inspiring and engaging ocean" outcome by translating complex scientific and policy issues into lived experiences that touch hearts and minds. The session also demonstrated that building capacity and ensuring equitable access to knowledge and technology are essential to enable ECOPs to lead and benefit from sustainable ocean futures.

Key points and takeaways

- Revitalising ancestral voyaging strengthens identity and sustainability: Simon Salopuka's work with the Taumako community shows how building traditional *vaka* supports cultural revival while offering sustainable, low-impact alternatives for marine transportation.
- Traditional knowledge thrives when elders and youth build together: *vaka*-building creates a living classroom where navigation, carving and design skills are shared across generations, strengthening cultural continuity and unity.
- Documenting ocean stories is vital for cultural and climate resilience: Chloe Molou's work on *Stories of Our Mother Ocean* highlights the urgency of preserving Indigenous maritime knowledge, especially in communities that have experienced depopulation and language loss.
- Art is a powerful catalyst for community engagement and ocean stewardship: Dreamcast Theatre transforms scientific and legal information into accessible performances, sparking dialogue and empowering youth to participate in ocean governance.
- Digital tools can strengthen resource management through youth participation: using simple technology, such as GoPros for underwater storytelling, helps young people document their environment, build confidence and engage in community-based resource management.

- Cross-cultural collaboration builds the future of Pacific Ocean science: an ECOP's experience on the Kaiyo-Maru cruise shows the importance of openness, communication and cultural exchange in advancing scientific research and strengthening regional solidarity.

Speakers

Nigella Salopuka, Artist, Solomon Islands
Nigella Salopuka opened her contribution with a powerful chant dedicated to the ocean. The chant served as both an artistic expression and a cultural invocation, honouring ancestral connections to the sea.

Simon Salopuka, Executive Director of the Vaka Valo Association and representative of the Taumako Indigenous Knowledge Institution (TIKI), Solomon Islands. Revitalisation of voyaging through the building of the tepuke
Simon Salopuka opened his talk with a chant that foretold the coming of the *Tepuke,* invoking a deep connection to ancestral tradition. In Solomon Islands, community gatherings centred on building traditional *vaka* (boats) bring elders and youth together, creating a shared space where carving, navigation and traditional design skills are passed from one generation to the next. The impact of traditional knowledge includes understanding wind direction, buoyancy and how natural elements affect the boat's structure.

This collective process not only renews pride in Indigenous heritage but also addresses modern needs, as *vaka*, built from local materials and powered by wind, offer a sustainable, low-impact alternative for marine transportation. The activity includes men, women, youth and children, each with their respective responsibilities in the building process. Men often lead in the carving and shaping of the *vaka*, while women prepare materials, weave sails or ropes and support communal tasks. This event brings people together for a common purpose. The activity requires sensitivity to cultural diplomacy and the use of the *Tepuke* as a living classroom.

Chloe Molou, Member of the Erromango Cultural Association, Vanuatu. Capturing traditional ocean knowledge and stories on Erromango Island
The people of Erromango, a southern island of Vanuatu, have maintained a deep relationship with the ocean for centuries. However, the 1800s brought catastrophic depopulation as epidemics introduced through European contact swept through communities, exacerbated by the violence tied to the sandalwood trade. Over the next century, the population is thought to have plummeted from around 10,000 in the 1820s to barely 800 by the 1920s, a decline so severe that five of the island's six languages disappeared.

These intertwined legacies of population loss, cultural disruption and ongoing climate stresses underscore the urgent need to safeguard Erromango's remaining cultural heritage and knowledge. One of the NGO's recent achievements is the publication of *Stories of Our Mother Ocean* (Netai en Namou Toc), a trilingual book in the Indigenous language, English and French, highlighting the culture and traditions of Erromango communities. The stories emphasise the connections between islands, celebrate unique cultural heritage and link Indigenous knowledge with the current deterioration of climate and ocean health.

Neil Nuia, Artistic Director, Dreamcast Theatre, Solomon Islands. The art of Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM): storytelling for sustainable governance
Dreamcast Theatre's impact is to spark dialogue. The theatre is recognised in the region as a youth-led group that dramatises real-world issues in a format that men, women and young people can enjoy.

The team has on board a group of young producers who translate scientific knowledge and legal information into art. The participatory art movement is inclusive, engaging local communities in various events. We acknowledge that culture is central to resilience, but art can be a catalyst for change.

Dreamcast Theatre has also empowered young people to share their stories through modern equipment. For example, providing GoPros to children while they swam and allowing them to watch their dives in real time created a powerful experience for both the youth and the wider community. This approach strengthens cultural expression by fostering local engagement, building confidence and encouraging communities, especially the younger generation, to observe, document and connect with their environments.

Genezy Ilolahia and Suelaki Tiatia, Journalists at The Moanan, New Zealand. The Moanan: a platform for intergenerational Pacific dialogues

Genezy and Suelaki, in their discussion of The Moanan platform, noted that Pacific Islanders have a unique opportunity to share their own narratives. They observed that although scientific knowledge is not incorrect, it remains incomplete because it does not incorporate the stories embedded within traditional knowledge.

The Moanan, established two years prior, serves as a regional platform for the dissemination and celebration of these narratives. Despite historical disruptions that hindered the transmission of knowledge across the Pacific, there are now resources that enable communities to reclaim and articulate their stories. Ultimately, they emphasised that in every interaction, one should ask: given the knowledge held, how should it be used, who will receive it, and who will carry it forward?

Dorothy Wickham, Journalist, Solomon Islands. Reviving the Tomoko: at the Roviana Lagoon Festival

Dorothy Wickham, an Indigenous knowledge expert, delivered a presentation on the traditional activities incorporated into the upcoming Roviana Lagoon Festival, scheduled for December 2025 in the Solomon Islands. The event aims to revive traditional ocean knowledge through paddling competitions and indigenous arts, while also serving as a platform for artisans such as carvers and weavers. Activities scheduled for the festival include the presentation of the *Tomoko*.

Another highlight is the construction of the traditional *Koku*, an offshore wooden platform that has long been part of local coastal life. Children often climb the structure and leap into the water below, turning it into a joyful space for play, confidence-building and connection to the sea. The Bamboo Band session reintroduces Indigenous music, showcasing the rhythmic traditions embedded in locally made bamboo instruments. It is also essential to recognise that the lessons learned in canoe-making, particularly in the Western Province, reflect the need for communities to adapt to present-day realities. Due to changing resource availability, canoe builders must now work with whatever materials are accessible, rather than those traditionally used. This shift not only demonstrates resilience and creativity but also underscores broader environmental changes shaping cultural practices and knowledge transmission.

Caisy Ata, ECOP, Solomon Islands National University (SINU). At sea experience as an ECOP

Caisy, a student at SINU, played an active scientific role aboard the Kaiyo-Maru Tuna Ecology Cruise, part of a five-year tuna monitoring project led by the Japan Fisheries Research and Education Agency with the scientific collaboration of SPC. Working under the supervision of the scientific team, she assisted with a wide range of tasks, including seawater sampling, environmental monitoring using the

Conductivity Temperature Depth (CTD) instrument, acoustic data profiling, eDNA sampling and sorting organisms at each station. She also recorded key details during gear deployment and retrieval.

Experiencing acoustic data retrieval for the first time was both challenging and inspiring, as she learnt how sound is used to detect marine life at depth. Life at sea also posed challenges, including seasickness, time zone changes, adapting to new foods and language barriers. However, she overcame these by persisting, remaining open-minded and engaging with colleagues to learn basic Japanese and French, which strengthened communication and teamwork.

Overall, the cruise demonstrated the importance of cross-cultural collaboration, youth capacity building, and regional solidarity in advancing ocean science in the Pacific. Her message to young Pacific Islanders is to stay open-minded, communicate confidently, embrace challenges and ask questions, because every learning opportunity is valuable.

Ocean governance

The management of ocean space – at the international, regional, national and local levels – requires effective and transparent governance. The Ocean Decade aims to catalyse improved ocean governance by providing governments, policymakers and other stakeholders with better scientific knowledge and decision-making tools.

National ocean governance

Moderator: Lusiana Dalituicama, Ocean Management Officer (Office of the Pacific Ocean Commission)

Objective: At its core, national ocean governance is the framework of policies, laws, institutions and processes a country uses to manage its ocean space and resources. It is about how a nation makes decisions about its ocean, who is involved, and how those decisions are implemented and enforced. For Pacific Island countries, ocean governance isn't just an administrative task but also a matter of economic survival, food security, cultural identity and climate resilience. Our vast ocean territories are our greatest asset and our most significant responsibility.

In this session, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea discussed their ocean governance mechanisms, i.e., national ocean policies and their implementation.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Different institutional frameworks exist across the region to support national ocean governance and encourage coordination across sectors.
- Lack of resources and implementation can create challenges.
- Responsibility for ocean governance sits with traditional owners.
- Shared leadership and funding across ministries can support strengthened national ocean governance.
- Political will is a key driver of successful national ocean governance.
- Harmonisation of legislation and policies is essential.

Presentations

Dr Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC). Introduction
The Commissioner emphasised the importance of collaboration for effective ocean management across the Pacific. He highlighted the need for integrated national efforts and the exploration of sustainable governance policies to ensure long-term conservation.

Steve William Hango, Senior Desk Officer to the Oceans and Maritime Affairs Division, Vanuatu's Department of Foreign Affairs
Vanuatu expects the formal recognition of Indigenous ocean management at the November 2025 parliamentary session. The ocean is culturally and economically important to Vanuatu's people, reinforcing the value of traditional practices in national governance. For Vanuatu, policy implementation challenges include ensuring that government ministries and agencies implement ocean policy with strong leadership, effective coordination, and an emphasis on cooperation and community engagement, while also addressing limited staffing and fragmented communication across sectors.

Maria Tuoro, Director, Office of the Prime Minister, Marae Moana Coordination Office, Cook Islands
The government of the Cook Islands is collaborating with traditional leaders and NGOs to manage marine resources. This includes recognition of the 12-mile maritime zone by local leaders (though it has not yet received international recognition). Ocean policy is coordinated across various sectors through committees. Implementation challenges include staffing constraints, overlapping responsibilities and the need for stronger inter-agency cooperation.

Andrew Coriakula, Ocean Specialist, Fiji Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Policy implementation focuses on integrating ocean governance across agencies.

The strengths of Fiji's National Ocean Policy (NOP) structure are:

- Collaborative foundation, with inclusive and participatory design involving ministries, NGOs, academia and communities.
- Strategic governance provides high-level leadership and coordination.
- An adaptive policy framework provides flexibility to integrate global and regional ocean commitments.
- Technical working groups ensure evidence-based decision-making.

The key governance challenges slowing NOP implementation are:

- Weak secretariat and lack of resources.
- Poor inter-ministerial coordination (especially Fisheries not fully integrated).
- No functional MEL system for accountability.
- Polarised debate over 30 x 30 MPAs.
- Limited inclusivity and communication with stakeholders.
- Over-ambitious scope and too many indicators.

Tokabai Bauro, Marine Scientific Research Officer, Geospatial Division, Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Kiribati
The ocean is central to Kiribati's national identity and governance. The country has established a progressive management structure led by a steering committee and specialised agencies, aiming to streamline coordination and reduce duplication in ocean policy implementation.

Semi Malaki, Deputy Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, Maritime Zones & Statehood, Tuvalu
Ocean governance must be embedded at the highest political levels to strengthen national ownership. The Prime Minister's Office leads climate change and ocean coordination, and the government is developing a National Ocean Policy integrating sectoral and partner engagement.

Brian Akwasia, Ocean and Climate Desk Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands
A coordinated ocean management structure has been established through the Ocean 12 committee. This is a permanent committee, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and coordinates efforts among 12 ministries to implement the National Ocean Policy. Challenges include: research and information sharing, financial, capacity building in science/technical expertise, and slow approval processes and procedures.

Bonaventure Hasola, Acting Principal Legal Officer, Department of Justice and Attorney General, Papua New Guinea
In Papua New Guinea, a committee oversees the development of national ocean policy, with a focus on community ownership and the involvement of traditional leaders. The country manages over 80 stakeholder applications (including international cases), promoting transparent governance and participatory management.

Ocean governance and legal frameworks

Moderator: Madeleine Pears, Ocean Policy Officer, Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)

Objective: To share knowledge across a cross-section of ocean governance issues and strengthen linkages to regional ocean frameworks such as the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Panellists shared knowledge across a cross-section of ocean governance issues.
- Integrated ocean management provides a pathway for sustainable and inclusive governance.
- There are opportunities to support and strengthen community-based fisheries management to support biodiversity, community livelihoods and Indigenous governance.
- Rights of nature and earth law provide an opportunity for us to rethink ocean governance through recognising our relationships with living ecosystems.
- Collective principles might be able to provide safeguards in support of ocean stewardship.

Presentations

Bensley Viranamanga, Student, University of the South Pacific (USP). Integrated Ocean Management: A Pathway to Sustainable and Inclusive Ocean Governance
Integrated ocean management (IOM) is a holistic approach to ocean governance that fundamentally emphasises sustainability, equity and robust cross-sectoral coordination.

IOM is particularly critical in the Pacific, where ecological health and cultural identity are deeply intertwined with and reliant upon marine systems. It seeks to balance diverse human uses of the ocean with the long-term health of marine ecosystems, ensuring benefits for current and future generations.

IOM offers a sustainable, inclusive and adaptive approach to marine resource governance that effectively and equitably addresses the complex challenges of food security, livelihoods, climate change, overfishing and habitat degradation.

For the Pacific, regional cooperation is key for IOM, facilitated by frameworks (such as the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy [PIROP]) and key institutions (SPC, FFA and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement [PNA]) that promote harmonised legal approaches for sustainable marine governance. Traditional knowledge systems and regional policy frameworks will need to be synergistically integrated. While there are challenges, there is growing regional momentum towards advancing IOM in the Pacific.

Ariella D'Andrea, Legal Adviser, SPC. Community-based fisheries management towards 30 x 30 biodiversity targets

In 2022, member states of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets out four long-term goals for 2050 and 23 actionable targets for 2030. One of the commitments is that countries will protect 30% of their terrestrial, coastal, marine and inland water areas by 2030.

