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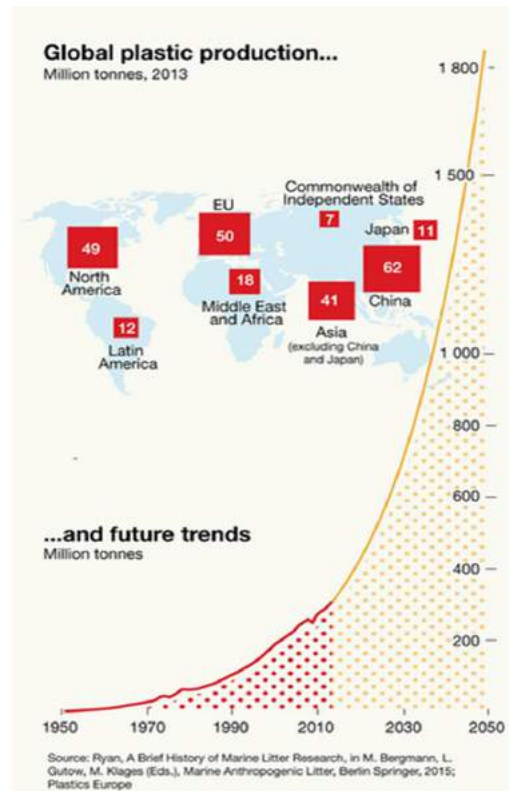
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

POLITICAL
ECOLOGY
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Why does the Pacific need a global agreement on plastic pollution?

Associate Professor Trisia Farrelly (Massey University)

Dr Sascha Fuller (University of Newcastle, Australia)

