

Why does the Pacific need a global agreement on plastic pollution (*isn't it already covered under MEAs Pacific islands are Party to.*)

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In the future the generations that follow us will know we came from the Anthropocene era from all the plastic geological markers around us

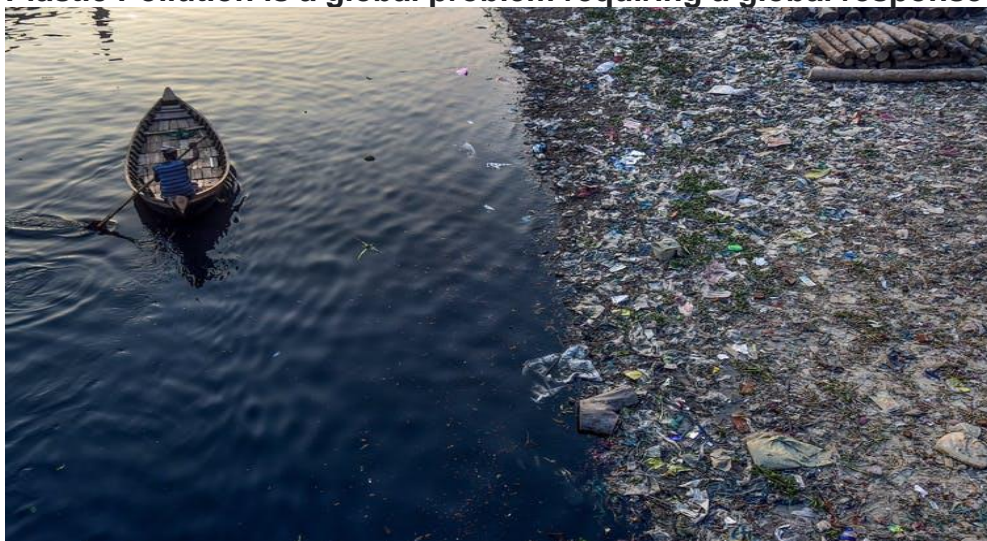
1. The Pacific needs global agreement for the following reasons:

- 1.1 Plastic Pollution is a global problem requiring a global response.
- 1.2 Plastic Pollution a global issue affecting the Pacific region.
- 1.3 Most of the plastic pollution in our region is not of our making.
- 1.4 The plastic pollution is of a magnitude/scale the Pacific region cannot solve alone.

2. MEAs and other frameworks Pacific SIDS are Party to do not cover the range of areas that give rise to the scale of plastic pollution we are now facing

3. Outcomes for P-SIDS

1.1 Plastic Pollution is a global problem requiring a global response



<https://newhampshirebulletin.com/2022/03/04/commentary-plastic-pollution-is-a-global-problem-heres-how-to-design-a-treaty-to-curb-it/>

- by 2025, 100 million to 250 million metric tons of plastic waste could enter the ocean each year
- there may be more plastic by weight than fish in the ocean by 2050.

A clearer picture of plastics

Humans have created about 8.3 billion metric tons of plastics to date, outgrowing all man-made materials other than steel and cement.

How heavy is 8.3 billion metric tons?

822,000 X
THE EIFFEL TOWER
(10,100 metric tons)



25,000 X
EMPIRE STATE
BUILDING
(331,000 metric tons)



80 MILLION X
BLUE WHALE
(104.5 metric tons)



1 BILLION X
ELEPHANTS
(7.5 metric tons)



The rapid rise of plastics

A world without plastics seems unimaginable today, yet their large-scale production and use only dates back to around 1950.

GLOBAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION ESTIMATES



1.2 Plastic Pollution a global issue affecting P-SIDS -It is a big problem for our Pacific communities

- Dependent on imported goods many of which contained or are packaged in plastic.
- Not disposing of plastic waste properly.
- Lack infrastructure for environmentally sound management -atolls
- No recycling facilities and can't ship plastic waste overseas.
- See plastic pollution everywhere -roads, rivers, coastline, ports, water column, even at bottom deepest trench in World found a plastic bag.
- Plastic in the ocean breaks down into microplastics digested by fish, seabirds, turtle, whales (iconic animals) and then humans.