In the Pacific, community-based fisheries management (CBFM) efforts have been growing and are being scaled up through support for effective monitoring, control and surveillance. Strengthening local fisheries governance through participatory decision-making that promotes voluntary compliance will ultimately lead to effective management of marine and aquatic resources.

Coastal CBFM areas, along with large marine protected areas, can help achieve the 30 x 30 commitment. In the CBD, the term used is "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs). Effective management of coastal areas relies on inclusive governance, with legal frameworks that recognise the role of local communities and integrate their knowledge, rights and responsibilities.

Noemie Bardaro, Environment and Public Policies Consultant, Ecorisinsights. Rethinking ocean governance: centring Indigenous knowledge in a new legal paradigm

As highlighted at the United Ocean Conference 2025, the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) demands a shift: a new legal paradigm rooted in Pacific realities for integrated, inclusive and climate-resilient governance. Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) must also be treated as fundamental, not as an add-on. Customary systems are more than data – they are legitimate, place-based governance and legal systems and are being recognised as such as part of a global shift.

Earth law was introduced as a body of law that protects Earth's interconnected life systems; it recognises nature as a legal subject with rights (not as property). Examples from Ecuador and New Zealand were cited.

A paradigm shift requires moving from inclusion to recognition and from domination to protection. While there are many questions about how this would be operationalised legally, Earth law presents an opportunity to recognise the ocean as a legal subject, thereby strengthening Indigenous knowledge-led co-governance.

Philippa Louey, Research Fellow at the Pacific Security College, Australian National University. Surveying seabed actors and governance frameworks in the Pacific

The Pacific Islands region has been central to the seabed minerals sector ever since the discovery of deep-sea minerals in the 19th century. After decades of exploration, the sector is on the cusp of transitioning to seabed mining, with many Pacific nations facing a decision on whether to proceed with this new form of resource extraction and, perhaps more importantly, how to govern it effectively.

There are differing opinions across the region on deep-sea minerals, and seabed activities are accelerating (minerals, subsea cables, research), involving many actors, including contractors, technical partners and engaged governments. Seven interconnected areas of interest were highlighted: justice, knowledge, development, geopolitics, governance, ecosystem health, and cooperation and coordination.

As global interest in seabed minerals continues to intensify, the need for transparent regional discussions on seabed minerals is now more than ever. The February 2025 Deep Sea Minerals High-level Talanoa was a positive first step; however, more work remains if the Pacific is to extend its global ocean governance leadership to the seafloor.

Malakai Vakautawale, Maritime Boundaries Adviser, SPC. Defining the Pacific outer limits: extended continental shelf data, analysis, and deposits

Securing maritime boundaries in the Pacific is integral to ocean governance and management across the Blue Pacific Continent. The Pacific remains a leading global voice on maritime boundaries through key regional declarations, including the 2021 Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones and the 2023 Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood.

Of the 48 shared maritime boundaries in the region, 36 have been settled by signed treaties (in force), 12 are under negotiation, and four have treaties signed but awaiting ratification. Refer to the Pacific Maritime Boundaries Dashboard for progress and relevant information on Pacific Island maritime boundaries and zones.

Work is also ongoing on extended continental shelf (ECS) submissions, with 14 countries having made 19 submissions to date. Under UNCLOS, States may claim an extended continental shelf beyond 200 nm if the natural prolongation of their land territory meets specific criteria. The purpose is to allow coastal States to exercise sovereign rights over seabed resources beyond 200 nm, subject to international review. Submissions for ECS require supporting scientific and technical data. Seafloor measurements (bathymetric data) and other information are needed to determine the extent of the ECS.

Recognising the importance of completing all maritime boundaries, the Pacific Community, in collaboration with CROP agencies and partners, developed the Maritime Boundaries Engagement and Advocacy Strategy in 2025. This strategy advocates the urgent completion of boundary work to achieve 100% ocean management in the region. Securing maritime borders provides certainty about the activities that countries can undertake in the maritime zones they have established within their ocean space.

There is great urgency to complete this work to establish 100% of maritime boundaries, given the compounding impacts of climate change, sea-level rise, deep-sea mineral exploration and the need to manage existing resources, ranging from commercial fisheries to marine genetic resources. Under the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Ocean Policy Statement 2021, the Pacific remains strongly committed to achieving 100% management of the ocean and its resources.

Hugh Govan, Consultant on oceans and communities. (USP) and Watisoni Lalavanua, Fisheries Officer at Wildlife Conservation Society (SPC). A triple win for biodiversity, community livelihoods and indigenous governance: harnessing 30 by 30 for maximum impact

A global commitment to ensure that 30% of marine areas are effectively conserved and managed through protected areas by 2030 has been promoted globally and adopted by several Pacific Island countries. There is concern that to meet this target, Pacific Island countries are focusing on establishing large marine protected areas, which, if not adequately supported, will result in unmanaged "paper parks".

Most Pacific Islands have inadequate systems for enforcing and managing coastal conservation, with insufficient staffing and budgets that do not extend to provincial, local or island councils.

Many communities practise community-based fisheries management, and strategies are in place to extend it, but these are unsupported. Coastal communities depend on coastal resources for food security and livelihoods, and it is imperative to improve coastal conservation.

An alternative approach is proposed: establishing a co-management framework in which communities assume stewardship of areas beyond their customary rights. These artisanal stewardship areas would provide a buffer against industrial fishing, secure community livelihoods and count toward conservation commitments, such as the 30% protection target.

Artisanal stewardship areas already exist in Tuvalu, the Cook Islands, Samoa and Palau, where co-management of areas exists beyond customary boundaries, for example, from three to twelve nautical miles. This co-management, with the necessary support, would also enable better enforcement and protection against illegal fishing. Legal and institutional systems will be required, as will a framework for negotiating and designating appropriate protections, including marine protected areas.

A call to action is for philanthropies to join in protecting the lifeblood of communities – the coastal and territorial waters.

Ocean accounts: From data to decisions – supporting ocean governance in the Pacific

Moderator: University of New South Wales (UNSW)/Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP)

Objective: To build understanding of ocean accounts and their value in ocean policy, reporting and decision-making.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Ocean accounts integrate environmental, economic and social ocean data into a standardised framework that aligns with existing national accounting systems used by statistical offices and finance ministries.
- The framework addresses fragmented ocean information scattered across agencies, enabling countries to track progress on commitments and policies to make evidence-based decisions.
- Fiji and Vanuatu presented their national experiences implementing ocean accounts, highlighting regional progress and practical approaches to overcome data challenges.
- GOAP is developing a cloud-based infrastructure that combines local project data with publicly available datasets like Digital Earth Pacific to create comprehensive ecosystem accounts and interactive dashboards for decision-making.

- Ocean accounts reveal connections between ocean health, economic production and community well-being that GDP alone misses, supporting implementation of regional Pacific strategies and policies like the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Presentations

Elizabeth (Liz) Hollaway, Policy and Governance Specialist at UNSW Sydney's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform

Ocean accounts compile consistent, comparable ocean-related data within a structured framework, similar to national accounts/statistics. The goal is to provide a standard information system for ocean policy, reporting, decision-making and monitoring changes in ocean wealth and ocean-based economic activity. Ocean accounts align with existing international statistical standards, which often fail to distinguish ocean from land-based data. Ocean accounts track environmental stocks (amount and condition) and services (storm protection, carbon storage, fish nursery habitats).

Oceans are complex systems, and related data is often scattered across ministries and organisations. Ocean accounts capture flows between the environment, the economy and society.

Andrew Coriakula, Ocean Specialist, Fiji Ministry of Environment and Climate Change

Pacific Island sea areas are significantly larger than land areas, and national economies rely heavily on fisheries, tourism, ports and shipping. Coastal communities depend on mangroves, seagrasses and coral reefs for protection and food. Ocean wealth, however, is often invisible in budgets, development plans and official statistics.

Ocean accounts provide an internationally recognised statistical framework aligned with the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and enable the linkage of environmental changes to economic performance. Ocean accounts can provide Ministries of Finance and Planning with evidence needed to justify ocean management investments.

The main challenges to effective ocean accounting are under-resourcing of national statistics offices and the lack of a single repository for data, which is scattered across multiple agencies, NGOs and research entities.

Steve William Hango, Senior Desk Officer to the Oceans and Maritime Affairs Division, Vanuatu's Department of Foreign Affairs

After establishing protected areas through traditional governance, the next step is determining their value. Ocean accounts are seen as the "icing on the cake", a way to understand what is being protected. The concept of ocean accounts was introduced after Vanuatu had revised its National Oceans Policy and completed its Marine Spatial Plan. In Vanuatu's context, ocean accounts are about "adding value to our resources". Collaboration with other government agencies, such as the Ministry of Statistics and the Ministry of Finance, helped to assign value to protected spaces.

Cheryl Joy Fernandez-Abila, Research Fellow at UNSW's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform. Case studies in Indonesia and Vietnam

Indonesia: a pilot programme for ocean accounts was launched in the Gili Matra Marine Protected Area, which includes the famous islands of Gili Air, Gili Meno and Gili Trawangan.

The pilot compiled accounts of ecosystem assets, including coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves, along with economic and environmental flows.

- Expanding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Sustainable, quota-based fishing
- Sustainable aquaculture
- Controlling coastal development
- Combating marine pollution

In Indonesia, ocean accounts serve four critical functions: informing decision-making, highlighting economic and environmental trade-offs, prioritising conservation (with a goal of 30% MPA by 2045) and promoting transparency. The initiative is now formally embedded in the National Development Plan (2025–2029).

Vietnam: a pilot for ocean accounts was completed in March in Quảng Ninh province, home to the world-renowned Ha Long Bay. This area is a hotspot for tourism, aquaculture and shipping. The accounts measured assets such as mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass, as well as environmental pressures such as solid waste and emissions.

The study found that tourism accounts for approximately 11% of the local gross regional product. Nationally, Vietnam's ocean economy accounts for 7.2% of GDP. By combining asset data with governance assessments, the pilot has established a crucial baseline for scaling up ocean accounting nationwide.

Elizabeth (Liz) Hollaway, Policy and Governance Specialist at UNSW Sydney's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform

The Secretariat for the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership engages with countries on a demand basis; countries approach them for help. Workshops have been conducted in countries including Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, involving diverse ocean-sector actors. Workshops cover ocean account topics: introduction, training, priority setting, data availability and development guidance.

Support is also provided through pilot projects, such as an ocean account pilot for a Maldives atoll. The pilot included gap funding, local community training in seagrass hatching, the use of satellite data and curriculum development for local university master's programmes. Continued engagement in the Maldives includes extending the atoll project and conducting national workshops.

In discussion, it was noted that customary traditional governance is often overlooked in policy decisions; national legislation typically does not recognise a chief's authority to declare a protected area.

Building integrated ocean accounts for the Blue Pacific: Data, collaboration and policy action (workshop)

Moderators: Elizabeth (Liz) Hollaway, Policy and Governance Specialist at UNSW Sydney's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform and Cheryl Joy Fernandez-Abila, Research Fellow at UNSW's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform

Objective: To raise awareness of the key concepts and components of ocean accounts and explore how these align with and support existing national and regional policy frameworks and planning tools.

This workshop session was built directly on the previous panel session on ocean accounting, shifting from presentations to practice. Participants participated in a hands-on group simulation exercise using building blocks and Post-it notes to represent the roles of data generators, compilers and users. The approach emphasised experiential learning to mirror real-world challenges of fragmented data,

integration needs and the importance of collaboration. Data sovereignty, traditional knowledge and the sustainable blue economy were explored, and outputs were synthesised into a shared model for the Pacific Ocean Data Platform.

United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) – next steps for the Pacific

Moderator: Dr Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)

Objective: To explore the outcomes and opportunities arising from the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), held in Nice, France in June 2025.

Panellists

Andrew Coriakula, Ocean Specialist, Fiji Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Toney Tevi, Legal Innovation & Climate Justice, Head of the Maritime & Ocean Affairs Division, Vanuatu
Semi Malaki, Deputy Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister, Maritime Zones & Statehood, Tuvalu
Brendon Pasisi, Vice President, Niue Ocean Wide NOW
Brian Akwasia, Ocean and Climate Desk Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands
Jerome Aucan, Head of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS), SPC
Maloni Siga, Project Manager, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA)

Key discussions and takeaways

- UNOC provided an opportunity to align national priorities with global commitments.
- In the lead-up to UNOC, the Pacific built alignment and ocean momentum through the Honiara Summit on SDG 14.4 and an ocean ministerial meeting.
- Pacific Island countries showed political leadership on the global stage, showcasing commitments and highlighting challenges.
- Key initiatives showcased at UNOC include the Niue Ocean Wide conservation credits, a proposed dedicated legal treaty on sea-level rise, national ocean policies and ratifications of the agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) need to ensure access to long-term sustainable financing to operationalise and implement commitments made at UNOC.
- There is an imperative to include traditional governance in planning and policy and to consider the connections/cultural heritage linked to the land and ocean, especially when considering relocation options.
- Continued advocacy for a legally binding international treaty on plastic pollution is needed.
- Inclusivity is essential – youth from rural communities, village governance and inclusion of remote communities.
- Building the capacity of youths to be included in policy and at the national level through mentorship pathways.

Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ)

Moderator: Madeleine Pears, Ocean Policy Officer, Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)

Objectives:

- To highlight Pacific leadership and priorities in negotiations for the BBNJ Agreement.
- To provide an update on the BBNJ process to date, including ratification and implementation.
- To strengthen awareness and understanding of the BBNJ Agreement, including how it could be implemented in the Pacific.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The BBNJ Agreement will come into force on January 17 2026.
- The agreement addresses legislative gaps relating to resources in the areas of high seas beyond their national jurisdictions.
- Pacific SIDS played a leadership role for equity (full recognition of special circumstances of Small Island States), traditional knowledge and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC), and adjacency (what happens outside our borders is of interest to us). However, to date, only seven Pacific island countries have ratified the agreement.
- Pacific nations are working together to set maritime boundaries and create marine protected areas, although challenges like politics, fishing and legal issues remain.
- The Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific stress the role of Pacific people as custodians of the ocean.
- There is a need to focus on readiness to implement the BBNJ through cooperation and strong partnerships for the future. The High Seas Alliance can support Pacific nations' work on BBNJ implementation and has produced guides and supporting materials.
- The BBNJ Agreement is significant for Pacific Island countries as it supports their long-standing work to protect the ocean. It helps close gaps in the law on cross-border resource sharing and underscores stewardship as a key priority.