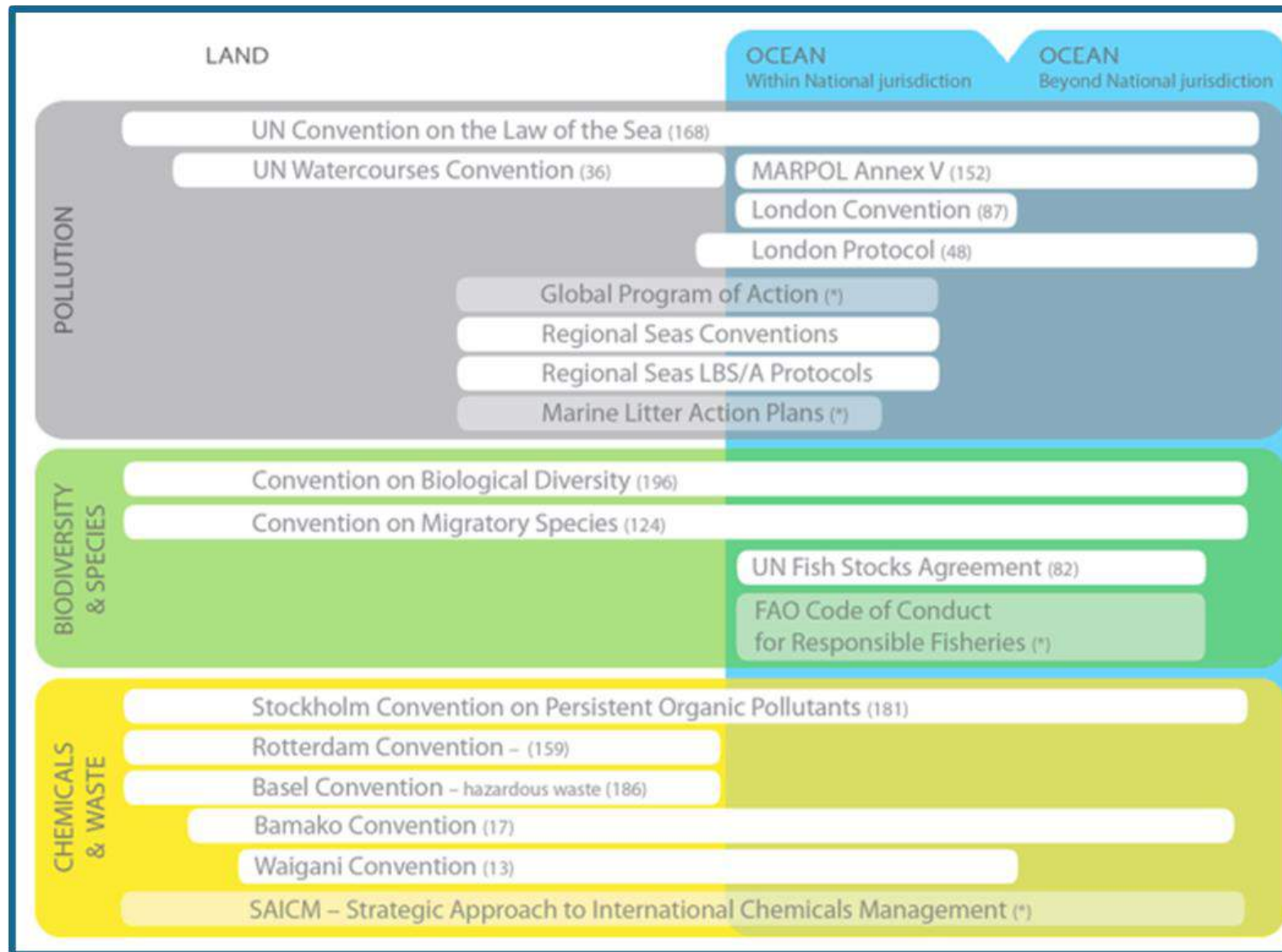


368 million metric tons of virgin plastics are produced annually, with production expected to double by 2040

Only 9% of all plastics ever produced have been recycled, and 12% have been incinerated

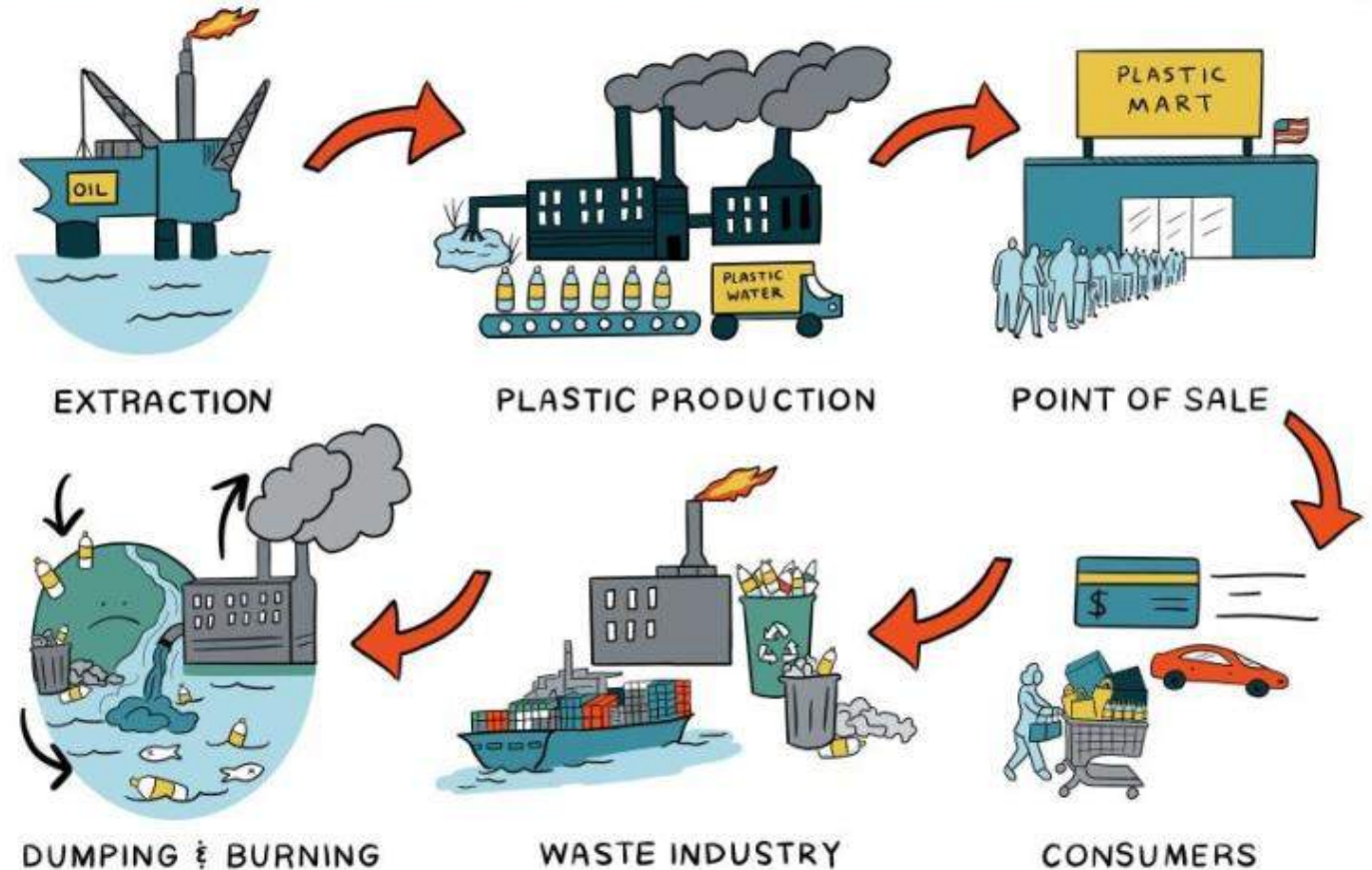
79% of all plastics produced have accumulated in landfills or the environment