68% of fish in the Suva Coastal Area had some form of microplastic in them according to research done by USP Postgraduate Researcher Andrew Paris.¹

Socio Economic impacts

We are undermining the very environment that nurtures sustains and defines us

Impacts on our:

- Food security
- Livelihoods incomes
- Revenues from Tourism
- Right to healthy environment (State obligation)

We are taking action

- Progressively enacting laws to ban SUPs (see table)
- Utilizing Economic instruments (taxes, levies, container deposit schemes)
- Public awareness / clean up campaigns are increasingly common
- Piloting investments plastic – fuel
- Alternative products – banana trunks to plates
- Involvement of youth increasing and encouraging -Tide Turners program
- More are more projects addressing SUP for example (POLP, GEF ISLANDS, EU- Pac Waste Plus, SWAP IUCN Plastic Free Pacific, J-PRISM II, World Bank, ADB, UNDP, USP)

¹ <https://www.fijivillage.com/news/68-of-fish-in-the-Suva-Coastal-Area-have-microplastic-r85fx4/>

P-SIDS Legislation, policies, instruments

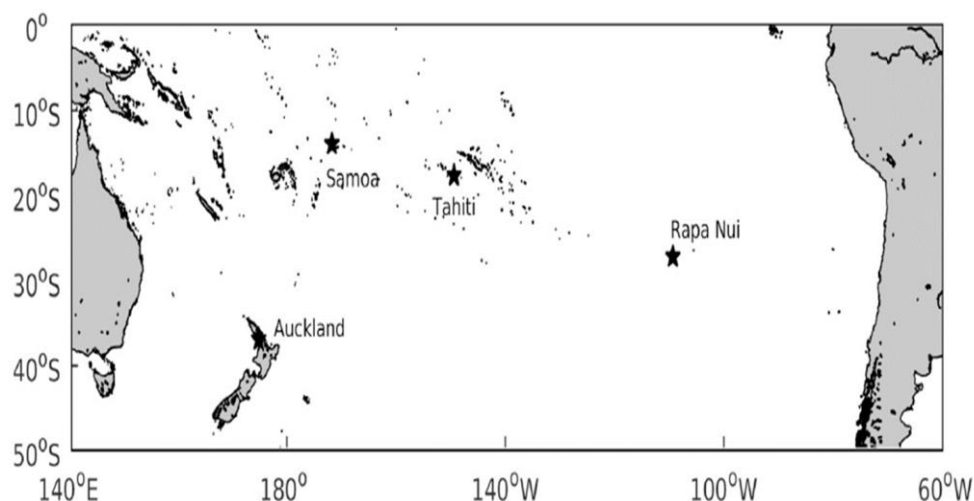
	Single Use Plastic Policy	Dedicated Single Use Plastic Orders, Acts and Regulations							Economic Instruments to internalise costs		Recycling of Plastics
		Plastic bags	Polystyrene plates	Straws	Styrofoam food Containers	Cups plates cutlery	PET	Plastic ice blocks pouches nappies	Container Deposit Scheme	Levy Plastic Bags	
Cook Islands		○	○	○	○	○			○		○
FSM					○	○			○		
Fiji		○	○						○	○	
Kiribati		○						○			
RMI		○	○			○	○				
Nauru		○									
Niue		○									
Palau		○							○		
PNG		○									○
Samoa		○	○	○							
Solomon Is											
Tonga										○	
Tuvalu		○	○	○	○	○	○	○			
Vanuatu		○		○	○	○			○		

1.3 Most of the plastic pollution in our region is not of our making

- 30,000 islands every single one has plastics (from *Pacific Action Plan*)
- PICs contribute less than 1.3 per cent of the mismanaged plastics in the world's oceans yet are one of the main recipients of plastics pollution and its impacts. In other words, around 98% comes from the outside of the Pacific islands region.