Presentations

Dr Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC). Opening remarks

A significant milestone in ocean governance was reached with the ratification of the BBNJ Agreement. The agreement will enter into force on January 17 2026. Seven Pacific Islands have ratified the agreement (Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu).

The BBNJ provides a framework to organise the management of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, helping to close legal management gaps. The Ocean Commissioner stressed the importance of coordination and collaboration for the BBNJ Agreement in the Pacific region and urged the promotion of an integrated, holistic approach to managing the ocean as one.

The Pacific BBNJ group should now pivot to address the needs of member countries in implementing the details of the negotiations.

Joan Yang, Chief of Staff at Permanent Mission of Palau to the United Nations. Overview of the BBNJ Agreement and Pacific Priorities during the BBNJ negotiations

The BBNJ Agreement addresses the gap in international law regarding the unequal sharing of benefits from resources in areas beyond national borders. There has been no one to protect areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Pacific Islands region has been at the forefront of the BBNJ efforts. The BBNJ preamble highlights the concept of stewardship:

> *Desiring to act as stewards of the ocean in areas beyond national jurisdiction on behalf of present and future generations by protecting, caring for and ensuring responsible use of the marine environment, maintaining the integrity of ocean ecosystems and conserving the inherent value of biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.*

Key principles and/or key concepts highlighted are:

- Principle of equity enables fairness in the implementation of international law and the recognition of the special circumstances of Small Island Developing States.
- Proper reflection of traditional knowledge – complementarity of scientific information and traditional knowledge, where the science and technical expertise of traditional knowledge holders is recognised, and Indigenous people are important stakeholders. Noted that there are challenges as to how to operationalise this, e.g. how to write a TOR for a scientific and technical body and include traditional knowledge.
- Traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources should only be shared with free prior consent.
- Cooperation and coordination – all relevant sectors need to be incorporated, agreeing not to undermine each other.
- Adjacency (not a principle in the agreement but operationalised in the agreement). For the Pacific, this is important because it recognises that events outside our borders are of interest to us as coastal states. The concept of "adjacency" holds that, at a minimum, countries should be actively informed and consulted when projects in areas beyond their borders, including high-seas pockets, are contemplated.

The BBNJ agreement needs 60 states to ratify it before it can enter into force. This threshold was reached on September 19 2025, and the agreement will officially enter into force on January 17 2026 (120 days after the 60th State deposited its ratification).

A Conference of the Parties (COP) must be convened within one year of the agreement's entry into force. The COP is required to confirm several key elements, including financing arrangements, the clearing-house mechanism, rules of procedure and terms of reference for subsidiary bodies such as the Scientific and Technical Body. A Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) is currently working on these matters.

Tony Kabasi, Team Leader for ocean management and literacy, SPC. Securing 100% of maritime zones in the Blue Pacific Continent

The Blue Pacific Continent is home to over 42 million people across 24 Pacific Island countries and territories, and spans more than 42 million km^2 of ocean space. Pacific Islands hold stewardship of 30% of the world's exclusive economic zones.

Across the region, 48 locations have maritime boundaries between two countries. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) divides the ocean into maritime zones, which determine how much ocean area falls within a state's jurisdiction and what lies beyond it. Since 2001, work has been ongoing to map and negotiate treaties between countries with shared boundaries. Thirty-six out of the 48 shared locations are now under treaty. There is still significant work to be done:

- Six treaties remain to be ratified and brought into force.
- Twelve shared boundaries have yet to be negotiated.
- Five high seas limits have yet to be declared.

It is imperative to finalise these remaining maritime boundaries to facilitate management-related matters.

Danielle Smith, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Blue Economy CRC, University of Queensland. Marine protected areas beyond national jurisdictions (MPABNJ): Lessons from the successes and challenges of existing MPABNJs

There are 14 marine protected areas across different countries, managed under various agreements.

- There are two main MPABBNJ, and they are in the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean; within this, only the member countries make decisions.
- Under the CCAMCR MPABBNJ, there are two MPAs, and they are the Southern Orkney Islands (2009) and the Ross Sea MPA (2016).
- The Northeast Atlantic Region, covered by the OSPAR convention, has 12 MPAs in the ABNJ.

Governance in this context is complex, with challenges arising from scientific jurisdiction, geopolitical considerations, fishing interests and legal constraints. Lessons learned from these marine protected areas (MPAs) highlight the importance of agreed-upon selection criteria and decision-making processes; application of the Precautionary Principle; clearly defined conservation objectives; effective champions; strong political commitment and willingness; coordinated partnerships; incorporation of Indigenous science; and robust management, monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

Tekau Frere, Advisor at the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, High Seas Alliance. The BBNJ Agreement: a tool to help realise the Blue Pacific Ocean Commitments

The High Seas Alliance was established in 2011 with the mission to conserve and protect the high seas, including the seabed. It has over 70 members, including the IUCN. The Pacific Islands region has committed to ocean conservation and management through the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, which sets the vision for a "*secure future for Pacific islands countries and territories based on sustainable development, management and conservation of our ocean*." This is also reflected strongly in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, where the ocean and natural environment are among the key values.

Implementation opportunities of the BBNJ include:

- Strengthen regional ocean governance, noting that global governance is fragmented, lacking a common objective.
- Advance ocean custodianship. There is a need to include a regional approach to our ocean not limited to exclusive economic zone (EEZ) boundaries.

- Support responses to climate change.
- Opportunities to meet capacity and technological needs.
- Increase benefits from biodiversity.

Considerations for readiness include:

- Countries need to ratify and domesticate the agreement (only seven Pacific Island countries have ratified the treaty), becoming Parties to be adequately prepared for rights and obligations.
- Domestication is complex, but necessary.
- CROP agencies need to be BBNJ ready, e.g., supporting members that will be party to BBNJ in needs-based assessment, and regional architecture needs to be fit for purpose.
- New regional ocean policy to consider BBNJ and how the agreement can support existing national initiatives (Part III).
- Readiness of traditional knowledge holders and Pacific peoples – *how are traditional knowledge holders going to be effectively involved? What are the processes for meaningful participation of IPLC, including as traditional knowledge holders?*

Tok stori: Pacific resilience through the planetary crisis and international law

Moderator: Belinda Rikimani, Climate Activist and a One Young World Ambassador from Solomon Islands

Objectives:

- To dissect the legal and practical implications of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion for ocean governance and climate action in the Pacific.
- To showcase powerful, real-world examples of how members of the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN) are tackling the triple planetary crisis through integrated, community-led initiatives.
- To foster a dynamic dialogue on creating and implementing rights-based, justice-centred climate policies.
- To inspire and equip conference participants with actionable strategies for advocacy, research and partnership.
- To model a Pacific-led moderation style that can be adopted for more inclusive and impactful global forums.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The ICJ Advisory Opinion (ICJAO) marks a historic event and is a testament to what can be achieved through persistence and partnership.
- This is an international advisory opinion that will have the impact of influencing international laws for the benefit of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- The success of the ICJAO is a tool that needs to be utilised by countries to their benefit – further communication and awareness raising is required on this.

Panellists

Steve William Hango, Senior Desk Officer to the Oceans and Maritime Affairs Division, Vanuatu's Department of Foreign Affairs

Solomon Yeo, Campaign Director of the Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, Solomon Islands

Rodrick Hollands, Lawyer, Solomon Islands

Panel summary

On 23 July 2025, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a unanimous opinion that all states are obligated under international law to protect climate policies, prevent further harm and cooperate to address climate change. The legal opinion states that nations can be held legally accountable for their greenhouse gas emissions.

The ICJ Opinion is the culmination of years of effort, initiated in 2019 by a group of 27 students at the University of the South Pacific who collaborated with the Government of Vanuatu, the Pacific Islands Forum and other youth organisations globally to bring the issue to the attention of leaders.

This panel session featured some of the original group of students who led the work beyond their student years. The panellists shared their insights and the human story behind the effort to bring the issue to the ICJ. They highlighted the power of partnerships, collaboration and resilience, and they acknowledged the support they received from their university professors. The ICJ Opinion marks a historic milestone and is a testament to what can be achieved when countries work together.

The 2025 success story is the second AO that was successfully advocated by Pacific Island countries – the first ICJ ruling was in 1996 in reference to the threat of nuclear weapons.

Although much remains to be done, the panel urged Pacific Island countries to celebrate this significant "win" and reflect on how a united approach, with many partnerships and considerable hard work, has led to this ruling. The ICJAO is a tool that can be utilised for the benefit of SIDS, and all conference participants were called to use it in the most bold, creative ways possible.

A recommendation is to inform communities about the advisory opinion and identify outputs that would directly benefit them. The community vulnerability assessment would be a starting point.

The panellists highlighted the use of science and the law to achieve something great for our region and for humanity. In the longer term, there is a need to identify financing tools, quantify the impact of climate change, and for SIDs to determine how the ICJ ruling can provide financial assistance in this crisis.

The call to action was: 'The Future is for the competent, be good at it, be better at it'.

Consultation on draft Integrated Ocean Management (IOM) Guidelines for the Pacific

Moderators: Tony Kabasi, Team Leader for ocean management and literacy (SPC) and Madeleine Pears, Ocean Policy Officer, Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)

Objective: This workshop-based session aimed to gather input on the "Draft Guidelines for Integrated Ocean Management in the Pacific: A practical framework for implementing IOM at national and regional levels".

Summary

Integrated ocean management (IOM) is a holistic, cross-sector approach to ocean governance that emphasises sustainability, equity and coordination; it is vital for the Pacific, where ecosystems and cultures are tightly linked to the sea (food security, heritage, livelihoods).

The region can utilise community-based fisheries/resource management (CBFM/CBRM) and other OECMs (other effective area-based conservation measures) to help achieve the Global Biodiversity Framework's 30 × 30 target (to protect 30% of land/ocean by 2030). CBFM can be positioned to close the "coastal gap" often left outside large EEZ-scale MPAs (within the 12-nm territorial sea).

This consultative session identified the following recommendations for IOM:

- Advance harmonised legal and policy approaches regionally; pair science data with faster, accessible sharing through networks.
- Formalise community inclusion (chiefs/leaders), translation support and women/youth engagement in IOM processes.
- Use adaptive management linking science to policy, maintain and deepen regional partnerships for resilience.
- Recognise CBFM/OECMs formally in 30 × 30 accounting, adopt binding national legislation where feasible and support customary law with documentary tools.
- Use IUCN categories and a common terminology to streamline mapping/reporting across the Pacific (HOF17 framework as regional anchor).
- Prioritise coastal-zone CBFM to fill the near-shore gap while coordinating EEZ-scale MPAs.

Science, stewardship and solutions: Advancing Ocean Decade actions for a sustainable future

Moderator: Katy Soapi, Coordinator for partnerships and engagement at PCCOS (SPC)

Objective: To explore the innovative initiatives that are shaping the course of ocean science and ocean management in the Pacific region during the Ocean Decade, particularly emphasising indigenous knowledge systems and regional priorities.

Key discussions and takeaways

The session introduced and discussed progress on actions endorsed as "Decade Actions" under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development – the Ocean Decade (2021 – 2030).

Jerome Aucan, Head of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS) SPC. Background on the Ocean Decade and regional coordination

The Ocean Decade aims to reverse the decline of the oceans through knowledge generation, international legitimacy through the UN General Assembly and regional collaboration. Its vision is "the science we need for the ocean we want," and its mission is to deliver transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development and to connect people with our ocean. Despite funding constraints, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to drive greater investment in science and data to preserve the ocean. Characteristics of transformative ocean science would include:

- Transformative in action and outcomes
- Move beyond business as usual
- Harness science and embrace local and indigenous knowledge
- Co-design and co-deliver in a multi-stakeholder environment
- Strive for generational, gender and geographic diversity
- Be solution-focused and pay attention to science for sustainable development
- Actions need to be big, audacious and forward-looking
- Share openly and re-use

Juney Ward, Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Adviser (SPREP) and Michael Jensen, Marine Species Genetics Coordinator (WWF). Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan 2021-2030: Threatened and migratory marine species science

The Pacific Coral Reef Action Plan (2021–2030) focuses on four priorities: habitat and biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries, climate change resilience, and sustainable tourism.

The Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme supports Pacific Island nations in strengthening the management and conservation of key marine species (including seabirds, whales and dolphins, sharks and rays, dugongs and marine turtles). A range of resources has been developed to assist these efforts, including management manuals, a regional database, symposium proceedings, surveys and training programmes. Training on CITES-related reporting and support for developing national plans of action for particular species has been provided.

Understanding marine turtle connectivity – how turtles migrating between countries and ecosystems are linked – is vital for effective conservation and management. The ShellBank global DNA database holds over 15,000 open-source samples, providing a valuable tool for tracing turtle origins and migration pathways. By combining genetic data with information from nesting sites and satellite tracking, initiatives such as the Blue Corridors for Turtles project are helping to map these connections and highlight critical habitats.

Currently, however, no important marine areas (IMAs) have been formally designated for marine turtles. Recognising and protecting these key migratory and foraging corridors is an essential next step toward safeguarding regional turtle populations and the ecosystems they sustain.

Kevin Mackay, Marine Geologist, Earth Sciences New Zealand. Seabed 2030 and the challenge to map the World's Oceans – Pacific perspective

Only 27% of the seafloor is mapped and much remains unknown. Knowledge of the impact of underwater geography and elevation on biology, species distribution and ecosystems remains limited.

The Nippon Foundation–GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project (Seabed 2030) aims to gather and compile existing data and promote ocean mapping, enabling free access to a fully mapped ocean floor by 2030. Endorsed by the UN Decade for Ocean Science, Seabed 2030 operates in four regional centres. The Pacific Ocean Regional Centre is based in Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ).