A global issue requiring a global response



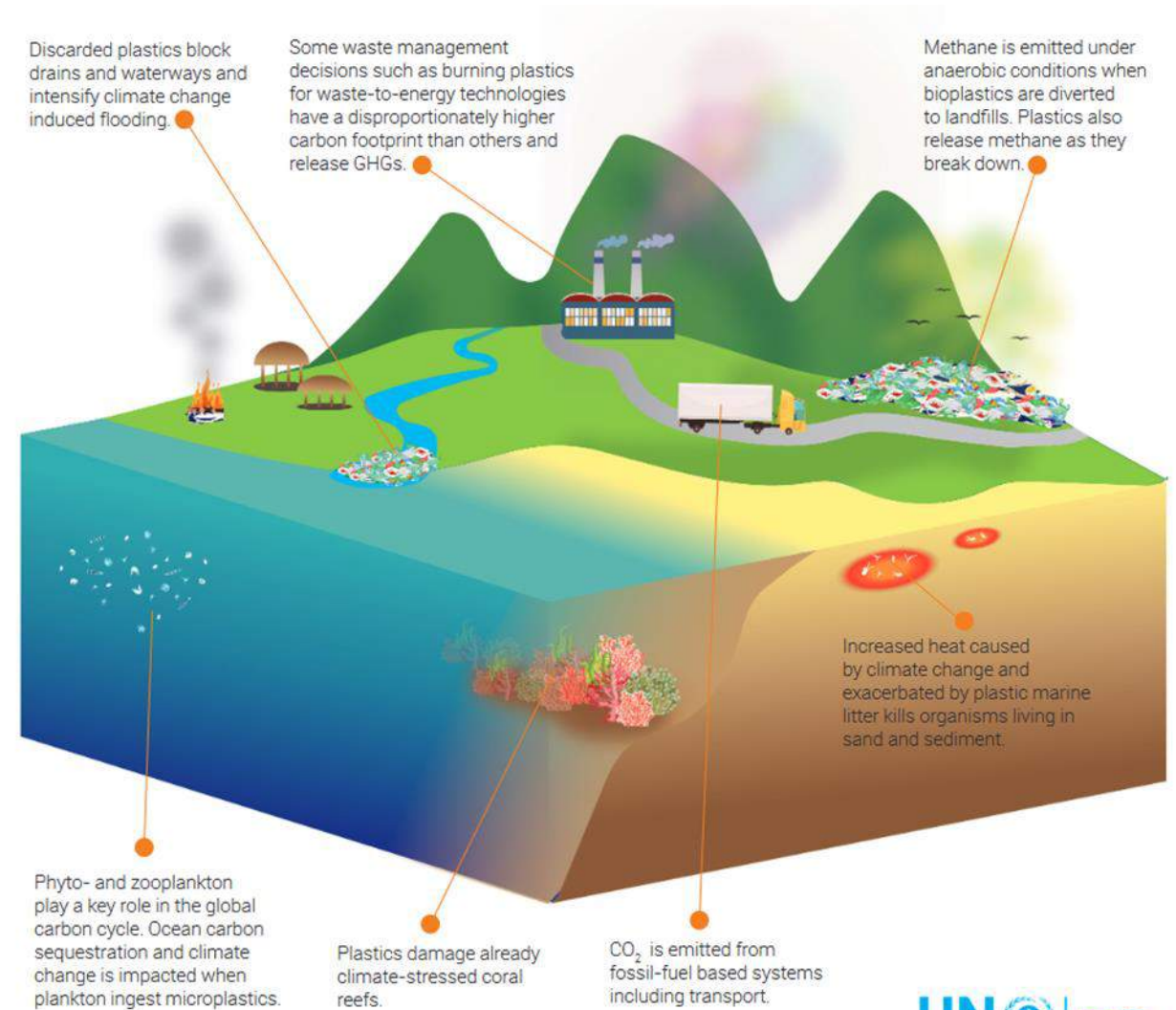
“Full life cycle”