- Great Pacific garbage patch twice the size of Texas
- Expedition finds South Pacific plastic patch off the coast of Chile bigger than India -mainly fishing gear and micro plastics.²
- Palau has documented finding large volumes of rubbish on its northern most islands
- Interesting NZ study that shows more microplastics in fish closer to remote uninhabited islands than heavily populated areas- attributed to current flow. I.e more fish in Rapa Nui than Tahiti, Samoa and Auckland in that order



² <https://www.snexplores.org/article/expedition-finds-south-pacific-plastic-patch-bigger-india>

1.4 The plastic pollution is of a magnitude/scale the Pacific region cannot solve alone

SIDs are taking steps laws, policies, campaigns, piloting alternative products

Example Palau – prides itself pristine marine environment. Alternatives beetle nut fronds replace foam plates plastics to fuel – Invaded by plastics to the north -what can it do that it is not trying hard to do already?

Alternatives – cut banana and coconut tree leaves as substitutes for plastic not sustainable in the long run especially place Kiribati, Tuvalu, FSM, RMI -so what are the realistic alternatives?

- Producer responsibility is needed need
- Transparency (right to know were not ingesting poison) is design safe?
- Focus on tightening upstream so SIDs don't have to manage downstream

2. MEAs and other frameworks Pacific SIDs are Party to do not cover the range of areas that give rise to the scale of plastic pollution we are now facing

- If MEAS working in their current form why is plastic pollution exponentially increasing?
- Not one MEA is dedicated to plastics/life cycle of plastics. While existing international treaties attempt to limit plastic waste, they do so in a piecemeal fashion.
- Thousands harmful chemicals out there with plastics but only a very few are regulated under Stockholm, Montreal)
- Different types of plastics need to be addressed- agri-plastics, microplastics, nano plastics, microbeads
- Current MEA focus is marine environment at disposal stage -what about land, design, production, sustainable consumption stage
- A global plastics treaty is needed to fill the gaps in the existing conventions
- Need to focus upstream on the source- design / production
- Regional Frameworks *Noumea* and *Waigani* Convention can help address plastic pollution in region but all other regions needs to do the same and development across regions hasn't been consistent Need global standard/ metrics for everyone to follow in all regions.
- Soft law instruments are exhortatory not binding, Statements of intent. Like voluntary pledge sounds good but could be a license to do nothing.

3. Outcomes

- End plastic pollution is the ultimate outcome.
- Reduction output at the source. Focus on upstream -turn the plastic tap off before the bath tub overflows and spills everywhere and SIDs are left to manage its effects (like the climate change scenario SIDs face).
- Phasing out of toxic plastics and single use plastics.
- Plastics are complex and involve thousands of largely unregulated chemicals and their physical properties can present hazards in diverse ways- Get rid of all the harmful ones.
- Focus on product design, production, manufacture and trade.
- Need targets that are met. The mainly voluntary current approaches have proven insufficient and have not been able to scale up to the scale of the problem. eg the UN Resolution on Marine Litter and Microplastics;
- Ramp up efforts and take ambitious, legally binding and globally collaborative action.
- SIDs need assistance to address the barriers that have been identified for them in the context of plastic pollution ((Raubenheimer's work on this is an excellent source material for INC preparation).
- Ensure involvement of Pacific scientists, technical people at INC to cover the technical aspects covered in the more technical cluster discussions. (Representatives from main importers of plastics as well)
- Advocacy should be aligned to and reinforce climate change, biodiversity objectives, promote internally consistent waste management approach that also takes into account other waste streams. (nb if Plastics were a country it would be the fifth largest greenhouse gas emitter).

Finally let's protect that which defines us (the ocean in the words of Epeli Hau'ofa) by making our voices count in the way the global agreement on plastic pollution is framed.



Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding,
Oceania is hospitable and generous,
Oceania is humanity rising from the
depths of brine and regions of fire
deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the
sea, we are the ocean.

— Epeli Hau'ofa —

AZ QUOTES