Austin Bowden-Kerby, Founder of Coral for Conservation. Active coral-focused adaptation, the Reefs of Hope Ocean Decade Action

As coral reefs decline due to intensifying marine heat waves, strategies have been developed to accelerate natural coral reef adaptation and recovery processes. Reefs of Hope is a decade-Long initiative focused on coral reef restoration and adaptation. The project has trained NGO and resort staff, as well as indigenous communities in six Pacific Island nations, to work with heat-adapted corals to reinforce fish habitat and to build resilience within existing locally managed MPAs.

The coral reef adaptation strategy focuses on three key aspects: 1) prevention (preventing further loss of heat adapted corals); 2) restoring reproduction (increasing supply of larvae in strategic areas); and 3) rebooting natural recovery processes (by using surplus coral biomass generated within nurseries to create densely planted recovery patches designed to maximise fish and invertebrate habitat for improved ecological functioning and to restore strong settlement signals to enhance coral larval settlement to the reef).

Coral extinction is a real threat, and it is urgent to act now by involving diverse groups, including youth, students, the tourism industry and international initiatives such as the UN Decade.

Resilient coastal ecosystems Decade of Ocean Science (consultation workshop)

Moderators: Winifereti Nainoca, Pacific Islands Decade Collaborative Centre Coordinator (SPC) and Pierre-Yves Charpentier, Innovation & Design Adviser (SPC)

Objective: To gather input from different stakeholder groups in the Pacific Islands and agree on a work area for the development of an action plan and future project proposal, contributing to climate-resilient coastal ecosystems through ocean science, as part of a project funded by Japan and coordinated by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

The consultations consisted of two complementary sessions, each featuring introductory presentations by experts on previously identified areas of work. The discussions focused on specific needs related to science and knowledge, capacity building and the integration of traditional knowledge holders.

The sessions also provided an opportunity for different stakeholders to share their views on how they could collaborate more effectively to build coastal ecosystems that are resilient to climate change.

Key discussions and takeaways

- SPC recently developed the Coastal Fisheries and Climate Change Strategy that lays out a 10-year roadmap with 27 practical actions to safeguard coastal fisheries and aquaculture against escalating climate threats such as stock declines, extreme weather and habitat loss. This strategy integrates ongoing regional work, scientific findings from the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) and lessons from past initiatives.
- Carbon stock assessment on sequestered carbon in mangroves and seagrasses has been calculated and mapped in four countries within the region.
- The investment in early warning systems has been one of the most cost-effective solutions to climate change impacts within the region.

- The status of seafloor mapping within the Pacific is less than 10%. To put this into context, the Pacific Ocean accounts for 20% of the world's exclusive economic zones, with only 1% of the global ocean mapped.
- Ocean literacy is significant for ocean governance.
- The different forms/identities of MPAs require an understanding of their objective, as this would inform their successful management.
- Data must be clear and concise.
- Community well-being needs to be paramount for management approaches such as MPAs to be supported and recognised.
- Place the onus on donors to create and fund initiatives that will be able to sustain themselves when funding is no longer available.
- Funding must recognise the uniqueness of traditional knowledge for Pacific Island countries for tailor-made interventions. This includes support for communicating traditional knowledge, which may not always follow the Western model.

Presentations

Marie Lecomte, Climate Change Project Development Specialist for Coastal Fisheries and Aquaculture, SPC. Coastal Fisheries

Communities rely on coastal fisheries, which are often the primary source of food and income. Women play a significant role in coastal fisheries, contributing to household food security. In recognition of escalating climate threats such as stock declines, extreme weather and habitat loss, SPC has developed the Coastal Fisheries and Climate Change Strategy to elevate the shared concerns and objectives of Pacific Island countries in relation to the projected risks and impacts of climate change on coastal fisheries and aquaculture, and to map out strategic actions to address these.

The six core objectives are: adaptation and resilience; climate mitigation; loss and damage; science and knowledge; climate finance; and policy and advocacy. To achieve these objectives, 27 actions have been tailored at the national and regional levels. In the medium term, the implementation of this strategy at regional and national levels will be costed and will enable resource mobilisation approaches tailored to the various donors.

Turang Teuea, SPREP-MACBLUE Coordinator, SPREP. Mangrove relating to blue carbon assessment and trading

SPREP, in partnership with SPC and GIZ, has been assisting four Pacific countries in updating existing maps and improving carbon quantification in mangrove areas. A recent activity led by the Australian-based consultants, Alluvium Consulting Ltd, concluded carbon stock assessment for the four countries (evaluation of carbon absorbed and sequestered in mangroves and seagrasses).

Herve Damlamian, Team Leader Ocean Prediction and Monitoring, SPC. Early warning systems (EWS)

The early warning system (EWS) has been elevated at the national, regional and international levels. It is one of the most cost-effective solutions to climate change. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, for every $1 invested in early warning, you get a $10 return. The end goal of EWS is to save lives. The EWS operates under four pillars, which include:

- Strengthening risk knowledge by investing in high-resolution data.

- Strengthening response to emergencies and preparedness, which informs decisions.
- Detection and warning services.
- Dissemination and warning services – holistic and people-centred approach.

Bipen Prakash, Pacific Islands Global Ocean Observing System Coordinator, SPC. Data Collection, Monitoring and Technology

Data is significant because it provides results-based information that helps people monitor and forecast hazards and track variables. Less than 10% of the Pacific seafloor has been mapped. The Pacific Ocean accounts for 20% of the world's EEZs, but the region's limited monitoring resources mean we have mapped only 1% of the global ocean.

Current challenges for this area of research include limited funding and the need to expand national ocean observation capacity and the number of trained experts across the region. Cross-sector collaboration would enable options for data discoverability and accessibility. Preventing vandalism of buoys and solar panel-powered machines is an additional challenge that requires awareness and understanding among coastal users.

Within the Pacific region, opportunities include access to rapidly evolving technology, for example, through the Ocean Portal with SPC. Furthermore, the unwavering support of local coastal communities in allowing researchers to gather data helps inform science and strengthen traditional knowledge in national ocean policies, which also provides a significant opportunity through national ocean committees.

Koila Finau, ECOP at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji. Ocean Literacy

Ocean literacy is understanding how our actions influence the ocean and how the ocean influences us. The ECOP programme intentionally includes real-life experiences to illustrate what ocean literacy entails. The influence of effective mentorship and alignment with relevant networks is an approach adopted through the programme to strengthen ocean literacy. Ocean literacy is critical to ocean governance, and the ECOP programme has raised optimism for a sustainable future.

Hugh Govan, Consultant on oceans and communities. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM)

Clean and healthy coastal ecosystems often include establishing MPAs as a management tool. To be most effective, MPAs should be in productive ecosystems or areas of high biodiversity. They require active management and enforcement. Management of MPAs differs in different areas – this includes locally acknowledged *tabu* sites, as well as the recently recognised terminology of OECM, which allows a broader approach to marine area-based conservation.

In the management of MPAs, it is recommended to clarify which *tabu* types are being implemented. With clear objectives, management is more feasible.

Konishi Rikiya, Director of Deep-Sea Earth Scientific Research, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan. Building climate resilience of coastal ecosystems with ocean science for a sustainable Pacific

The project period is 24 months, from April 2025 to March 2027, with funding provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. The research covers the Asia-Pacific region, with a focus on Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The project aims to strengthen SIDS-to-SIDS exchange and collaboration to build climate-resilient coastal ecosystems through ocean science. Pacific SIDS, which span the most significant ocean area of all SIDS regions, are

a priority group for ecosystem-based coastal management policies. However, limited human, financial and co-design resources, as well as gaps in understanding the benefits of investment and collaboration, have hindered the number of Decade Actions in the Pacific and access to data, technology and infrastructure.

Marine spatial planning

Five sessions were held on marine spatial planning (MSP), exploring Pacific approaches to MSP, national priorities and actions, and regional processes. Sessions build on one another and follow a variety of formats, including catalytic presentations, guided group work and breakout discussions.

Key discussions and takeaways (overall)

- MSP processes across the Pacific are progressing, but countries remain at different stages and require continued support to strengthen legislation, political commitment, and institutional coordination.
- Community/national alignment is critical, with customary knowledge, traditional ocean governance and community-based fisheries management (CBFM)/community-based resource management (CBRM) forming the foundation for adequate MSP.
- Tools and data platforms such as SeaSketch, Digital Earth Pacific and Ocean Accounts are increasingly important for planning, visualisation, monitoring and decision-making.
- Capacity constraints remain a core barrier, including limited technical skills, data management systems, legal interpretation and cross-sectoral coordination.
- Regional MSP approaches can add value by providing shared data standards, enabling transboundary cooperation and aligning national efforts with the 2050 Strategy and 30 x 30 targets.
- Countries consistently emphasised the need for coordinated support from CROP agencies, NGOs and donors, ensuring assistance is country-led, not donor-driven.
- Traditional knowledge and cultural values must remain central to MSP design, implementation and monitoring.
- Key challenges include sustainable financing, data governance, overlapping mandates, geographic isolation and maintaining community engagement.

Subnational to national MSP

Moderator: Vainuupo Jungblut, Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser, SPREP

Facilitators: Lysa Wini-Simeon, Early Career Researcher (Nia Tero NGO) & Hans Wendt, PhD Student (University of Sunshine Coast)

Objective: To explore how community-based and national initiatives are driving MSP from the ground up. Highlights integration of traditional knowledge, local leadership and national coordination.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Traditional knowledge and cultural values are integral to MSP and should be incorporated from the outset.

- Local initiatives can directly shape and inform national MSP policies.
- Successful planning depends on bridging institutional and cultural gaps, building trust and ensuring resources reach local communities, who act as frontline managers.
- Key needs identified were stronger cross-sectoral institutions, legal frameworks (e.g., Ocean Acts) and financial support to empower local communities.

Roundtable participants

Lysa Wini-Simeon, Early Career Researcher, **Nia Tero NGO**

Agnetha Vave-Karamui, Conservation Officer, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology, Solomon Islands

Rusiate Misikivosa, Conservation Officer, Lau Provincial Office, Fiji

Kaiea Awira, Project Manager, Ministry of Fisheries & Ocean Resources, Kiribati

Leausalilo Leilani Duffy, Technical Director at Conservation International, Samoa

Suemalo Foliga, Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Samoa

On alignment of national jurisdiction to community-level consultation, the following points were raised:

- Reform of ocean laws is essential to establishing MSP
- Improving ocean laws helps strengthen links between national and community participation
- National institutional structures and differing cultural perspectives can hinder alignment
- Improving shared knowledge at the national level through community consultation
- Cultural and traditional ocean ownership becomes a barrier to national initiatives
- Recognition of community needs and possible linkage to the national level
- Improving ocean policies and regulations
- Establish ocean organisation at the community level (has been done in Samoa)

Related to the community experiences on the national jurisdiction of the ocean, it was mentioned that:

Barriers: Communication and distribution to communities

- Information and data are not always effectively communicated or used
- Limited recognition of social implications and data limitations
- Weak policies and recommendations may undermine traditional ocean tenure systems

Success: Communication distribution to communities

- Improved integration and joint monitoring at the national and community levels
- Improve policy and recommendations establishment

Navigating national MSP: National and sectoral MSP – tools, policy and blue economy alignment

Moderator: Sally Bailey, Marine Spatial Planning Coordinator (SPC)

Objective: Shared understanding of national MSP implementation approaches and improved awareness of tools and data systems that support decision-making.

Key discussions and takeaways

- MSP is being applied as a cross-sectoral coordination tool and is increasingly recognised as a mechanism for balanced decision-making.
- Tools and data (e.g. DEP, Ocean Accounts) support national planning.
- Ocean literacy in this context includes building awareness and data fluency within agencies and sectors.

Roundtable participants

Judah Wamamberi, Inspection & Enforcement Officer (Maritime Compliance), Papua New Guinea Ports Corporation Limited
Papua New Guinea, with Australian support, is developing a new port while maintaining existing infrastructure and embedding marine conservation into planning, emphasising the need for regional cooperation.

Leausalilo Leilani Duffy, Technical Director, Conservation International (Samoa) and Suemalo Foliga, Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Samoa)
Samoa began its marine spatial planning (MSP) process in 2019, with the aim of legal adoption in 2025. Several partners, including IUCN, CI and BPC, were involved. SeaSketch was used to map and conduct broad consultations with communities, government and industry.

Kaiea Awira, Project Manager, Ministry of Fisheries & Ocean Resources, Kiribati
Kiribati, which launched its first MSP in 2016 through MacBIO, has since mandated that its Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) lead ocean governance, managing three separate EEZs using SeaSketch as a planning tool.

Maivunijale Waqa, Earth Observation Technical Assistant (SPC) and Nicholas Metherall, Earth Observation Officer (SPC). Digital Earth Pacific products (Satellite-Derived Bathymetry, coastline change monitoring, mangrove mapping)

Elizabeth (Liz) Hollaway, Policy and Governance Specialist at UNSW Sydney's Centre for Sustainable Development Reform. Ocean accounts

Caroline Ton, Fisheries Scientist (SPC). Fisheries Assessment modelling
Speakers highlighted different modelling approaches applied to MSP. The demonstrations showcased decision-support frameworks, such as ocean accounting, that provide data for MSP, highlight ecosystem assets and their relationships with human activities, and inform negotiations, with case studies in Thailand and Indonesia.

Offshore fisheries integration relies on ArcGIS, bycatch reduction models and traditional knowledge to fill coastal data gaps. Digital Earth Pacific offers a centralised data hub with marine habitat classification, enabling standardised mapping of land, inland and coastal use, supporting monitoring

of ecosystem change, protection priorities and resource-informed decision-making. Across all demonstrations, capacity needs included stronger legislative frameworks, political commitment and integration of maritime domain awareness (MDA) with MSP.

Regional ocean governance and MSP – from shared vision to collective action

Moderator: Madeleine Pears, Ocean Policy Officer, Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)

Objective: Improved understanding of how national efforts contribute to regional goals, especially the 2050 Strategy, and shared regional vision of how MSP, IOM and 30 x 30 targets intersect.