PLASTIC POLLUTION LIFECYCLE



#breakfreefromplastic

Climate and plastic pollution





Plastic pollution in aquatic ecosystems will **increase by 2.6 times the level of 2016 by 2040** under a 'business as usual' scenario.

Plastics pollution is transboundary

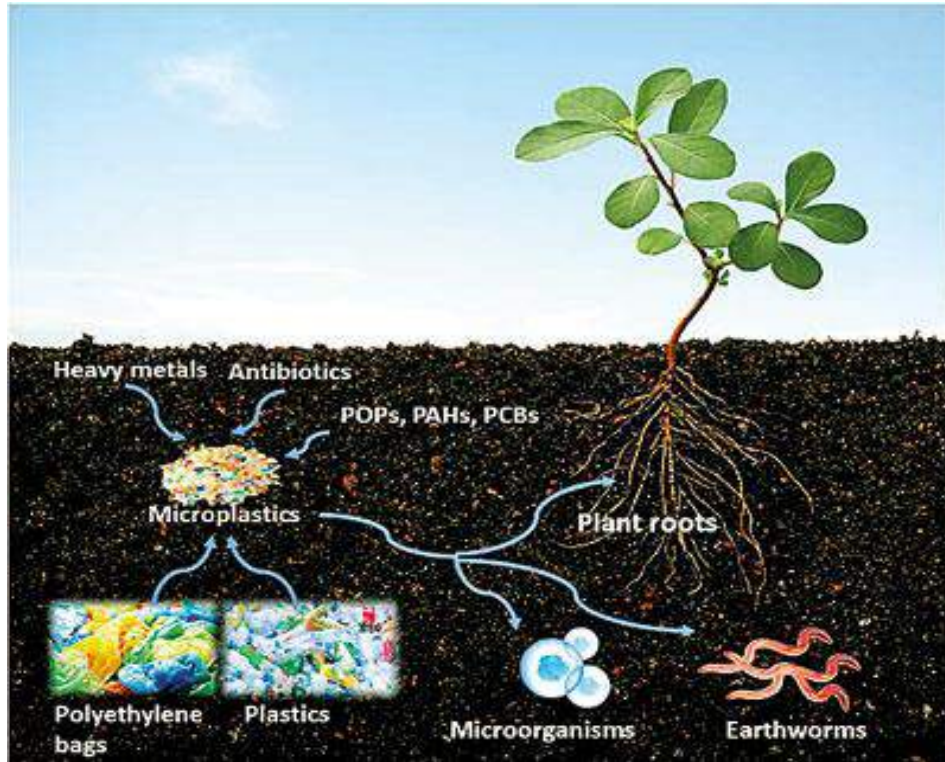




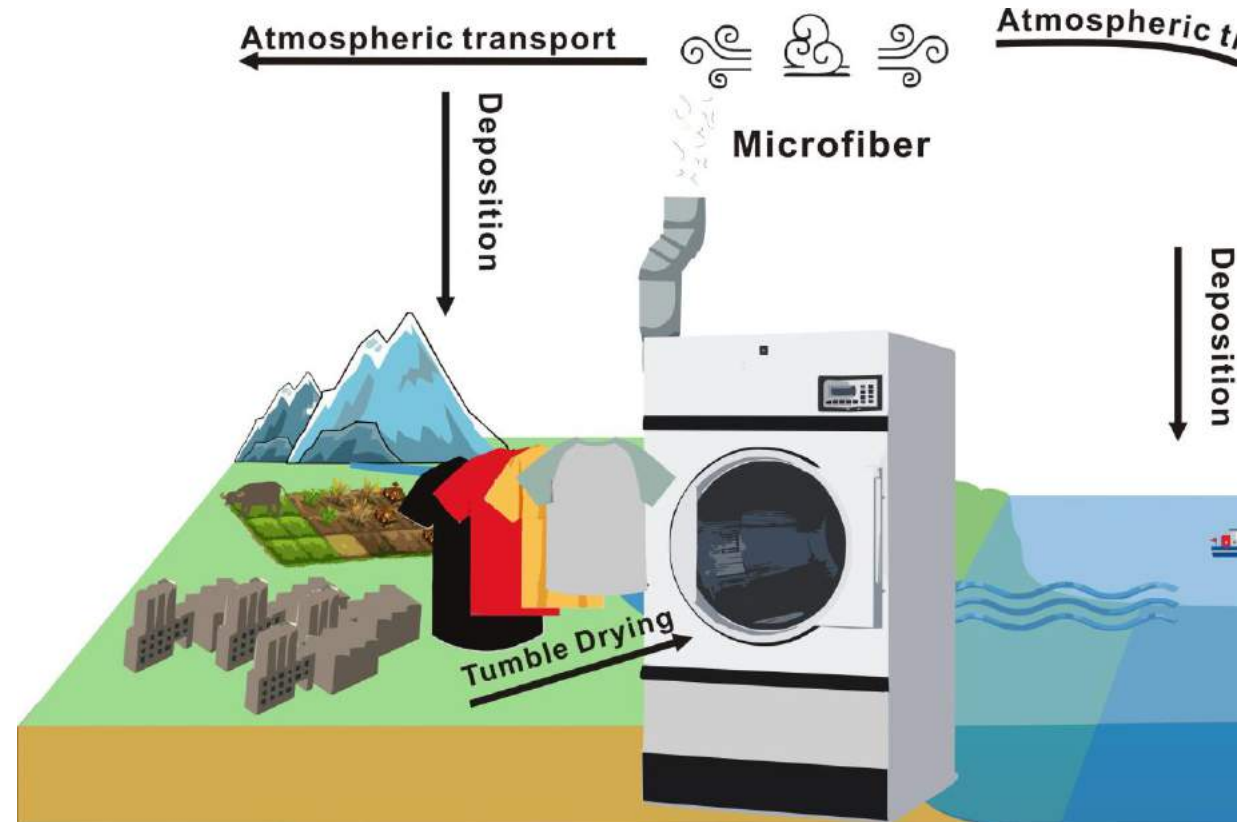
Freshwater

- Rivers and sedimentary pathways
- Freshwater lakes
- Reservoirs
- Groundwater
- Drinking waters supplies

Terrestrial



Atmospheric



Microplastics

Found pretty much everywhere

Microplastics in food



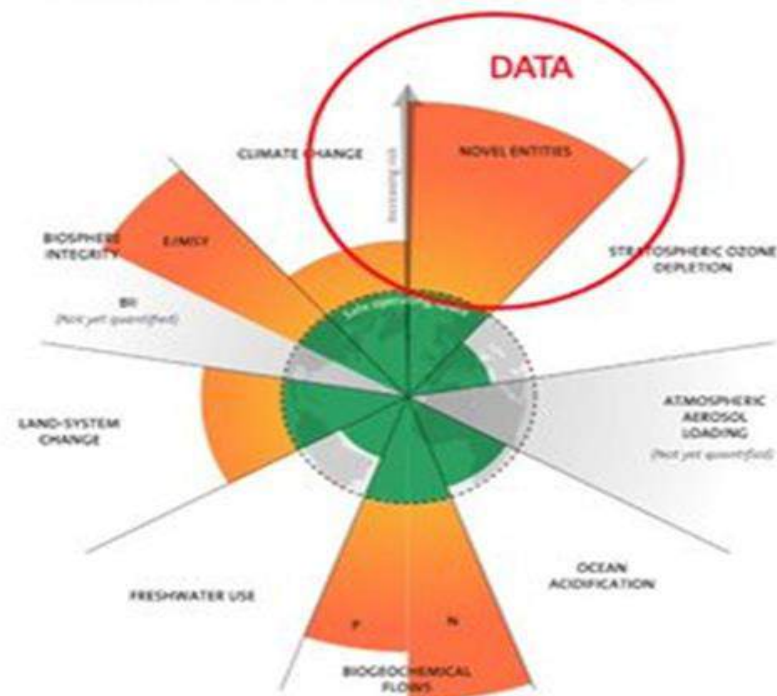
Economy



Until now the planetary boundary for chemical pollution had not been quantified



Now it has been –
and the news is devastating



The updated Planetary Boundaries framework (2022) showing 5 boundaries transgression, now including "novel entities."
Credit: Stockholm Resilience Centre/Unisa



UNEP

STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

Protecting human health and the environment
from persistent organic pollutants

Basel Plastics Amendments



An underwater photograph showing a large amount of plastic pollution, including a prominent blue plastic bag, floating in clear blue water. The scene is filled with various pieces of debris and seaweed.