Key discussion points and takeaways

- Regional MSP requires shared tools, values and data standards.
- Cultural diplomacy, heritage and ecological connectivity matter.
- The 2050 Strategy provides the political anchor.
- Country 'lightning talks' showed varied progress, with some (like Vanuatu) developing new legislation that portrays explicitly traditional governance as a key component.
- A key lesson from the discussion was the need to align external support with country priorities and build MSP processes on existing community-based frameworks.

This session explored how integrated and participatory MSP processes support regional commitments and manage competing priorities. It established the link between global frameworks (UNCLOS, BBNJ) and regional vision, specifically the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Presentations highlighted that MSP supports both global commitments and manages competing priorities. Country lightning talks showed varied progress, with some (such as Vanuatu) developing new legislation that explicitly recognises traditional governance as a key component. A key takeaway from the discussion was the need to align support with country expectations and to build MSP processes by starting with existing community-based frameworks (CBFM/CBRM) and government-declared MPAs, thereby avoiding an additional administrative burden.

Pacific government dialogue on MSP: Successes, challenges and collective solutions (closed session for national government staff)

Facilitator: Hans Wendt, PhD Student (University of Sunshine Coast)

This closed roundtable brought government representatives together to discuss challenges and lessons learned, emphasising that MSP must be defined and implemented in the Pacific context, integrating traditional knowledge and cultural practices.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Participants reaffirmed that States retain full sovereignty over their ocean spaces and MSP processes.
- Major challenges included overlapping institutional mandates and siloed operations across sectors, hindering integrated implementation.
- There was a strong call for CROP agencies, NGOs and donors to improve coordination and ensure support is country-led rather than fragmented or donor-driven.

- Other identified needs included strengthening national spatial mapping capabilities, ensuring the protection of sensitive national data in regional tools and addressing the uncertainty around the effectiveness of offshore MPAs.
- Proposed solutions included exploring cross-sectoral use of maritime domain awareness (MDA) systems for MSP monitoring and enforcement.
- The consensus was that MSP is a national development issue, and the Pacific must lead its own MSP journey, grounded in traditional wisdom and shared responsibility

Pacific approaches to marine spatial planning

Moderator: Lucy Jacob, Senior Adviser for Pacific Ocean and Fisheries at the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and Bex Ansell, Marine Spatial Planning Implementation Lead at the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)

Objective: To highlight progress made by Pacific partners working on marine spatial planning, including efforts to build capability through practice in science, policy, governance and communications.

Key challenges identified

- Balancing economic development and conservation measures
- Determining how people can manage MSP within their jurisdiction (multi-level coordination)
- National Acts require review to support national MSP implementation fully
- Policy fragmentation and national-level coordination
- Increased awareness and education are needed to ensure sustained engagement
- Sustainable funding
- Geographic isolation

Lessons learned

- Clear political direction, communication ensures effective coordination
- Taking ownership of processes
- Data and analytics are critical in working with the communities
- Need for dedicated personnel for different tasks
- Maintaining strong relationships with partners
- Strategic planning, budgeting

Presentations

Halatoa Fua, Director of the National Environment Service, Cook Islands

Maria Tuoro, Director, Office of the Prime Minister, Marae Moana Coordination Office, Cook Islands

Kaiea Awira, Project Manager, Ministry of Fisheries & Ocean Resources, Kiribati

Brendon Pasisi, Vice President, Niue Ocean Wide NOW

Inez Faitala, Project Officer, Niue Ocean Wide NOW

Faye Siota, Senior research analyst at WorldFish in the Solomon Islands

Sylvester Diake, Project Manager, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Solomon Islands
Countries provided feedback on the progress of the NZMFAT-funded Climate and Biodiversity-Smart Marine Spatial Programme (CaB-Smart MSP) project.

The presentations illustrated that while legal frameworks may be in place (such as the Marae Moana Act 2017 in the Cook Islands), institutional fragmentation and technical capacity constraints often slow implementation. Niue's experience highlighted that relationships and local community engagement lead the way (achieving 100% village engagement) but are constrained by limited human capacity (population of 1700) and regional issues affecting local resources.

Key lessons emphasised that flexibility is essential in Pacific contexts, early engagement reduces delays, and cultural grounding is critical for resilience and relevance. Kiribati also highlighted that clear political direction ensures effective coordination, and there is a need for clear communication and ownership of processes. Breakout groups addressed persistent regional challenges related to capacity limitations, sustainable financing and cross-government coordination.

Sally Bailey, Marine Spatial Planning Coordinator (SPC) and Malcolm Fraser, Pacific Data Hub Programme Manager (SPC)
SPC reported on multi-country activities 1 and 4.

Multi-country activities 1: Capacity-building programme

A regional training needs survey (10 countries, 21 respondents) was conducted. An industry stakeholder committee was established, and three workshops were held with EQAP on micro-qualifications. Key challenges include limited technical capacity in GIS and data analysis, gaps in policy and legal interpretation, and low capacity in negotiation, conflict resolution and social dimensions. There is strong demand for accredited training, with a preference for modular learning, mentoring and coaching, and a need to better integrate traditional knowledge and local contexts. Next steps will address training needs through five online focus group discussions, the design of the MSP Leadership Training Cohort and two micro-qualifications on MSP, moving towards endorsement.

Multi-country activities 4: Data governance and management for MSP

Stakeholder workshops were conducted in Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Niue. Key challenges included data management, particularly issues related to centralisation and storage, data access, sharing and ownership, data translation, and limited capacity and resources. Key lessons highlighted the importance of clearly defining the purpose of data collection for maritime spatial planning (MSP) and recognising the value of qualitative insights.

Vainuupo Jungblut, Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser (SPREP) and Patea Setefano, CaB Smart MSP Project Coordinator (SPREP)
SPREP reported on multi-country activities 2 and 3.

Multi-country activities 2: Integrating traditional and ecological knowledge (TEK) into Kiribati and the Cook Islands

Multi-country activities 3: Developing indicators for climate & biodiversity smart MSP (Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Kiribati)

The implementation of these objectives faces several significant challenges:

- Limited technical and local capacity, including resource constraints and insufficient technical skills.
- Delays in participant confirmations and tight project timelines have affected coordination and progress.
- Overlaps with other MSP initiatives in the region, requiring careful alignment to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.
- Complex logistics are involved in managing activities across multiple island countries.

Discussions considered solutions to the identified challenges:

1. Capacity limitations – the shortage of technical expertise and local capacity are significant barriers. Improved coordination, targeted training and leveraging existing regional networks were suggested to strengthen implementation.

2. Sustainable implementation

- Finance: establishing a model like conservation trust funds could ensure long-term funding stability.
- Policy and legal frameworks: clearer alignment between legal mandates and policy strategies is needed to support MSP.
- Implementation: building on community knowledge and strengthening coordination are key to effective rollout.
- Planning: incorporating both short- and long-term MSP plans, supported by cost-benefit analyses, will enhance sustainability.

3. Cross-government and multi-stakeholder engagement – adequate MSP requires strong political support, capacity development for resource people, and coordination across government departments.

- Data sharing and governance need improvement to enable balanced decision-making.
- Traditional influence plays an important role in dispute resolution and should be integrated into stakeholder engagement processes.

Valuing and integrating traditional knowledge

For Pacific Island peoples, the ocean is central to cultural, traditional and spiritual well-being and livelihoods. Traditional knowledge and practices are not only alive in each culture but also guide scientific research and are being integrated into policy development and governance arrangements. Several sessions focused on learning from and safeguarding traditional knowledge, as well as on success stories and how best to inspire and engage young people.

Ocean wayfinders: Lessons from the past with our holders of wisdom

Moderator: Dr Filimon Manoni, Pacific Ocean Commissioner, OPOC

Key discussions points and takeaways

- This Q&A-style session explored how traditional Pacific knowledge and stewardship practices are valued in modern ocean governance and what further work is needed.
- Although the value of traditional knowledge is recognised in regional plans and policies, there is also a need to protect/safeguard traditional knowledge.
- Community-based conservation relies on acknowledging and supporting traditional knowledge, while gender inclusive approaches unlock the vast ocean knowledge held (for example) by women in communities.
- A challenge for scaling up community-based conservation in a large country is that the traditional knowledge is often localised.
- A key need is to engage young people, recognising that they often have other interests, and the challenge is to bridge the intergenerational gap, including addressing the diaspora issue (i.e. where the local expertise has grown up overseas and does not have the traditional knowledge).
- Language was highlighted as providing insight into what communities value and in connecting the past to the present.

Presentations

Maria Tuoro, Director, Office of the Prime Minister, Marae Moana Coordination Office, Cook Islands. Cook Islands Marae Moana Policy

There is growing interest in traditional canoe building across Pacific Island countries, including the Cook Islands. The government has three traditional *vaka*, with two master navigators actively teaching students traditional navigation methods. Challenges include the heavy reliance on diaspora capacity and external funding. There is also a shortage of qualified researchers within the country and a gap between national commitments/discussions and concrete action on the ground.

Hugh Govan, Consultant on oceans and communities. History of the integration of traditional knowledge into national and regional policies

The discussion highlighted traditional governance and its relation to values and knowledge about marine resources. Traditional knowledge, often embedded in community activities, was increasingly referenced and even integrated into regional policies, including PIROP 2002, the Regional Nature Conservation Strategy and the Pacific Climate Framework. Traditional knowledge was operationalised through the LMMA movement, where it served as the starting point. Traditional knowledge also informed LMMA activities, including seasonal closures based on spawning knowledge; spatial zoning

aligned with customary boundaries; enforcement and tenure legitimacy; and potential resilience and adaptive capacity.

Limited government budgets challenge the scaling of community-based fisheries management (CBFM) to support all communities (information, enforcement, monitoring). Reports often state that traditional knowledge is not being utilised due to the novelty of new ideas, further complicating the challenge.

Alice Clara Rore, PhD candidate, University of the South Pacific. Gender and governance
A gender-inclusive approach to ocean stewardship and governance can strengthen both traditional systems and policy from a linguistic perspective. At Balelea, North Malaita, four languages are spoken. Women in those communities are familiar with ocean governance but not with gender inclusivity. Within the concept of inclusion, it is recognised that there is a need to embrace their unique lived experiences and support collective decision-making and leadership.

Maloni Siga, Project Manager, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA). Youth reflection
Reflections of youth on traditional knowledge: Maloni discussed how to link past lessons to future aspirations, offering insights from a youth perspective. Traditional governance and stewardship remain the living foundations of Pacific Ocean management today. This is seen within customary stewardship, where fisheries governance is subject to the chief's sole authority. Recommendations include engaging elders to co-decide mapping priorities, designing systems for continuity, and maintaining data that is concise, clear and aligned with the stewardship role, while respecting community sovereignty. This approach aims to build bridges across governance, knowledge and policy, connecting past lessons to future actions for sustainable Pacific Ocean management.

Case studies of the successful integration of traditional knowledge and science to inform marine management

Moderators: Alice Clara Rore, PhD candidate (University of the South Pacific) and Rosyln Delaivoni, ECOP, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji

Objective: To share examples and lessons on the integration of traditional knowledge and science to inform marine management.

Key discussions and takeaways

Four case studies from Vanuatu, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Samoa were shared, highlighting how traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge have been integrated to inform marine management.

Key points include:

The importance of trust building and open communication.

- Greater youth engagement in traditional knowledge and capacity-building activities to foster long-term behavioural change and sustained interest in resource management.
- Documentation of traditional knowledge to prevent its loss in the digital age.
- Designing training programmes that reflect traditional and communal structures, including gender-based and group-based learning.
- Enhancing communication between traditional knowledge holders and government institutions to avoid working in silos.

- Developing successful management plans that are not limited to marine management.
- Studying language – such as the naming of species in local dialects – can help scientists identify dolphin species within a district.
- Understanding community needs and integrating those needs, along with traditional knowledge, into the management of government-implemented marine protected areas (MPAs).
- Incorporating capacity building within communities by integrating traditional knowledge and skills. Community training should recognise communal and traditional roles and therefore be designed around gender and group structures.

Presentations

Allan Rarai, PhD Candidate, University of the South Pacific. Case-based evidence – Integrating traditional knowledge and science for predicting ciguatera outbreaks in Vanuatu
The case study from Vanuatu highlights how Indigenous traditional knowledge informed scientific approaches to public health risk management. Traditional knowledge indicates that ciguatera outbreaks tend to follow disruptive natural events, such as volcanic eruptions and algal or jellyfish blooms. Subsequent scientific studies identified the ecological mechanisms and predictors of ciguatera poisoning, with a significant peak in 2022 coinciding with a volcanic eruption. The introduction of the Gigila Framework integrates scientific evidence and traditional knowledge into shared communication products, including templates, signboards, training materials and standard operating procedures (SOPs). This case study underscores the need to draw on both knowledge systems to inform effective decision-making.

Kabini Afia, PhD candidate, Griffith University. Case-based evidence – Cultural practices, genetics, and dolphin conservation in Solomon Islands
In the Solomon Islands, research was conducted to identify the dolphin species harvested for cultural purposes. This research required an understanding of traditional knowledge and the communities' relationships with dolphins, particularly their identification through local languages. Traditional knowledge plays a significant role in dolphin conservation within the district, as dolphins are integral to local culture. Community knowledge of dolphin habitats, behaviour and species diversity is well established and supported by scientific research.

Maloni Siga, Project Manager, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA). Tools and frameworks – Community-led resilience and inclusive governance in Fiji
The case study from Fiji examined the impacts of government-designated marine protected areas (MPAs) and community responses to these measures. Initially, the community did not support the MPA. To ensure that the MPA supported and benefited local communities, the government integrated its management into the community's Integrated Village Development Plan (IVDP). Incorporating the IVDP into MPA management aligns conservation measures with local realities, enhances legitimacy, bridges national objectives with village priorities and strengthens accountability, trust and compliance.

Ulusapeti Tiitii, Principal Fisheries Officer, Inshore and Aquaculture. Conservation International, Samoa. Lessons for equity and governance – Co-management and traditional Knowledge integration through the KIWA RESTORE Initiative
The case study from Samoa highlighted the Community-Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) Plan, which relied on inclusive, village-based planning and engaged more than 120 villages in co-management arrangements. The project incorporated capacity-building for community members,

with a focus on men, women and youth. Integrating culture and tradition into the CBFM plan alongside evidence-based management practices was encouraged and successfully adopted. The approach was also implemented in Fiji, specifically in the Lau group of islands, where community leaders played a key role in building public support, resulting in strong community endorsement and participation in the seascape strategy.

Marine cultural heritage and cultural values, Indigenous rights and ocean conservation

Moderator: Maeva Tesan, Information and Knowledge Management Officer, SPC

Objective: The session aimed to affirm Indigenous rights by emphasising Indigenous authority and data sovereignty as foundations for ethical and equitable ocean governance; promote inclusive governance by demonstrating how cultural values and community-led visions can transform marine conservation policy and practice; bridge cultural heritage protection, Indigenous governance systems and marine conservation to support long-term sustainability; and empower Indigenous women and youth by strengthening their leadership and participation in ocean governance and conservation.

Key discussions and takeaways

- Revitalising Indigenous ocean knowledge: community-led initiatives are documenting and reviving traditional maritime, meteorological and storytelling practices to safeguard cultural heritage amid climate change and historical loss.
- Women are central to ocean literacy. Indigenous women's worldviews, particularly through concepts such as *Tē Mangoedo* ("One heartbeat"), highlight the deep relational connection between people and the ocean and the need to integrate women's knowledge into ocean governance meaningfully.
- Bridging culture, science and memory is fundamental: the session demonstrated how cultural and environmental knowledge, combined with scientific tools, can support the protection of underwater heritage and address the historical legacies of conflict in the Pacific.
- Embedding Indigenous rights in marine governance is essential to achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable ocean management that respects cultural values, strengthens community leadership and enhances long-term ecological resilience.
- Biocultural approaches for resilient futures: participants highlighted how biocultural heritage can inform community-led nature-based solutions, such as customary tenure, seasonal closures and spiritual taboos.

Presentations

Chloe Molou, Member of the Erromango Cultural Association, Vanuatu. Cultural Heritage & Storytelling – Netai en Namou Toc: Stories of Our Mother Ocean

The compounded impacts of depopulation following European contact and increasing environmental stress from climate change make the recording, revival and restoration of cultural heritage in Vanuatu particularly complex. In response, since 2021, the Erromango Cultural Association (ECA) has led the Netai en Namou Toc initiative, working with elders, traditional leaders, artists, linguists, academics and government scientists to document traditional ocean knowledge before it is lost through the passing of elders or the erosion of coastal sacred sites. This work has successfully revived community maritime and meteorological knowledge, preserved in vernacular language and expressed through art.

Erromango's history includes severe population decline linked to European contact, disease and the violent sandalwood trade, with numbers falling from around 10,000 to 800 between the 1820s and 1920s. This depopulation led to the loss of several Indigenous languages. To safeguard remaining knowledge, a children's book is being developed that draws on native languages to share traditional understandings of weather patterns, winds and seasons and the deep connections between land, sea and people across the island.

Alice Clara Rore, PhD candidate, University of the South Pacific. Cultural Heritage & Storytelling – Women, Ocean Literacy and Tē Mangoedo

Ignorance of Indigenous worldviews in dominant ocean-care discourses creates barriers for women's engagement with Western ocean science and conservation initiatives. Understanding the Baelelea (Malaita) Indigenous concept of *Tē Mangoedo* ("One heartbeat") is essential to strengthening women's ocean literacy. This presentation explores women's perspectives on their relationship with the sea through the lens of *Tē Mangoedo* and highlights its practical application to ocean care. Data were gathered from women in four communities in the Solomon Islands using *tok stori* focus groups, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Findings indicate that women strongly identify with the ocean and maintain a deep, innate connection to it.

Building on these insights, the study emphasises the need to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems with contemporary frameworks to develop inclusive strategies for effective marine ecosystem protection and to integrate women's contributions into existing ocean governance structures meaningfully.

Jessica Irwin, GIS specialist and archaeologist, Henry Jackson Foundation of Military Medicine. Cultural Heritage & Storytelling – Underwater heritage, memory, and cultural values in the Pacific

The Defence POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is responsible for recovering and identifying more than 80,000 U.S. service members missing from past conflicts, nearly half of whom were lost at sea, with most cases located in the Pacific. This presentation highlights how DPAA strengthens the science–policy–practice interface by building regional partnerships, respecting traditional and community knowledge and addressing the historical, cultural and environmental dimensions of underwater conflict sites.

Combining cultural and environmental understanding with scientific tools such as divers and sonar, DPAA has successfully recovered shipwrecks off Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu and continues its efforts in the Solomon Islands. Ultimately, the mission seeks to provide families with closure while fostering lasting connections between families and the Blue Pacific region.

Josine Tiavouane, Customary liaison manager, Kanak Vision of the Ocean (VKO), Conservation International, New Caledonia. Rights & Governance – VKO: Embedding cultural values in marine governance

The Natural Park of the Coral Sea in New Caledonia covers 1.3 million km² – 100% of the EEZ – with 10% under legal protection. Designated in 2014, it includes the world's largest lagoon, the second-largest barrier reef and around 30% of the world's pristine reefs. A project led by Conservation International sought to define the Kanak Vision of the Ocean (VKO) and integrate it into national law and NPCS governance, including the co-chairing of management committees by customary authorities.

Grounded in over 3000 years of Kanak cultural knowledge, the VKO reflects deep connections between people and the ocean. Through an inclusive consultation and prioritisation process, the project achieved key outcomes: formal recognition of the VKO, its integration into park management and

policy, a 50-year moratorium on seabed exploration and the publication of booklets combining scientific and cultural knowledge related to the Natural Park of the Coral Sea.

Aungas Olewale, Project Officer at Piku Biodiversity Network Inc., Papua New Guinea. Rights & Governance – Biocultural heritage and adaptive governance in the Kikori Delta
The Kikori Delta is a globally significant biodiversity hotspot and the ancestral home of seven major tribes. The project is centred on the Neuri Wildlife Management Area, established in 1987, which encompasses diverse ecosystems, three villages and culturally significant sacred sites. Effective management of the area requires an integrated approach that addresses both ecological and cultural dimensions. Incorporating biocultural indicators is recommended to strengthen local governance and enhance resilience for both ecosystems and communities. At its core, biocultural heritage is about safeguarding identities, knowledge systems and future generations.

Drawing on the lived experiences of local fisheries communities in Neuri and surrounding areas, the session explores how biocultural knowledge systems, grounded in the deep interconnection between people and nature, can inform community-led nature-based solutions. These include seasonal fishing closures, customary marine tenure and spiritual taboos that align with contemporary conservation approaches while remaining firmly rooted in Melanesian values of relationship, responsibility and reciprocity.

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), fishing practices and marine conservation

Moderator: Maloni Siga, Project Manager, Adventist Development and Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA)

Objective: To share insights on how TEK-based fishing practices continue to inform contemporary marine governance. Their experiences will highlight how communities negotiate the trade-offs between conservation and livelihoods while shaping national and regional ocean strategies.

The session highlighted the need to ground adaptation efforts and community-based marine management in traditional ecological knowledge and practices, including kinship systems, oral histories, and ancestral knowledge and relationships between people and the sea and land. Panellists emphasised the importance of integrating indigenous perspectives, especially those of women and youth, into governance frameworks, coastal management and conservation efforts, demonstrating that combining local and scientific knowledge is crucial for resilience and sustainable stewardship.

Key discussions and takeaways

- The Climate Resilient Islands (CRI) toolkit implemented by Live and Learn provides a guide for community consultations to inform the community profiling for development, which develops into plans and actions.
- In Fiji, it is important to understand the impact and influence of the Fijian Vanua/ocean governance on indigenous communities.
- Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) can be better advanced and understood in the Pacific if associated with practices that are recognised by the local communities.
- Legal recognition, inclusive strategies, and cross-sector partnerships are key to protecting marine heritage and ensuring the well-being of both people and the ocean.

Presentations

Wilton Laufiu, Climate Resilient Islands Project Manager for Solomon Islands and Gerard Hivu, Project Officer, Live and Learn Environmental Education (Vanuatu). Traditional knowledge and governance models – Climate Resilience Islands and Community-based fisheries management
The Climate Resilient Islands programme is a community-led marine management initiative rooted in traditional knowledge and implemented by Live & Learn. The programme began in 2021 with support from MFAT and has engaged 67 rural communities across Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu. Community evaluation was structured using the Communities Resilient Islands (CRI) Toolkit, which incorporates community-valued information, including traditional knowledge. The CRI Toolkit guides community consultations that inform profiling processes and lead to locally driven plans and actions.

Successful outcomes of Live & Learn's approach include integrating traditional knowledge into marine conservation, developing nature-based income sources and implementing nature-based solutions for reefs and mangroves. The programme also strengthens partnerships between traditional knowledge and science, with active support and leadership from women and youth.

Claudia Fry, Social Scientist, University of Exeter/University of South Pacific. Traditional and Ecological Knowledge and Governance Models, Oral traditions and Vanua frameworks in customary fishing grounds (Kana Veicurumaki, Qoma Island)
The study is situated in a context in which climate change adaptation and marine governance are largely shaped by modernist ontologies that often overlook Indigenous governance systems. The research focuses on a Fijian village community on Qoma Island that has resisted relocation since 2016, despite increasing climate impacts. The central question guiding it is: *How do seascape governance systems support climate change adaptation in situations of voluntary (im)mobility?*

The research seeks to understand the Fijian Vanua framework by centring lived realities and applying traditional knowledge-based research methods. It recognises that understanding governance systems in Qoma requires an understanding of ocean governance. For the people of Qoma:

- Identity is intrinsically connected to the ocean.
- Language is shaped through their relationship with the sea.
- Deep knowledge of winds, waves, fisheries and seafaring, passed down through generations, has led neighbouring communities to recognise Qoma as a traditional seafaring community.
- The ocean structures relationships with neighbouring communities.
- Spiritual beliefs further shape governance, with the ocean understood as central to the circle of life.

Since 2016, the people of Qoma Island have continued to resist relocation, recognising that displacement would sever their fundamental human–ocean relationship. Instead, the community has pursued in situ adaptation measures, including constructing a seawall to mitigate the impacts of sea-level rise.

Claire Oiire, Pacific Biodiversity Coordinator for the Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation, SPREP. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Governance Models: Advancing other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and strengthening Indigenous leadership for culturally rooted marine protection, as highlighted at the Tiaki Moana Summit

The summit was hosted by Blue Cradle Foundation, with SPREP as a partner, in March 2025 in French Polynesia. Representatives from 35 Pacific Island nations attended the summit. The discussion focused on the use of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM), which can be advanced and understood more effectively in the Pacific when linked to practices recognised by local communities. These include, for example, the *tabu*, LMMA and customary fishing areas. It is acknowledged that OECM is essential in achieving the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) 30 x 30 target.

The event, which included community representatives, explored OECM as a culturally appropriate tool. Priority actions of the summit include:

- Centre local communities in OECM governance.
- Local communities and indigenous people have full authority over local decisions.
- Facilitate an inclusive long-term partnership.
- Develop and implement OECM tools and innovation.
- Empower Indigenous knowledge holders.
- Reframe OECM through a Pacific lens (expression of indigenous stewardship).

CLOSING

The conference closing session featured a summary of the week by Jerome Aucan, Head of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science, and a short video highlighting the week's highlights.

A question-and-answer session based on crowd-sourced questions and comments highlighted the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference's unique role in strengthening the science–policy interface while honouring the integral roles of traditional, cultural, spiritual and leadership dimensions in sustainable ocean governance and management.

Participants highlighted the need to work more effectively together and reduce overlap to improve resource and time utilisation.

Donors, participants and conference attendees were encouraged to continue highlighting and seeking ways to ensure that culture, language and place are respected and to support efforts to build on traditional ecological knowledge in scientific planning and research.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme's Director of Climate Science and Information, Salesa Nihmei, spoke on behalf of the host organisations, thanking participants for their engagement throughout the week. He advised that work would begin toward hosting the next Pacific Islands Ocean Conference in two years, in alignment with the regional agenda. He invited countries and partners to support the hosting of the next edition.

Mr Nihmei acknowledged the Government of Solomon Islands as the conference country host, including the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade; Ocean 12; the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration; the Solomon Islands National University; and the students and Early Career Ocean Professionals for volunteering their time, supporting logistics, presenting their work and making youth engagement a critical contribution to this conference.

The European Union, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the German government through the International Climate Initiative were thanked for their financial support and ongoing partnership.

The Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs attended the Second Pacific Islands Ocean Conference closing ceremony, along with Mr Colin Beck, the New Zealand High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands; His Excellency Jonathon Curr, the Pacific Ocean Commissioner; Dr Filimon Manoni, the Director General of the Forum Fisheries Agency; and Dr Noan Pakop, the Director General of the Forum Fisheries Agency.