Plastic Pollution Prevention in the Pacific: Key Findings



Plastic Pollution Prevention in Pacific Island Countries:

Gap analysis of current
legislation, policies and
plans

August 2020





ARTICLES

Plastics pollution as waste colonialism in Te Moananui

Authors: Sascha Fuller  (University of Newcastle) , Tina Ngata  (Ngāti Porou), Stephanie B. Borrelle  (Birdlife International), Trisia Farrelly  (Massey University)

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Abstract

Plastics pollution is a global, relational, integrated, and intersectoral issue. Here, we undertook narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews with nineteen key plastic pollution decision-makers. They offered a contextual lens to understand challenges facing Pacific Island (Te Moananui) nations in preventing plastics pollution. We build on the work of Ngata (2014–2021) and Liboiron (2014–2021) to situate the narrative analysis within a "waste colonialism" framework. We argue that plastics pollution as waste colonialism transcends environmental, policy, and industry concerns. "Indigenous political ecologies" of plastics pollution provide an understanding by which plastics pollution prevention can be examined at multiple scales. These include, at the international level: trade agreements and import dependency, donor aid and duplication, and transnational industry influence. At the local level: pressure from local plastics manufacturers, importers and suppliers, and barriers to accessing the latest science. Located within a global and regional context, our findings capture the systemic and long-standing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous responses to plastics pollution prevention and management, highlighting its effects on human and environment health and wellbeing. Sustainable solutions to plastics pollution for Te Moananui require the centering of its peoples and their deep, lived, and intergenerationally transmitted knowledges in the identification of challenges and solutions, the implementation of activities, and amplification of a shared regional voice.

Keywords: plastic pollution, waste colonialism, Pacific region, Indigenous political ecology, Small Island Developing States

How to Cite:

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Plastics Pollution Policy Gaps in the Pacific Region

Plastics pollution in the Pacific region is a growing concern. The region is home to some of the world's most beautiful beaches, but they are increasingly littered with plastic waste. This is not only a visual blight but also a serious threat to the health and well-being of the people who live there.



The main reason for this is the lack of adequate waste management systems. In many parts of the Pacific, there are no formal waste management systems in place. This means that plastic waste is often dumped in open dumps or scattered across the landscape. This not only pollutes the environment but also poses a health risk to the people who live there.

Without clear policy frameworks, the release of contaminants into the environment is increasing. This is a major concern for the Pacific region, as it is home to some of the world's most beautiful beaches. Plastic waste is a major source of pollution, and it is a growing concern for the people who live there.

Weak plastics policy cannot protect Pacific communities



Plastics pollution is a major threat to the health and well-being of the people who live in the Pacific region. The main reason for this is the lack of adequate waste management systems. In many parts of the Pacific, there are no formal waste management systems in place. This means that plastic waste is often dumped in open dumps or scattered across the landscape. This not only pollutes the environment but also poses a health risk to the people who live there.

Policy instruments needed to achieve a safer circular economy for plastics in the Pacific

PREVENTION

- Minimize plastic usage, the volume, size and weight of plastic items and their packaging
- Reduce single-use plastics and unnecessary packaging
- Reduce plastic waste generation
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage

Enforce regulations on pre-production plastic

- Use plastic as a last resort
- Reduce plastic waste generation
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage

MANAGEMENT

- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage

Definitions

Plastics are synthetic or semi-synthetic materials made from long-chain hydrocarbons. They are used in a wide range of products, from packaging to construction. Plastics are a major source of pollution, and they are a growing concern for the people who live there.

The Business of Plastics:

The impacts of plastics pollution on human rights in the Pacific Region

Despite the known environmental and human health harms of plastics, the Pacific Islands are under tremendous pressure to continue to import plastic products, to meet the high consumption expectations of tourists, and to manufacture plastics domestically. Current legal and policy frameworks in the region either exclude or include limited trade-related provisions, production, manufacturing, importation, packaging, and end-of-life standards, and technical regulations for plastics, persistent organic pollutants, and chemical additives.