Appendix I: Programme

Pacific Islands Ocean Conference

PACIFIC ISLANDS OCEAN CONFERENCE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES - PLEASE CHECK REGULARLY FOR UPDATES
AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES - PLEASE CHECK REGULARLY FOR UPDATES

Access detailed agenda here

MORNING SESSIONS

	MONDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER	TUESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER	WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER	THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER	FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER
8:30	Registration	Reflections	Reflections	Reflections	Reflections
9.00 10.30	Opening	• **Panel session: a Predicted and Safe Ocean** • National Ocean Governance • Coral Reefs: Monitoring and Assessments	• Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) • Ocean Literacy for a Sustainable Pacific: Integrating Science and Indigenous Wisdom • Mapping, Measuring, and Valuing Pacific Blue Carbon	• Science, Stewardship, and Solutions: Advancing Ocean Decade Actions for a Sustainable Future • **Panel session:** • **A Productive Ocean**	• **Panel session: An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean - the ocean in us** • Climate & Innovation • IOM Steering Committee (Closed Session)
10:30 11:00	BREAK				
11.00 12.30	• Tok Stori: Weaving Ancestral Knowledge with Ocean Science for the Future of the Pacific	• **Panel session: United Nations Ocean Conference - next steps for the Pacific**	• Tok Stori: Ocean discoveries in the Pacific	• Tok Stori: Pacific Resilience Through the Planetary Crisis and International Law	• **Panel session: A Clean, Healthy and Resilient Ocean**
12.30 13.30	LUNCH				

Pacific Islands Ocean Conference

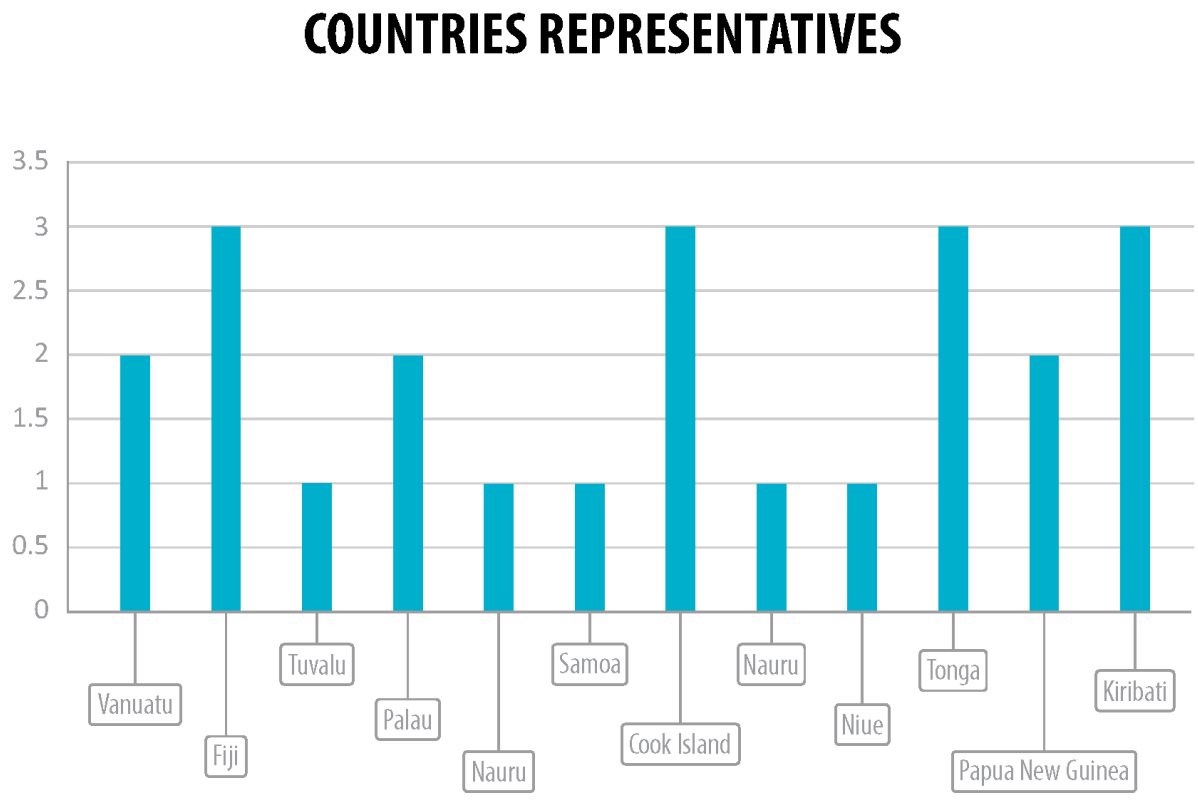
PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A TENTATIVE AGENDA, INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A LIST OF KEY TOPICS THAT WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED DURING THE EVENT.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS

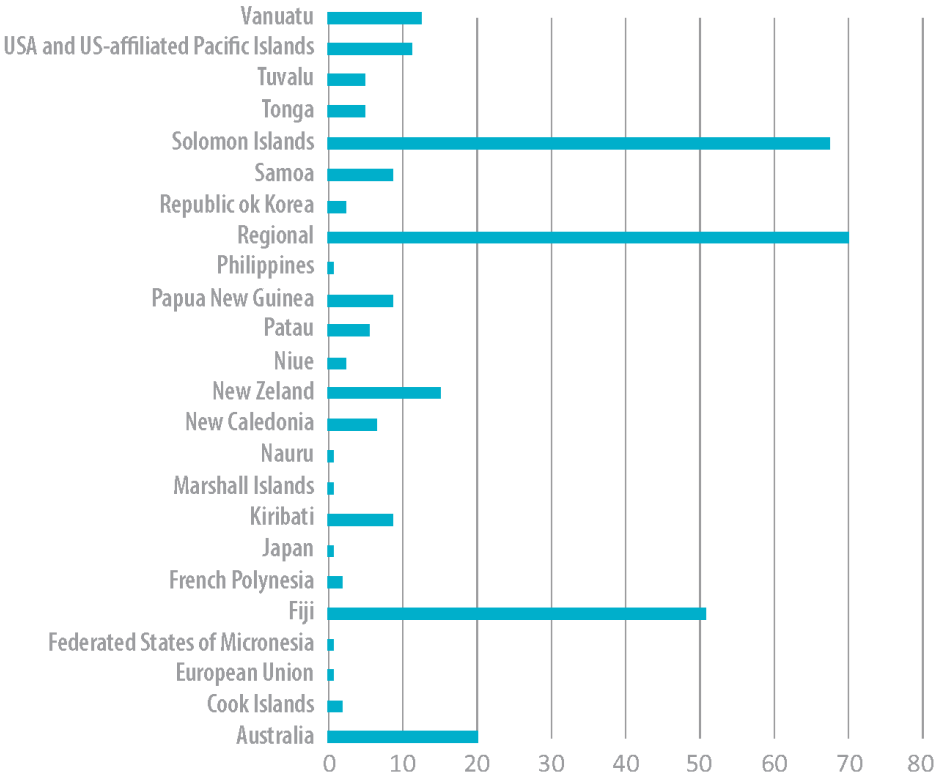
	MONDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER	TUESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER	WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER	THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER	FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER
13.30 15.00	• Community-Based Fisheries Management • Ocean Wayfinders: Lessons from the Past with Our Holders of Wisdom • Marine Spatial Planning - subnational to national • Maritime Transport & Connectivity • Ocean Observation and Ocean Modelling	• Integrated Ocean Management (IOM) Guidelines for the Pacific (consultation) • Case studies of the successful integration of traditional knowledge and science to inform marine management • Pacific Aquaculture • Climate and Open Ocean Science	• Safeguarding heat tolerant corals in a warming ocean • Coastal Fisheries Science • Navigating National Marine Spatial Planning • Early Career Ocean Professionals • Information portals and database	• Resilient coastal ecosystems: Decade of Ocean Science • Building Integrated Ocean Accounts for the Blue Pacific: Data, Collaboration, and Policy Action (Workshop)	• Building Knowledge and Innovation for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Pacific Tuna Fisheries • Capacity Building • IOM Steering Committee (closed session)
15:00 15:30	BREAK				
15.30 17.00	• Community Based Fisheries Management • Ocean Science Communication • Pacific Approaches to Marine Spatial Planning that Build Resilience to Climate Change • ECOPs & POC closed session	• Ocean Accounts: From data to decisions – supporting ocean governance in the Pacific • Governance and Legal Frameworks • Traditional Knowledge - Marine cultural heritage and cultural values, Indigenous rights and ocean conservation • Ocean Acidification Dialogue: Policy-Science • Strengthening Early Warning Systems in the Pacific: Innovations, Barriers, and Opportunities	• Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), fishing practices and marine conservation. • Community Leadership and Integrated Approaches to Blue Carbon Ecosystems • Regional Ocean Governance and MSP – from Shared Vision to Collective Action • Ocean Acidification Dialogue: Country Perspective	• Pacific Islands Coastal Fisheries Strategic Research and Monitoring Network • Coral Reef Management and Governance Strategies • Ocean Acidification Dialogue: Presentations	• Closing
17:00 17:30	BREAK				
17.30 19.30	Opening function		Launch of the Ocean Portal	ECOP Training (ECOP ONLY)	

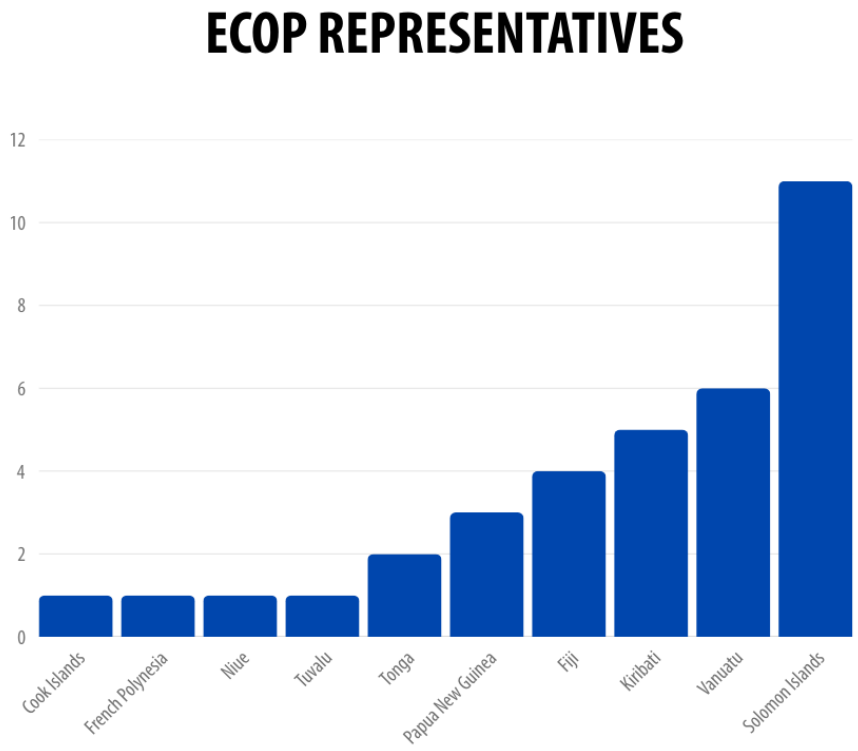
Appendix II: Participant analysis

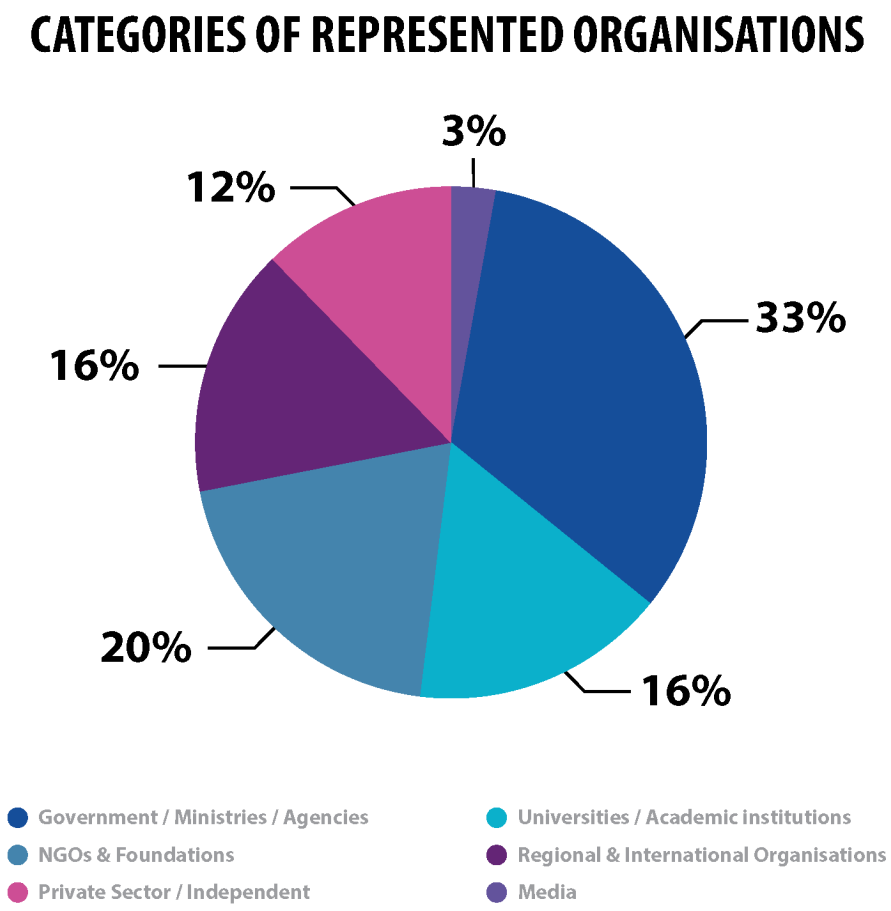
- **A total of 287 participants attended the** conference, reflecting a broad and diverse range of perspectives across the Pacific region.
- Participation included **22 government officials from Ministries of Ocean Affairs, Fisheries and Marine Resources, and Environment and Climate Change,** highlighting strong policy-level engagement. The conference also welcomed **35 Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP**), who officially represented the next generation of ocean stewards.
- In addition**, six representatives of Indigenous communities and 22 experts in traditional knowledge** contributed critical Indigenous perspectives, ensuring that cultural knowledge systems and lived experience were central to discussions and outcomes.
- Media engagement was ensured through the participation of **five journalists,** selected to represent each Pacific subregion – Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia – as well as the French territories and a regional media outlet.



DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY




ECOP REPRESENTATIVES
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
Cook Islands
French Polynesia
Niue
Tuvalu
Tonga
Papua New Guinea
Fiji
Kiribati
Vanuatu
Solomon Islands



Category	Country	Organisation
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Australia	Australian High Commission
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Cook Islands	Ministry of Marine Resources
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Kiribati	Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources

Government / Ministries / Agencies	Australia	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Government / Ministries / Agencies	New Zealand	Ministry for Primary Industries – Fisheries
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Vanuatu	Ministry of Fisheries, Ocean & Maritime
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Papua New Guinea	DJAG-National Oceans Office
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands Meteorological Service
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Japan	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Vanuatu	British High Commission Port Vila
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Fiji	Department of Climate Change – Ocean Unit
Government / Ministries / Agencies	New Zealand	MFAT – Pacific Ocean and Fisheries
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Cook Islands	National Environment Services
Government / Ministries / Agencies	New Zealand	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Tonga	Ministry of Fisheries

Government / Ministries / Agencies	Palau	Ministry of Finance
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Fiji	Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Tuvalu	Tuvalu Meteorological Services
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Tonga	Department of Environment
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology
Government / Ministries / Agencies	American Samoa	Department of Marine and Wildlife
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea Ports Corporation Limited
Government / Ministries / Agencies	UK	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
Government / Ministries / Agencies	USA	NOAA Global Ocean Monitoring & Observing Program
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Tuvalu	Office of the Prime Minister
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Cook Islands	Office of the Prime Minister – Mare Moana
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Honiara City Council – Environmental Protection
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Korea	Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST)

Government / Ministries / Agencies	Fiji	Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research
Government / Ministries / Agencies	France	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)
Government / Ministries / Agencies	USA and US-affiliated Pacific Islands	Department of Marine and Wildlife - Coral Reef Advisory Group American Samoa
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Australia	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Fiji	Lau Provincial Office
Government / Ministries / Agencies	Solomon Islands	Ocean12
Government / Ministries / Agencies	USA and US-affiliated Pacific Islands	Henry Jackson Foundation of Military Medicine in support of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
Government / Ministries / Agencies	New Caledonia	Coastal Fisheries Observatory of New Caledonia
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	Griffith University
Universities / Academic institutions	Palau	Palau International Coral Reef Centre
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	University of Sunshine Coast
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	James Cook University
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	The University of Western Australia

Universities / Academic institutions	New Zealand	Victoria University of Wellington
Universities / Academic institutions	New Zealand	Earth Sciences New Zealand
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	University of Queensland
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	University of New South Wales
Universities / Academic institutions	UK	University of Exeter
Universities / Academic institutions	Fiji	University of the South Pacific (USP)
Universities / Academic institutions	Samoa	National University of Samoa
Universities / Academic institutions	New Zealand	Auckland University of Technology
Universities / Academic institutions	Canada	University of Otago
Universities / Academic institutions	New Caledonia	University of New Caledonia
Universities / Academic institutions	Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands National University (SINU)
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	Australian National University
Universities / Academic institutions	New Zealand	The University of Auckland

Universities / Academic institutions	American Samoa	American Samoa Community College
Universities / Academic institutions	USA	University of Hawaii – American Samoa
Universities / Academic institutions	Australia	University of Queensland – Centre for Policy Futures
NGOs & foundations	Samoa	Conservation International (CI)
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Positive Change for Marine Life
NGOs & foundations	Fiji	Corals for Conservation
NGOs & foundations	International	High Seas Alliance
NGOs & foundations	Palau	OneReef Micronesia
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Langalanga Cultural Wealth Heritage
NGOs & foundations	Regional	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Live and Learn Environmental Education
NGOs & foundations	New Zealand	The Moanan
NGOs & foundations	Kiribati	Oceans 5
NGOs & foundations	Vanuatu	Erromango Cultural Association
NGOs & foundations	International	FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Dreamcast Theatre
NGOs & foundations	Papua New Guinea	Piku Biodiversity Network Inc

NGOs & foundations	USA	Niatero Foundation
NGOs & foundations	USA and US-affiliated Pacific Islands	The Ocean Foundation
NGOs & foundations	USA	Pristine Seas project
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
NGOs & foundations		Rare Conservation
NGOs & foundations	Australia	Great Barrier Reef Foundation
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands Youths for Change Christian Association
NGOs & foundations	New Caledonia	LMMA Network International
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands
NGOs & foundations	Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands Rangers Association (SIRA)
NGOs & Foundations	International	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
NGOs & Foundations	International	Bezos Earth Fund
NGOs & Foundations	USA and US-affiliated Pacific Islands	The Pew Charitable Trusts
NGOs & Foundations	Federated States of Micronesia	Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization
NGOs & Foundations	Solomon Islands	Vaka Taumako Project
NGOs & Foundations	Fiji	Corals for Conservation
NGOs & Foundations	Regional	Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change
NGOs & Foundations	Niue	Niue Ocean Wide Trust

NGOs & Foundations	Fiji	ADRA Fiji
Regional & international organisations	Regional	SPREP
Regional & international organisations	Regional	SPC
Regional & international organisations	Regional	Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC)
Regional & international organisations	Regional	FFA
Regional & international organisations	Regional	UNDP
Regional & international organisations	International	Global Ocean Accounts Partnership
Regional & international organisations	Regional	European Union
Regional & international organisations	International	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Private sector / Consulting	Fiji	Footprints in the Sand Consulting
Private sector / Consulting	Marshall Islands	MiCOAST project

Private sector / Consulting	New Zealand	Oceanly Science
Private sector / Consulting	Australia	Inkfish
Private sector / Consulting	Solomon Islands	In-Depth Solomons
Private sector / Consulting	Australia	Alluvium Group
Private sector / Consulting	Fiji	TAMATA's Enterprise
Private sector / Consulting	USA and US-affiliated Pacific Islands	Ai.Fish
Private sector / Consulting	Solomon Islands	Solo Enviro Beautification
Private sector / Consulting	Australia	Campbell Scientific Australia
Private sector / Consulting	French Polynesia	ECORISE Insights
Private sector / Consulting	Papua New Guinea	Infinity Blue Limited
Private sector / Consulting	Fiji	Talanoa Consulting
Media	Samoa	2AP and TV9 Samoa
Media	French Polynesia	Tahiti Nui Television

Media	Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea National Broadcasting
Media	Regional	Island Business

Appendix III: Overview of session formats

The PIOC programme was designed to bring together diverse voices, perspectives and expertise through a variety of session formats. Each format served a distinct purpose in fostering dialogue, co-creation and knowledge exchange around the ambitions of the Ocean Decade. The main formats included:

Panel discussions

A total of five panel discussions took place during the event, providing participants with valuable expert insights. Panel discussions served as a prominent platform where thought leaders, policymakers, scientists and stakeholders participate in dialogues concerning the key objectives of the Ocean Decade ("a productive ocean", "a predictable and safe ocean", "a clean, healthy and resilient ocean" and "an inspiring and engaging ocean").

Tok stori

A total of four *tok stori* took place during the event. The term *tok stori* is a Pidgin expression meaning informal conversation or casual storytelling. *Tok stori* sessions were designed as open, narrative-driven conversations that honour this cultural origin. They centred on personal experiences, community perspectives and storytelling as tools for reflection and knowledge exchange.

Workshops

Workshops provided interactive environments in which experts collaborated to deepen technical understanding, co-develop solutions, and exchange practical methods. During the event, sessions on integrated ocean management (IOM) and marine spatial planning (MSP) were conducted as workshops.

Conferences

These sessions involved structured presentations, where speakers share findings related to their projects, methodologies or case studies. They provided a platform for showcasing ongoing work, disseminating results and highlighting emerging trends in ocean science and policy.

Press conference

One press conference took place during the event to announce the launch of a new Ocean Portal, which now offers easy-to-use data for everyone from fishers to forecasters, real-time maps, visualisations and flexible downloads.

Appendix IV: Summary of key topics and themes

Category	Subthemes	Number of sessions
1. Fisheries science and community-based fisheries management	• Community-based fisheries management – Session 1 • Pacific tuna fisheries • Community-based fisheries Management – Session 2 • Coastal fisheries science • Pacific aquaculture • Pacific Islands Coastal Fisheries Strategic Research and Monitoring Network • Ocean fisheries management and science	7
2. Traditional knowledge and cultural heritage	• Case studies of the successful integration of traditional knowledge and science • *Tok stori*: Weaving ancestral knowledge with ocean science • Marine cultural heritage, cultural values, Indigenous rights and ocean conservation • Ocean wayfinders: Lessons from the past with our holders of wisdom • Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), fishing practices and marine conservation • Panel session: An inspiring and engaging ocean: the ocean in us	6
3. Ocean governance and marine spatial planning	• National ocean governance • Ocean governance and legal frameworks • Panel session: A productive ocean • Coral reef management and governance strategies • Panel session: A clean, healthy and resilient ocean • Developing capacities for Ocean Science and Management • Marine spatial planning sessions (subnational to national) • Navigating national MSP Pacific approaches to marine spatial planning • Consultation on draft Integrated Ocean Management (IOM) Guidelines for the Pacific • Regional ocean governance: MSP • MSP session for government officials only	11
4. Marine ecosystems and biodiversity	• Discovering, monitoring and assessing Pacific coral reefs • Mapping, measuring and valuing Pacific Blue carbon coastal fisheries science • Pacific aquaculture • Safeguarding heat tolerant corals in a warming ocean	7

	• Community Leadership and Integrated Approaches to Blue Carbon Ecosystems • Resilient coastal ecosystems – Decade of Ocean Science – Session 1 • Resilient coastal ecosystems – Decade of Ocean Science – Session 2 Coral reef management and governance strategies	
5. Ocean and climate science	• Advancing ocean observations for climate resilience • Ocean acidification dialogue in the Pacific: Policy science • Climate and innovation • Open ocean science combined with ocean observation and modelling • Early warning: ocean risk knowledge, detection and forecasting Ocean observation and ocean modelling • Ocean acidification dialogue – Country perspective • Launch of the Ocean Portal • Ocean acidification dialogue – Presentations • Developing capacities for ocean science and management	9
6. Communication, literacy and engagement	• Ocean literacy for a sustainable Pacific • Communicating ocean science in the Pacific • Panel on a clean, healthy and resilient ocean • Panel on inspiring and engaging the ocean community	4
7. Capacity building and youth development	• Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) presentations ECOP training • Panel session: An inspiring and engaging ocean: the ocean in us	3
8. International and United Nations processes	• Science, stewardship and solutions: Advancing Ocean Decade actions for a sustainable future • Panel session: United Nations Ocean Conference – next steps for the Pacific • Ocean governance and legal frameworks: Biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction Pacific resilience through the planetary crisis and international law (ICJ) • Resilient coastal ecosystems – Decade of Ocean Science – Session 1 • Resilient coastal ecosystems – Decade of Ocean Science – Session 2	5
9. Ocean data and information systems	• Ocean accounts: From data to decisions • Building integrated ocean accounts for the Blue Pacific: • Strengthening early warning systems in the Pacific • Information portals and databases	4

10. Maritime transport and infrastructure	• Maritime transport and connectivity	1

Appendix V: Review of media fellowship and participant feedback

Financed by the Geoscience Division of SPC through the Pacific Solutions to Save Our Ocean – Integrated Ocean Management Programme Project, a media fellowship was established to strengthen communication and visibility for the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference.

The initiative aimed to generate high-impact, accurate and timely media coverage of the Pacific Islands Ocean Conference. It sought to highlight the integration of traditional knowledge and modern science in ocean governance, amplify underrepresented Pacific voices and extend the reach of PIOC discussions to diverse audiences through professional journalism.

Key targets included:

- Supporting four journalists to attend the conference.
- Producing at least 4–8 original media outputs.
- Ensuring coverage that features stories on the integration of traditional knowledge and science, as well as regional ocean governance priorities.

Journalist selection

The selection of journalists was based on a comprehensive evaluation system totalling 100 points, with five equally weighted criteria. Each applicant was reviewed and scored according to the following:

- Representation of a media organisation
- Concrete ocean-focused story idea
- Quality and relevance of reporting samples
- Commitment to highlight indigenous and traditional knowledge
- Provision of editor contact information

Journalists selected represented the three subregions and the Pacific region.

Regional	Based in Fiji	Sera Tikotikovatu	Islands Business/D31 Pasifika TV/The Guardian
French Territory	French Polynesia	William Samuel Ravatua-Smith	Tahiti Nui Television

Polynesia	Samoa	Moeona Folasa	2AP and TV9
Micronesia	Marshall Islands	Eve Riklon Burns – declined the offer	Marshall Islands Journal
Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	Maureen Orea	National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea

News published

A total of 15 media items have been published across international, regional and local news outlets.

- The Guardian (international): The scientist who helped win the fight to protect a sacred piece of the Pacific
- Global issues (international): Global issues: Weaving Wisdom and Science: Pacific Voices Call for Ocean Protection
- ABC Pacific (regional): Pasifik Ocean konfrens ikamap nau long Honiara
- Inter Press Services (regional): Weaving Wisdom and Science: Pacific Voices Call for Ocean Protection
- Pacifika TV (regional): Pacific Islands Ocean Conference 2025 | Day 1 Update with Sera Sefeti
  2025 Pacific Islands Ocean Conference_Uniting Science and Tradition_ Pacific SIDS
  2025 Pacific Islands Ocean Conference Wrap up with Sera Sefeti
- Pasifika Environment News (regional): Pacific leaders urged to strengthen Ocean collaboration for future generations
- Tribe 92FM (Papua New Guinea): Meet Stanley Wapot in Episode Two (2) of Pacific Voices What does the future of Pacific fisheries look like?
- SIBEC News (Solomon Islands): Pacific Island Ocean Conference 2025
- Solomon Star: 2nd Ocean Conference gets underway in Honiara
- Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation: Pacific Ocean Portal relaunched: A new era for ocean data access and regional resilience
- Islands Business magazine and online (regional): People centre of ocean conference
  Revamped Pacific Ocean portal strengthens climate and marine decision-making


WANTOK
Pasifik Ocean konfrens ikamap nau long Honiara
Thu 2 Oct 2025 at 6:30pm
Play 5m
WANTOK
Presented by


Pacific leaders urged to strengthen Ocean collaboration for future generations
By Sera Tikotikovatu-Sefeti PACNEWS
30 September 2025 at 14:03


Weaving Wisdom and Science: Pacific Voices Call for Ocean Protection


PACIFIC REPORTER
SERA SEFETI
0:16 / 3:12
2025 Pacific Islands Ocean Conference Wrap up with Sera Sefeti