This creates conditions for the unrestricted transboundary movement of problematic plastics and subsequent contamination of air, soil, freshwater systems, and the ocean with plastics pollution, including marine litter and microplastics. These legislative and enforcement gaps provide loopholes by which international trading partners and domestic manufacturers can choose to avoid their human rights responsibilities, in particular, those related to a healthy environment.



A CLEAN, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT IS A HUMAN RIGHT

On October 10, 2021, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in resolution 48/13, recognized for the first time that having a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is a human right. "Bold action is now required to ensure this resolution will protect people and nature." (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights)

Once produced and released into the environment, plastics never disappear, they break down and disperse into physical, chemical, and gaseous forms.³ The long-term contamination of all ecological systems involves food and water sources, soils, air, humans, and animals. Due to the transboundary nature of plastics, particularly marine litter, nation states and businesses have obligations and responsibilities to cooperate to prevent, reduce, and control sources of, and exposure to, plastics pollution, and to remediate leakage to the environment (see next page).

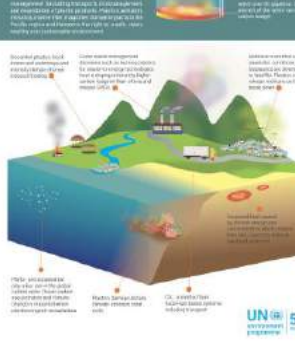
All nation states will continue to fail to protect citizens from human rights abuses if they allow plastics production and manufacturing companies to devastate the health of the Pacific Islands.

Plastic & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet (OCE) | Plastic and Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet (OCE)



Plastics, Marine Litter, and Climate in the Pacific Region

Plastics and marine litter are a growing concern in the Pacific region. The region is home to some of the world's most beautiful beaches, but they are increasingly littered with plastic waste. This is not only a visual blight but also a serious threat to the health and well-being of the people who live there.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Minimize plastic usage, the volume, size and weight of plastic items and their packaging
- Reduce single-use plastics and unnecessary packaging
- Reduce plastic waste generation
- Reduce plastic waste leakage
- Reduce plastic waste leakage



Further reading:
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021

A safe(r) circular economy for plastics in the Pacific region

Plastics pollution is a major threat to the health and well-being of the people who live in the Pacific region. The main reason for this is the lack of adequate waste management systems. In many parts of the Pacific, there are no formal waste management systems in place. This means that plastic waste is often dumped in open dumps or scattered across the landscape. This not only pollutes the environment but also poses a health risk to the people who live there.



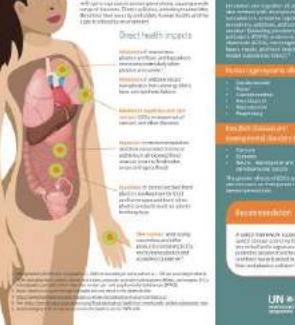
Safe(r) Economy for Plastics

A Safe(r) Circular Economy for Plastics will...
Minimize plastic usage, the volume, size and weight of plastic items and their packaging
Reduce single-use plastics and unnecessary packaging
Reduce plastic waste generation
Reduce plastic waste leakage
Reduce plastic waste leakage

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Plastics Impacts on Human Health in the Pacific Region

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Indirect Human Health Hazards From Plastics Pollution

- Plastics pollution is a major threat to the health and well-being of the people who live in the Pacific region. The main reason for this is the lack of adequate waste management systems. In many parts of the Pacific, there are no formal waste management systems in place. This means that plastic waste is often dumped in open dumps or scattered across the landscape. This not only pollutes the environment but also poses a health risk to the people who live there.

Further reading:
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021
The Pacific Islands Development Report 2021



State Obligations to Protect the Right to a Healthy Environment

- **Asses environmental impacts on human rights**
- **Make environmental information public**
- **Facilitate participation in environmental decision-making**
- **Provide access to remedies**
- **Adopt and implement legal and institutional frameworks that protect against environmental harm that interferes with the enjoyment of human rights**
- **Regulate private actors to protect against such environmental harm**
- **Protect members of groups particularly vulnerable to environmental harm - protect the rights of women, children and Indigenous peoples.**
- **International Cooperation on global environmental problems such as plastic pollution.**

UNITED
NATIONS



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Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme

United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Fifth session
Nairobi (hybrid), 22–26 February 2021
and 28 February–2 March 2022

Draft resolution

**End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding
instrument***

EP

UNEP/EA.5/L.23/Rev.1

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